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Parliamentary committees in a party-centred context : structure, composition, functioning

Mickler, T.A.

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Author: Mickler, T.A.

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Chapter 5

Analysing Criteria to Select Committee Members

The Committee Systems of the Dáil, the Tweede Kamer and the Bundestag

FOLLOWING the analysis of formal committee structures in thirty legislatures, the upcoming two empirical chapters of this book focus on three legislatures: the Dutch Tweede Kamer, the German Bundestag and the Irish Dáil Éireann. The aim of this chapters is to provide more insight into the working procedures of committees and how parliamentary party groups organise their work in these central institutions. Committees are *creatures of parliaments* which means that after every election to a new legislature the committee system is re-established. In each of these cases, distinctive committee systems are at work. In order to provide more information on these particular cases, first a short overview is given on the committees they establish.⁸⁹ Afterwards, the analysis will focus on how these committees are ‘filled’ and which criteria can account for this process.

The Establishment of Committees in the Bundestag

For the preparation of its plenary sessions the Bundestag relies on a number of permanent ‘standing’ committees (German: *Ständige Ausschüsse*).⁹⁰ The

⁸⁹ The discussion as well as the tables is mainly restricted to the specialised committees, as these are in the focus of this study.

⁹⁰ The Standing Orders of the Bundestag also allow for the establishment of other committees to be established. It can set up study commissions (German: *Enquete-Kommission*) to prepare reports on wide-ranging and significant matters. It can also establish special committee to consider specific issues.

institutionalisation of some committees is stipulated by the German Basic Law (Foreign Affairs, Defence, European Union Affairs and Petitions, for other see Standing Orders Bundestag, Article 54(2)). The number of committees has varied considerably in the past. The first Bundestag of 1949 had 40 committees, while the 6th Bundestag only counted 17. It has been parliamentary practice since the 1960s to set up a committee for each ministry at the federal level as a parliamentary counterpart (14 ministries in 2009). Additional committees are established if the field of responsibility of an existing committee is deemed so broad that another committee would improve the working procedure or as a political signal to underline the societal relevance of an issue. The Sports Committee (established since 1969, technically under the jurisdiction of Internal Affairs) and the Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid Committee (established in 1998, technically under the jurisdiction of Foreign Affairs and Economic Cooperation and Development) fall within this category. Table 5.1 shows the established specialised ‘standing’ committees at the beginning of the 18th Bundestag legislative period.⁹¹

Draft legislation is submitted after first reading in plenum⁹². A particularity of the committees in the Bundestag is that it allows for the assignment of an issue to multiple committees. Only the lead committee (German: *federführender Ausschuss*) can issue a report, while the others (German: *mitberatender Ausschuss*) give an advisory opinion. After considering the legislation, committees usually submit a recommendation for a resolution (German: *Beschlussempfehlung*), which summarises the discussions in the committee, the proposed changes as well as the opinions of the advisory committees. The plenum heavily relies on the recommendation for a resolution for its final votes. Committees in the Bundestag have extensive rights to take up an issue on their own initiative (German: *Selbstbefassungsrecht*). This is grounded in Article 62 of the Standing Orders which allows committees to take up questions falling within their terms of reference independently.

The Establishment of Committees in Dáil Éireann

The Dáil relies on several committees of which *Select Committees* are the primary committees to subdivide jurisdictional policy areas and mirror one or several ministerial departments (i.e. Select Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine). The particularities of Dáil committees were already discussed on p.

⁹¹ This table (as well as the corresponding tables for Ireland and the Netherlands) does not list all established committees but the specialised committees, as these are also in the focus of this book. Therefore, all committees of inquiry, contact groups, etc., are not listed.

⁹² The first reading does not involve a content-related debate on the bill. This is only the case a parliamentary party group demands it or if this has been agreed in the Council of Elders. Otherwise, the primary goal of this stage is to submit the bill to one or several committees. The recommendation for the committee(s) is made by the Council of Elders.

⁹³ The committee has a broad jurisdiction, but frequently deals with issues regarding Economic Affairs.

Table 5.1: Specialised Committees established at the beginning of the 18th Bundestag (2013-)

Standing Committee	Shadowed Federal Ministry/Ministries	MPs
Affairs of the European Union	-	34 / 34
Budget	-	41 / 41
Cultural and Media Affairs	-	18 / 18
Defence	Defence	32 / 32
Digital Agenda	-	16 / 16
Economic Cooperation and Development	Economic Cooperation and Development	21 / 21
Economic Affairs and Energy	Economic Affairs and Energy	46 / 46
Education, Research and Technology Assessment	Education and Research	34 / 34
Environment, Nature Conservation, Building, Nuclear Safety	Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety	36 / 36
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	36 / 36
Finance	Finance	37 / 37
Food and Agriculture	Food and Agriculture	34 / 34
Foreign Affairs	Federal Foreign Office	37 / 37
Health	Health	37 / 37
Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid	Federal Foreign Office	16 / 16
Internal Affairs	Economic Cooperation and Development	
Labour and Social Affairs	Interior	37 / 37
Legal Affairs and Consumer Protection	Labour and Social Affairs	41 / 41
Petitions	Justice and Consumer Protection	39 / 39
Sports	-	26 / 26
Transport and Digital Infrastructure	Interior	18 / 18
Tourism	Transport and Digital Infrastructure	41 / 41
	⁻⁹³	18 / 18

Source: Own depiction. This overview excludes the General Committee (German: *Hauptausschuss*) which was established at the beginning of the legislative period. It is not a specialised committee and due to its short existence also excluded from this overview. The column MPs lists the number of full members and the number of substitute members.

70.⁹⁴ In principle, each house has the ability to select a committee of its own members to examine any matter or issue. However, in reality, the select committees tend to stay in relation to the work of a specific minister. Because the most influential variable to determine the committee's jurisdiction is the government formation, there is little consistency regarding which committees

⁹⁴ To summarise shortly, each Dáil Select Committee and Select Committee appointed by the upper chamber, Seanad Éireann, form a Joint Committee to avoid duplication of oversight. The Joint Committee can consider and report on the need for legislation or expenditure and international agreements that do not involve a charge on the public purse. Only the Dáil Select Committee can consider proposed legislation, proposed estimates for expenditure and international agreements that involve a charge on the public purse.

are established from one general election to another. After an election it is open to the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) to arrange the number and work of ministers' 'portfolios' as he sees fit (see also B. Farrell, 1994). These reorganisations happen frequently after each general elections. Functions and titles of the portfolios or departments are changed.⁹⁵

In prior legislative periods, each ministry was shadowed by a separate committee. This has led to a relatively large number of committees for the size of the legislature (166 TDs). In the 30st Dáil (2007-2011) no fewer than 22 committees were established. Next to the standing committees⁹⁶ there were twelve select committees with ministerial jurisdiction, and four select committees with specific topics (on the constitution, European affairs, European scrutiny, and the Good Friday Agreement). The number of committees in proportion to the number of legislators (number of committees as high as the Bundestag, but roughly only 1/4 of the legislators) received widespread criticism during the 2011 election campaign. The newly elected government sought to address this issue by reducing the number of committees. In order to still be able to deal with the specific legislation and estimates for expenditure for each department the Dáil since then introduces *select sub-committees*. Each of these sub-committees meets only to consider issues in accordance with the terms of reference that established them. They deal with statute and law, estimates for public services dealt with by the ministerial department and proposals contained in any motion concerning the approval by the Dáil of international agreements involving a charge on public funds. Table 5.2 shows the established specialised committees at the beginning of the 31st legislative period.

New draft laws have to pass five stages in the Dáil. The committee stage is the third and *follows* the debate stage in which the bill is approved in principle (or not). During the committee stage, the draft legislation is debated line by line and amendments are tabled. Select committees are not allowed to rewrite a bill. In committee, a clause-by-clause examination takes place. Amendments can be proposed, but only the responsible minister decides to accept amendments or

⁹⁵ The Irish Constitution determines the size of the Cabinet to not less than 7 and not more than 15 members (Ministers). As an example, after the election to the 31st Dáil in 2011, a government was formed by a coalition between Fine Gael and the Labour Party. Enda Kenny, the leader of Fine Gael, was nominated by the house to be the 13th Taoiseach. On 9th March 2011, the day the government took office, the establishment of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, with Brendan Howlin TD as Minister was announced. The jurisdiction of this ministry stems partly from the former Department of Finance which stayed responsible for taxation and revenue-raising, while the new department took responsibility for the management of State expenditure. To stay within the constitutional limitation of cabinet size the Minister for Justice took over responsibility for the Department of Defence. This move freed up a Ministerial seat which was given to the new Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

⁹⁶ Public accounts, procedure and privileges, and members' interests and committees on administration, compellability, and consolidation bills

⁹⁷ This committee is a Standing Committee

⁹⁸ 'Gaeltacht' refers to those areas where the Irish language is still the main spoken language of a substantial part of the inhabitants.

Table 5.2: Specialised Committees established at the beginning of the 31st Dáil (2011-2016)

Dáil Committee	Shadowed department(s)	TDs
Committee of Public Accounts ⁹⁷	-	13
Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture	Communications, Energy and Natural Resources	15
	Environment, Community and Local Government	21
Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht	Transport, Tourism and Sport Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	
European Union Affairs	-	9
Foreign Affairs and Trade	Foreign Affairs and Trade	9
	Finance	21
Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform	Public Expenditure and Reform	
	Department of the Taoiseach Agriculture, Food and Marine Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	21
Jobs, Social Protection and Education	Social Protection	
	Education and Skills	
Justice, Defence and Equality	Justice and Equality	9
	Defence	
Health and Children	Health	15
	Children and Youth Affairs	
Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement	-	15
Investigations, Oversight and Petitions	-	15

Source: Own depiction. Due to intermediate changes in June 2012 which mostly refer to reshuffling and renaming the committee system has been altered again. The Committee on Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht⁹⁸ was split up into two committees ('Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht' and 'Transport and Communications') while the relevant responsibilities of the Committee on Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture' were assumed by either the newly established Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine or the Committee on Transport and Communications.

not and include them in the draft bill. The bill is then reported back and sent for the fourth stage (Report Stage). The last, fifth stage (Final Stage), concludes with a final vote on the passage of the bill. Both fourth and fifth stage are usually only a formality and very short. Amending bills on these stages is possible but unusual and usually restricted to government amendments in case of technical flaws. In case of controversial bills, the opposition may sometimes introduce new or reintroduce earlier amendments (for more information on introducing and amending legislation, see Oireachtas Brief, 2015a). Next to their primary function of considering draft legislation, Oireachtas committees also engage in issues they put on their own agenda. Some committees limit themselves mainly to their input during the committee stages of bills, others try to have a more active role by holding frequent discussions on particular topics and inviting

various stakeholders, i.e. non-governmental organisations, ministers and other interested bodies.

The Establishment of Committees in the Tweede Kamer

The Dutch Tweede Kamer relies on several types of committees. First, permanent committees (Dutch: *vaste commissies*) traditionally cover each ministerial portfolio. An exception is the Ministry of General Affairs (Dutch: *Ministerie van Algemene Zaken*) which is under the jurisdiction of the committee which deals with Internal Affairs. Permanent committees are also established for European Affairs (Dutch: *Europese Zaken*) and Kingdom Affairs (Dutch: *Koninkrijksrelaties*) (Article 16 Rules of Procedure of the Tweede Kamer). Second, general committees (Dutch: *algemene commissies*) are established for issues which “are of special importance to the exercise of its duties or which relate to virtually all Ministries” (Article 17 Rules of Procedure of the Tweede Kamer). In practice, they shadow the portfolio of a ‘minister without portfolio’. As of 2014, the two general committees in function are concerned with foreign trade and development cooperation (Dutch: *Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*) and Housing and the Central Government Sector (Dutch: *Wonen en Rijksdienst*). Third, for societal relevant issues which do not affect a particular ministry theme committees (Dutch: *thema commissies*) can be established. Their duration is restricted to one session. These committees offer a forum for the exchange of ideas and plans without the necessity of a government initiative. They were established in the legislative period which started in 2012. Prior theme committees have focused on issues like senior citizens and animal treatment. Temporary (Dutch: *tijdelijke*) committees are established for a specific topic and with limited duration.⁹⁹

Committees in the Tweede Kamer have slightly different working procedures with regard to bills compared to the Dáil and the Bundestag. Their functioning was already depicted in greater detail in Section 2.1 (see p. 76). After

⁹⁹ Apart from these, the Standing Orders regulates (and stipulates) a number of other committees. After each election, the House sets up a committee to check the letters of credence of each MP (Dutch: *commissie voor het onderzoek van de geloofsbriefven*) which files a written or oral report on the proper election of all legislators. Additionally, a committee is established and charged with the report on all petitions which are submitted to the House (Dutch: *commissie voor de Verzoekschriften en de Burgerinitiatieven*). Examples of housekeeping committees are the Procedure Committee (Dutch: *commissie voor de werkwijze*) which advises the House on its procedures and the Standing Orders, or the Presidium which consists of the Speaker of the House and the deputy speakers. Charged with national expenditure the task of the *commissie voor de rijksuitgaven* concerns the legitimacy and efficiency of the disbursement of public funds. It is engaged in informing, advising and supporting the legislature and other committees in the practice of budgetary estimates law and financial scrutiny. As is practice in other parliaments as well, a special committee is charged with the parliamentary oversight of intelligence agencies. In the Netherlands, the two institutions covered are the General Intelligence and Security Service (Dutch: *Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*) and the Military Intelligence and Security Service (Dutch: *Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst*). These meet in closed session. The members of the Intelligence and Security Services Committee are usually the leaders of the parliamentary party groups.

a draft bill has been submitted to the chamber, it is referred to a committee. However, on draft bills usually no classic 'oral debate' takes place in committees. Committees provide their views on the draft bill only in written form.¹⁰⁰ This report is sent back to the government which drafts an answer in form of a written report (Dutch: *nota naar aanleiding van het verslag*). Only when the bill is in its final draft a debate takes place in which motions and amendments can be tabled. However, this debate does not take place in committee, but in a plenary session. Table 5.3 lists the established specialised committees at the beginning of the 2012 legislative period.

Table 5.3: Specialised Committees established at the beginning of the 2012 Tweede Kamer

Standing Committee	Shadowed Federal Ministry/Ministries	MPs
Defence	Defence	26 / 26
Economic Affairs	Economic Affairs	26 / 26
Education, Culture and Science	Education, Culture and Science	26 / 26
European Affairs	-	26 / 26
Finance	Finance	26 / 26
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs	26 / 26
Health, Welfare and Sport	Health, Welfare and Sport	26 / 26
Infrastructure and the Environment	Infrastructure and the Environment	26 / 26
Interior	Interior and Kingdom Relations	26 / 26
Kingdom Relations	Interior and Kingdom Relations	26 / 26
Public Expenditure	-	26 / 26
Security and Justice	Security and Justice	26 / 26
Social Affairs and Employment	Social Affairs and Employment	26 / 26
Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation ¹⁰¹	-	26 / 23
Housing and Central Government Sector ¹⁰²	-	26 / 22

Source: Own depiction. The column MPs lists the number of full members and the number of substitute members.

Determining the Size of Committees and Allocating Seats

Apart from the issue of *which* committees are established parliamentary party groups need to reach an understanding to regulate the method of calculation for the seat share of parliamentary party groups in committees and committees' sizes (if not prescribed). Committees are filled by specific redistribution procedures in order to achieve the composition a smaller group on basis of the

¹⁰⁰ The Rules of Procedures allow for an oral debate for legislative consultations (Dutch: *wetgevingsoverleg*). These are mostly used for technical bills. Votes still need to take place in plenary session (cf. Bovend'Eert & Kummeling, 2010, p.226)

¹⁰¹ This committee is a General Committee

¹⁰² This committee is a General Committee

original aggregate. In the Bundestag these agreements on the calculation method, the number, size and field of responsibility of the committees are decided upon in the Council of Elders (German: *Ältestenrat*). An internal program calculates the seat distribution based on several redistribution methods.¹⁰³ The size of the committees is a recurring issue. They are by no means chosen randomly but rather support the claim by Eulau (1985, p. 196) that political outcomes such as sizes “are not ‘immanent’ tendencies but that they are determined by the behaviour of those who are in a position to manipulate a unit’s size”. As an example, in the 15th legislative period (government coalition of SPD and Greens), the number of each committee’s seats was determined so that the government coalition would always receive the last additional seat.

In the Netherlands this process is coordinated in the meeting of the whips (Dutch: *fractiesecretarissen*) of every parliamentary party group (Dutch: *secretarisoverleg*). In Dáil Éireann these negotiations take place in groups consisting of parliamentary party group leaders and whips. Several guiding principles are applied in every legislature. In general, committees reflect the composition of the plenum proportionally, meaning that the majority situation in the plenum is reflected in the committee. However, small parliamentary party groups are usually granted a minimum representation even if their size would not qualify for a ‘full’ seat on a committee. Such concessions usually occur when government coalitions have a relatively large majority (as is the case in the Tweede Kamer and the Dáil in the legislative period at the time of this study). In these cases, government parliamentary party groups agree to grant extra seats to smaller parliamentary party groups. Negotiations at the beginning of the legislative periods are highly influenced by the agreements reached in prior legislative periods. It is uncommon to deviate drastically from the status quo with regard to established committees and size if the external surroundings did not change (e.g. change in ministerial portfolios).

The Allocation of Committee Seats: ‘Self-Selection’ or Leadership-Dominated?

Once the number of available seats for each parliamentary party group has been determined, committee seats need to be ‘filled’. The question arises to what extent the parliamentary party group leadership *autonomously* decides on the assignment of legislators. The partisan rationale highlights the proactive role of the parliamentary party group leadership in the assignment procedure. All interviewed legislators of the Dáil of the smaller parliamentary party groups (Labour, Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin) indicated that their leader basically made the decision and they never gave any preferences for committees. The role of

¹⁰³ The method of (1) Hare/Niemeyer, (2) d’Hondt and (3) Sainte Laguë/Schepers. They differ in the way the number of seats of each committee is calculated (target size or step-wise) but they also have implications for the parliamentary groups regarding the distribution of additional seats when the size of committees is enlarged.

the parliamentary party group leader was compared to that of a “football manager selecting his team” (Interview Dáil, 151204C, 141202C) in the interviews.

Author: “And the choice for [committee X]?”

TD: “It was not a choice, it was the leader who decided. This is the way the Irish system works, it’s like the Prime Minister picking his cabinet”
(Interview Dáil, 141203A)

Only the interviewed legislators of Fine Gael as the largest parliamentary party group in the Dáil mentioned that they were asked about their preferences. However, an interviewed Fianna Fáil legislator, who had been a member in the previous legislative period, stated that when numbers were larger preferences were evaluated as well. Legislators would then “tell the whip which *committees* [they] would like to be on and the whip would draw up a list” (Interview Dáil, 141203E; also Interview Dáil, 141202C). Whether preferences for committees are gathered or not¹⁰⁴, the interviews indicated that the process in Ireland is very much leader-centric. Respondents across all other parliamentary party groups highlighted that the ultimate decision is made by the parliamentary party group leader (Interview Dáil, 141204C; 141205A). A different procedure was used in the Technical Group, an alliance of independent TDs in the Dáil. Here, TDs wrote down their preferences for committees on a piece of paper in their first meeting and in case only one member wanted a committee (s)he automatically got it (Interview Dáil, 141201A).

Processes in the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer differ from this. Legislators indicated during the interviews that they were able to give preferences in some form for committees and / or areas of interest. How and whether preferences for committees and portfolios are evaluated varies across parliamentary party groups. Legislators of the two largest parliamentary party groups (SPD and CDU/CSU) in the Bundestag are already asked *before* the election takes place (mostly around 6 months before the election) and a second time after the election. This step is most likely due to their large numbers (CDU/CSU: 311 at the beginning of the 18th legislative period, SPD: 193). The first assessment gives the parliamentary party group leadership a ‘first gauge’ of the distribution of preferences. For all parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer legislators’ preferences are evaluated right after the constitution of a new legislature. In the Bundestag, the process is formally coordinated by the whips (German: *parlamentarische Geschäftsführer*), either via direct talks (Green Party) or by using a survey in which MPs need to declare their preferences only for full membership (FDP) or full and substitute membership (SPD). Parliamentary party groups in the Tweede Kamer rely on personal talks between legislators and a member of the parliamentary party group leadership (Dutch: *fractiebestuur*), either the *fractiesecretaris* or the deputy leader of the parliamentary party group (Dutch: *vicefractievoorzitter*).

¹⁰⁴ If preferences are gathered, then this is usually done by the whip.

There is also a difference in *what* is evaluated. In the Bundestag and Dáil (for larger groups) preferences are given directly for *committees*. Legislators in the Tweede Kamer indicate preferences for themes in which they want to become the spokesperson of the parliamentary party group (portfolios, Dutch: *woordvoerderschappen*). At the end of this process, an initial list is set up, indicating surpluses and shortcomings. This lists functions as a baseline for the further process.

Once preferences are stated, the ‘puzzle’ begins. The task is complicated because the evaluation of preferences already takes place before the size of the committees has been decided upon. Additionally, for governing parliamentary party groups, MPs can be appointed to the cabinet or as secretaries of state and will, therefore, leave open slots. There is no extensive follow-up discussion between legislators and parliamentary party group leadership when interests and the available slots fit. In such cases, the legislator gets his or her preference(s) and the decision is merely communicated to the legislator. Respondents indicated that this is applicable for the majority of cases. However, in case it does not fit, whips have to approach the individual legislators to reach an agreement. The process to fill committees with too few legislators or with too many applicants is done via personal talks in which legislators are informed that they did not get their preferred topic and an alternative is found. In some cases, persuading is necessary to place the legislator. To qualify as notoriously ‘unwanted’ the committees’ topics are usually regarded as not very attractive or not prone to generate much attention by the media or the voter. This can, for example, occur through a very specific, technical subject matter:

“Let us take the Committee for Regional Planning. This is a dry and tough subject matter. You will never get into the news with that. That is really only something for ‘connoisseurs’ (Dutch: fijnproevers)”
(Interview Tweede Kamer, 150414A)

The committees dealing with petitions are usually not highly sought after either. These committees require the person coordinating this process (usually the whips) “to lasso” legislators and ‘convince’ them (Interview Bundestag, 150130F). Equally, some committees are known to draw more legislators than a parliamentary party group has seats on them. The interviews provided further support for the notion that some committees are universally highly sought after but there are differences between parliamentary party groups, i.e. the Committee for Social and Labour affairs with regard to left parties (Interview Bundestag, 150212A) or the committee dealing with environmental issues for the Green Party (Interview Bundestag, 150114I).

A particular allocation process takes place in the CDU/CSU parliamentary party group in the Bundestag. In this parliamentary party group, the role of the regional factions is highly institutionalised. Legislators communicate their wishes and preferences to the chairman of their regional factions (German: *Landesgruppensprecher*) who subsequently negotiate the allocation.

Negotiations over committee allocations take place in the ‘meeting of the chairmen of sociological groups and regional factions’ (German: *Runde der Vorsitzenden der CDU/CSU Landesgruppen und soziologischen Gruppen*), labelled within the parliamentary party group as the ‘carpet dealer convention’ (German: *Teppichhändlerrunde*). This group consists of the chairmen of the regional factions as well as the chairmen of the sociological groups (German: *Vorsitzende der soziologischen Gruppen*).¹⁰⁵ The process is therefore effectively delegated to this group. This particularly institutionalised influence is due to the setup of the parliamentary party group, consisting of two separate parliamentary party groups, which grants the smaller parliamentary party group, the CSU, certain contractual entitlements. For all committees or offices, the CDU has the first pick and the CSU always gets to staff the second seat with its members, only forfeited if it explicitly renounces this right. The second seat of the CSU is determined according to the number of mandates it has within the whole parliamentary party group.

In all parliamentary party groups in Germany, the final distribution needs to be able to withstand a vote in the parliamentary party group meeting (German: *Fraktionssitzung*) in which every MP is given a chance to initiate a crucial vote. Although this possibility exists, it is very rare and most legislators were unable to recite it actually happening. A similar possibility for a final vote does not exist in the Tweede Kamer, at least no respondent was able to point to the existence of the rule.

The Statistical Analysis: Choosing an Appropriate Model for Committee Assignments

The statistical analysis of committee assignments aims to find patterns in the assignment procedure and aims to understand which selection criteria explain why legislators serve on a particular committee. The unit of analysis is the membership to committees (the assignment of an individual legislator for a particular committee). An important step is choosing a theoretically appropriate model. Dow and Endersby (2004, p. 107) argue that the “relative merits of any statistical model primarily depend on the method that best represents the underlying choice process that generates the observed data”. In order to analyse the committee composition, the particular data structure needs to be taken into consideration. The data has the following characteristics:

1. All legislators are assigned to at least one committee.¹⁰⁶

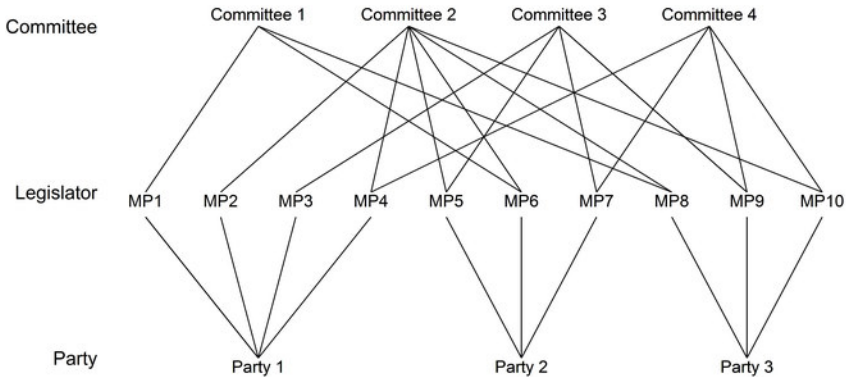
¹⁰⁵ In the legislative period beginning in 2013 these are the young group (German: *Junge Gruppe*), group of the dispossessed, ethnic emigrants and German minorities (German: *Gruppe der Vertriebenen, Aussiedler und deutschen Minderheiten*), work group local politics (German: *Arbeitsgruppe Kommunalpolitik*), women's group (German: *Gruppe der Frauen*), parliamentary circle small and medium-sized businesses (German: *Parlamentkreis Mittelstand*), employee's group (German: *Arbeitnehmergruppe*).

¹⁰⁶ Some MPs do not serve on a committee at all. Those legislators who are not on a committee are taken out of the data set and are not analysed. The focus of this project is on committee

2. Some legislators are assigned to multiple committees.
3. Committees differ with regard to their importance to parliamentary party groups.

Figure 5.1 displays a simplified data structure with ten legislators clustered in four committees with several legislators (e.g. MP₄, MP₅, MP₆,...) being assigned to more than one committee.

Figure 5.1: Schematic representation of data structure



Source: Own depiction.

In order to deal with data in which individuals are ‘nested’ within groups (data characteristics 1) a bulk of models clustered under the name multilevel modelling data analysis techniques have been developed.¹⁰⁷ These models are rapidly becoming the standard method of analysing nested data and have increased application in political science as well (D. K. Park et al., 2004; Duch & Stevenson, 2005; Solt, 2008; Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). Multilevel modelling can be thought of as a generalisation of linear regression, where intercepts and slopes are allowed to vary by group. This allows for an examination of relationships at multiple levels of analysis, be it data grouped within individuals, individual data nested within groups, and group data nested within higher-order entities, and statistically account for the intercorrelations which occur within a given group (Hofmann, 1997).

A standard notation of the basic multilevel model¹⁰⁸, assuming that there

assignment practices and thus only analyses the “successful” membership. The “non”-membership of not-assigned legislators is easy to explain, as they are mostly members of the executive or have other time-demanding positions within the parliamentary party group.

¹⁰⁷ They were originally developed and have frequent application in those disciplines which encounter hierarchical data at multiple levels of analysis. These data structures are common in educational science, sociology, psychology and organisational studies in which (e.g., children nested within classrooms or schools, or family members nested within families).

¹⁰⁸ Different authors use slightly different systems (see e.g. Gelman & Hill, 2007; Beretvas, 2011; Browne et al., 2001). Here, I follow the example by Hox (2010) and Beretvas (2011) which use the parameterization of Rasbash and Browne (2001).

are $n = C$ committees, with a different number of legislators n_c in each committee, (excluding any cross-level interactions and restricted to a shortened version which only includes one individual-level (X) variable and one class-level variable (Z) to predict the outcome variable Y) is:

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}X_{1ic} + \gamma_{01}Z_c + u_{1c}X_{1ic} + u_{0c} + \epsilon_{ic} \quad (1)$$

In this regression equation, the subscript c is for committees ($c = 1 \dots C$) and the subscript i is for individual legislators ($i = 1 \dots n_c$). The multilevel model equation in Equation 1 refers to the ‘standard’ (hierarchical) multilevel model, with each lower level unit belonging to one and only one higher level unit (or subsequently one level 3 unit, etc.). This ‘standard’ (hierarchical) multilevel model is not applicable due to the assignment of some legislators to multiple committees. In Dáil Éireann and the Tweede Kamer around 130 MPs¹⁰⁹ are allocated to committees, while in the Bundestag around 550 MPs are allocated to over 20 committees during the legislative period. Double membership is the norm and serving on even more committees is not exceptional. Single assignments only occur in legislatures with a perfect match between number and seats, like in the Norwegian Storting. Serving on two, some even on more committees represents multiple choices of legislators. This needs to be accounted for.¹¹⁰

Multilevel models are, however, very versatile and are not restricted to one specific setup. In the family of multilevel models, an extension to the standard multilevel framework considers the situation in which a lower level unit is a member of more than one higher classification unit. These models are commonly referred to as multiple membership models (Browne et al., 2001). In multiple membership models, lower level units are nested within multiple higher level units from the same classification. This model fits the data structure in which individuals are not ‘neatly’ clustered within one higher level group.¹¹¹ With regard to the model used in the analysis¹¹² the formula for the multiple

¹⁰⁹ This excludes the number of legislators who do not serve on a committee at all.

¹¹⁰ It would be possible to split those MPs who serve on multiple committees into several additional cases and treat them as new cases in the analysis to fit, for example, a discrete choice model. However, this can lead to biased parameter estimates and, subsequently, to drawing false conclusions regarding the tested hypotheses.

¹¹¹ There is another extension of the ‘standard’ multilevel model. These are called cross-classified multilevel models and can also take into account multiple simultaneous classifications. Conceptually, this multilevel approach models individuals (the first level of analysis) grouped in different contexts (the second level), and jointly analyses variables from the two levels in a unified framework. These models are used when it is necessary to account for influences coming from two different “contexts” and to evaluate the importance of the two classifications (Zaccarin & Rivellini, 2002). Cross-classification models are not the ideal choice, however, as they would require relatively complicated restructuring and are not necessary for the formulated hypotheses. Given the nature of the hypotheses, which refer to individuals in a committee, it is possible to conduct the analysis on the level of individuals and committees and leave out a cross-classification with regard to parliamentary party groups.

¹¹² For an extended discussion, see e.g. Beretvas (2011).

membership model used in the actual analysis is listed in Equation 2:¹¹³

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Logit}(\pi_{ic}) = \frac{P(\pi_{ic} = 1)}{1 - P(\pi_{ic} = 1)} = & \beta_0 + \\ & \beta_1 * \text{edu}_{ic} + \beta_2 * \text{occ}_{ic} + \\ & \beta_3 * \text{com.exp}_{ic} + \beta_4 * \text{ext.int}_{ic} + \\ & \beta_5 * \text{priority}_c \times \text{ideol.dist}_i + \\ & \beta_6 * \text{priority}_c \times \text{leg.per}_i + \\ & C_c + I_i + \epsilon_{ic} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Where π_{ij} is the probability for member i of belonging to committee c . edu_{ic} indicates whether a fitting prior education of member i in committee c is present, occ_{ic} indicates whether a fitting prior occupation of member i in committee c is present, etc. priority_c indicates whether a committee is considered to be of high importance. Two random intercepts are fitted: C_c for committees (with $c = 1, \dots, n_c$) and I_i for members (with $c = 1, \dots, n_i$).

The application of multilevel models has several advantages. Multilevel models can be applied to a multitude of data structures and can, with the right specifications, deal with the present nested data structures (individual legislators clustered in multiple committees). Additionally, these models are well-suited for making inferences from small sample size. Multilevel models are capable of being fit to very small numbers of observations per group and can still provide “partial information that allows estimation of the coefficients and variance parameters of the individual- and group-level regressions” (Gelman & Hill, 2007, p. 276). The number of level 2-groups (committees) always exceeds 10 (which was the smallest number of analysed committees and occurred in the 27th Dáil). The number of legislators in committee is not smaller than 10 and often exceeds 20. Explanatory variables can be defined at any level in multilevel models and can thus deal with the hypotheses regarding committee prestige. The primary reason to apply a multilevel model is because these can correct for the biases in parameter estimates resulting from clustering. When this multilevel structure is ignored, parameter estimates, as well as their standard errors, can lead to false inferences (Guo & Zhao, 2000).

¹¹³ In this formula, abbreviations were used: edu = prior education; occ = prior occupation, com.exp = committee experience; ext.int = external interests; ideol.dist = ideological distance to the party mean; leg.per = number of legislative periods; priority = high importance committee.

Data Set: Measuring Committee Membership and Operationalising the Variables

The Dependent Variable: Actual Assignments and Transfers to Specialised Committees in the Bundestag, the Tweede Kamer and the Dáil

Committee assignments can generally be analysed by two main approaches. One option is *committee request data*. These allow for inferences about which MPs received their preferred committee spot and which ones did not. Second, inferences can also be drawn *ex post* by focusing on *actual assignments* and testing the impact of background variables which are hypothesised to have influenced the placement of a particular MP. In this study, committee assignments were analysed. Several attempts to obtain committee request lists from parliamentary party groups were without success.¹¹⁴

The dependent variable measures the membership to *specialised* committees, i.e. those that are devoted to specific policy areas and exert both the control function and the scrutiny of bills. Committees were not analysed when legislators are assigned to them based on their standing and position within their respective parliamentary party group or in the chamber (e.g. conference of chairmen etc.). Similarly, inquiry committees and housekeeping committees were excluded. Membership to committees charged with higher-ranking housekeeping issues (e.g. drafting the agenda for the plenary session) is usually a privilege of the parliamentary party group leadership or whips. Other housekeeping committees which deal with topics such as the scrutiny of elections do not present similar incentive structures as specialised technical committees. They, therefore, have different assignment logics and are excluded. Appendix 8 on p. 286 contains a list of the analysed committees in each legislature per legislative period. To analyse the assignments, original data sets were built in all three cases.

In Germany, the period of investigation runs from the 12th (first legislative period after German unification) to the 18th Bundestag. In the Dutch Tweede Kamer, the period of investigation runs from the 1994 legislative period to the legislative period starting in 2012. The 1994 legislative period marks the establishment of a new committee system due to a prior change of the Standing Orders (Reglement van Orde voor de Tweede Kamer) on 17 May 1994 (Bovend'Eert & Kummeling, 2010, p. 189). The analysed legislative periods in Ireland comprises the 27th Dáil (1992 election) until the 30th Dáil (2011 election). The 1992 legislative period was the legislative period which marks the starting point of a new committee system. Reforms of the committee systems were enacted in this legislative period which restructured the number and jurisdictions of committees. They also reformed the referral of bills to committees. The transition to the new committee system was made mid-term

¹¹⁴ Often, these lists are simply not kept after the end of a legislative period or, in case they were still traceable, they are considered confidential by the parliamentary party groups and thus not handed over for further analysis.

in July 1995.¹¹⁵ These changes allowed the committee system to leap “into life again” (Gallagher, 2005, p. 219). An analysis across several legislative periods broadens the understanding about the impact of many variables in various years to determine plausible explanations and prevents the overestimation of outliers which might occur in single legislative periods. A possible pattern can only be identified by analysing multiple legislative periods.

The data set for Germany contains the committee assignments and transfers of all MPs in the 12th to 18th Bundestag (n = 4281 assignments to a committee in this period, n = 1870 unique legislators). For all MPs in the respective legislative periods, the individual committee assignments lists were obtained during a visit of the parliamentary archive in Berlin in April 2013. These overviews are based on the internal database of the Bundestag which contains detailed information on a legislator’s membership of a committee (substitute or full member, respectively (vice) chair). At the end of a legislative period, this information is used to set up the overview. An example of such an overview is listed in Appendix 9 (p. 295). For those MPs which were non-freshmen in the 12th legislative periods, the data for the 11th legislative period was also acquired to measure committee experience. During the visit of the archive, these overview lists were obtained for all MPs for the 12th to 17th Bundestag (effective 16th of March 2013). For the remainder of the 17th legislative period, these were updated by hand by consulting the overview lists on the parliamentary website twice a month.

Obtaining similar data for the Tweede Kamer was not as straight-forward.¹¹⁶ Data on committee assignments were obtained through a content analysis of committee minutes which list the committee members at the time of the meeting.¹¹⁷ While not as precise on the day as for German MPs, the data set is the most complete listing of committee memberships hitherto. Altogether n = 1175 legislators have been assigned to at least one committee in the analysed

¹¹⁵ The 1992 election was characterised by a mid-term government change. After the election Fianna Fáil and Labour formed the government until 1994 when a coalition Fine Gael, the Labour Party and the Democratic Left took office.

¹¹⁶ The Central Archive of the Tweede Kamer does not document committee assignments; neither do the supporting secretaries of the individual committees (Dutch: *griffiers*) in the Tweede Kamer. Additional inquiries to external documentation center (*Parlementair Documentatie Centrum Universiteit Leiden; Centrum voor Parlementaire Geschiedenis Nijmegen*) were likewise unsuccessful.

¹¹⁷ These minutes are available on the official website of all government organisations of the Netherlands (Overheid.nl, n.d.) which pools the publications of different institutions (*het Staatsblad, de Staatscourant, het Tractatenblad* and the publications of the parliament). Using all minutes of general consultations (*verslag van algemeen overleg*) from 1st of January 1995 onwards the included lists of members were used to set up overviews per committee. Appendix 10 (p. 296) contains an example of such minutes for illustrative purposes. At the end of each legislative period the committee lists were arranged per date and based on these lists the final membership lists per legislative period and per committee were set up, indicating initial assignments and mid-term changes as well as (vice) chair. From the 1st of July 2012 onwards the published minutes did not contain the member lists any more due to a change in regulation. For the period after July 2012 the committee membership lists of the Tweede Kamer homepage was consulted twice per month to keep the list updated.

legislative periods.

Table 5.4: Overview analysed committee minutes per legislative period (Tweede Kamer)

Legislative period	'94-'98	'98-'02	'02-'03	'03-'06	'06-'10	'10-'12
Number of documents	1274	1809	245	1737	2110	974

Own calculation, documents obtained via www.officielebekendmakingen.nl.

In the Dáil, detailed lists (with transfers) are available online for the 30th Dáil as well as the 31st Dáil (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2011). Committee membership lists for the 26th to 29th legislative period were obtained from the Journals Office of the Oireachtas. This office is responsible for recording day to day events, minutes etc. within the legislature. The data set lists the membership of all directly elected TDs and leaves out government ministers who are ex officio members of the committees as well as Senators.

At the end of each legislative period, the information of committee membership was used to establish a complete 'committee life cycle' of each MP. The data were coded to reflect founding members (those who were assigned at the beginning of the legislative period) and transfers (those who became a member in the course of the legislative process). For the 18th legislative period of the Bundestag, the 31st Dáil and the 2012 Tweede Kamer, the first assignments at the beginning of the legislative period are included but not the transfers. In the rare occasion of a member being assigned, discharged and re-assigned to the same committee in the course of one legislative period, detailed information is given on the timing of the transfer. Contrary to the Dáil which does not distinguish between substitute members and full members, the Bundestag and Tweede Kamer formally assign legislators to committees as full members and as substitute members. The membership status to particular committees obtained this way represents the dependent variable of the analysis. This allows me to analyse initial assignments and transfers as well as full members and substitute members and to test several hypotheses. This offers the possibility for making interesting comparisons, i.e. whether the number of legislative periods in high importance committees is less restrictive with regard to substitute members than concerning full members or whether an external interest explains full membership but not substitute members.

Informational Rationale: Advantages in Knowledge Concerning a Committee's Subject Matter:

The informational theory highlights the capacity of committees to improve the efficiency of the chamber as a whole. The informational rationale predicts that

those members are assigned who can *specialise at low cost* in a given policy area. With regard to such advantages in knowledge, a legislators' prior education and occupation are valuable assets. Information on the educational and occupational background were obtained by coding legislators' biographies. The biographies of the Dutch MPs were obtained from the online biographic archive of the Parliamentary Documentation Center (2015) of Leiden University (*Parlementair Documentatie Centrum*) which contains biographies of over 5000 people who were active in Dutch politics since 1796. For Germany, information on the prior education and occupation of legislators was obtained from *Kürschner's Volkshandbuch Deutscher Bundestag* (Holzapfel, 1993, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2013) for the respective legislative periods. These reference works contain biographies of all MPs. The data were cross-checked with the information listed on the website of the Bundestag. For the Irish Dáil *Nealon's Guide* (Kennedy & Nealon, 2002; Collins & Nealon, 2007; Collins, 2011; Nealon, 1992, 1997) was the primary source for the biographies of TDs. Missing information was obtained by consulting parliamentary party group or personal homepages.

The job descriptions were first summarised in more than 50 general categories (lawyers, banking industry, civil servant, etc.). These were then assigned to each committee. This demanded a clear cut-off point on when a prior education and occupation allow a legislator to specialise 'at low cost'. The guiding principle was whether prior education in a study program or job training, respectively a certain occupation *would give a legislator a relative advantage compared to a legislator who did not have such a training*. To illustrate, a completed law degree was connected to committees dealing with legal affairs, a study program of medicine (similar to job training as e.g. nurse) to committees dealing with health issues, etc. Farmers are assumed to have relevant knowledge for committees dealing with agricultural issues (compared to a legislator who did not work in this profession at all), while teachers would be able to specialise more easily in committees dealing with education. Most connections are relatively specific and narrow, i.e. only correspond to single committees. Some study programs were connected to more than one committee.¹¹⁸ Several study programs, job trainings and occupations were not connected to any committee (e.g. philology, history, process technology). Several occupations (legal background, teachers, farmers) are overrepresented within legislatures. One might argue that not many legislators would qualify for 'minor' committees, e.g. those dealing with culture, tourism or sports. The amount of variation in occupational and educational background of MPs is remarkable and allowed for coding for every committee, even for such 'exotic' committees like those dealing with sports.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ A study programs in economics were, in the German case, connected to the committees dealing with finance, the budget, and the economy (three separate committees), a background in political science was connected to committees dealing with European Affairs, defence, and foreign affairs.

¹¹⁹ As an example, several former top athletes and sports officials are represented in legislatures. Some prominent examples are Erica Terpstra, an Olympic Silver medallist in swimming in 1964,

Informational Rationale: Committee Experience

Committee experience was measured by pooling the membership to committees from *one* immediate prior legislative period to the next legislative period. Aggregating committee memberships across more than one legislative period would mean an inflation of positive codes. In case several committees were merged legislators of both committees are treated as having committee experience for the new committee. When committees were split up, those legislators who served on this committee are coded to have committee experience for both of the new committees. The Irish case deserves particular attention in this regard. Merging and splitting as well as discontinuing and newly establishing committees is far more common in this case than in the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer. In the latter two cases, committee systems remained relatively stable across the analysed legislative terms. A special case was the 27th Dáil (1992 - 1997) as the committee system was completely reformed in 1995. In this case, the committee membership of both the 26th Dáil and the 27th Dáil (pre-1995) were used to determine committee experience in the post-1995 committee system. The analysis for the 27th Dáil is therefore split into the committee system before the changes and one after the changes.

Distributive Rationale: Constituency Demands

The assumption that committees serve external interests of legislators who cluster in certain committees is at the very core of the distributive theory. This leads to the creation of outlying committees by disproportionately assigning high-demanders to committees. Traditionally, the goal is to facilitate the re-election of legislators based on constituency characteristics and their demand. Support for the legislator's electoral need came from a study of House Appropriations Committee and indicated that committees cater towards a constituency demand (Adler, 2000; Adler & Lapinski, 1997). However, it was concluded that the concept of district demand is impossible to test in the statistical analysis. Scholars in the U.S. were able to define relatively clear district types and identify their highest electoral need. This proved to be highly difficult for legislatures outside of the U.S. For several committees good indicators for constituency demand were entirely absent. An obvious example is a committee which deals with European Affairs, but also committees which deal with issues concerning women and family are difficult to match to certain constituency characteristics without over-stretching the concept. Another difficulty with the application is the fact that electoral districts are not a statistical unit in Germany. In order to conduct the test, one would have to rely on higher level aggregated data and generalise over regions rather than districts.

Jim Glennon, a former Irish International rugby player, John O'Mahoney the manager of the Mayo Gaelic football team or Eberhard Gienger, former World Championship winner in gymnastics, Olympic bronze medallist and name giver for the 'Gienger Salto', which comprises a backward giant swing into a backward somersault with a half turn (Readhead, 2011).

This, however, is not what the constituency-demand approach argues and would, therefore, be an inappropriate test. Instead of testing this assumption in the statistical model the issue of constituency characteristics is therefore addressed in the interviews with MPs. In the statistical model, following earlier studies, an external interest is measured by connections to groups and organisations outside parliament. Strictly speaking, this reading of the prediction of the theory does not fulfil the re-election purpose. These groups are not involved in the candidate placement and election. However, the basic idea, whether membership to committees is driven by external interests, remains the same.

Distributive Rationale: ‘High-Demanders’ and Affiliations to Outside Groups

The statistical model tests this rationale via the presence of official functions in organisations and companies. All members of the Bundestag are obliged to indicate their responsibilities in enterprises and organisations (German: *veröffentlichungspflichtige Angaben*). The primary source were remunerated activities during the exercise of the mandate (German: *Entgeltliche Tätigkeiten neben dem Mandat*¹²⁰), functions in corporations (German: *Funktionen in Unternehmen*) or in statutory bodies (German: *Funktionen in Körperschaften und Anstalten des öffentlichen Rechts*), or clubs, organisations and foundations (German: *Funktionen in Vereinen, Verbänden und Stiftungen*). The data is available online from 2005 onwards in the web archive of the Bundestag which offers monthly snapshots of the legislators’ profile pages (Bundestag, 2015). For earlier legislative periods the respective print editions of the official registers (*Amtliches Handbuch Deutscher Bundestag*) were used (Bundestag, 1994, 1998, 2002). For the Netherlands, Dutch legislators are obliged to list side functions (Dutch: *nevenfuncties*) in each legislative period. The data is only available since 1997 when a change was made in the Standing Orders of the parliament which obliges MPs to disclose their paid and unpaid side functions.¹²¹ The lists of side functions since 1997 were obtained from the office of the clerks (Dutch: *Griffie*). All functions were coded (*voorzitter/lid raad van bestuur*; advisory council, etc.). In the Dáil, TDs are required to furnish a statement of their registrable interests to the Standards Commission each year.¹²² The annual reports were obtained from the website of the Oireachtas.

An external interest was only indicated when directorships and/or remunerated position were present. Simple membership of an organisation does not qualify as a sufficient external interest. Otherwise, a vast amount of legislators from Green parliamentary party groups would qualify for committees dealing with environmental issues due to frequent membership of

¹²⁰ If they did not qualify as occupations like in the case of lawyers, etc.

¹²¹ This was later extended to also include all their travels (Tweede Kamer 2002-2003).

¹²² This is regulated in the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995 and the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001 and covers company directorships and shareholdings, travel benefits, gifts, and property holdings over a certain value.

NGOs and foundations dealing with these issues. This also applies for social-democratic parliamentary party groups and labour unions. Including them would mean an inflation of coding and would bias the results. An affiliation was indicated when a connection to an organisation specializing in the field of a committee was present on the profile of the MP. Examples of interest group connections are board chairmanships of unions (committees dealing with labour issues), farmers' associations (agricultural committees) or special interest group of the arms industry (defence, also foreign affairs). External interests were also counted as being present if a legislator was a member of an advisory board or administrative board of an organisation which has a stake in the policy area of the committee, i.e. memberships to executive boards of companies with a clear connection to the area of a committee (e.g. energy suppliers to committees dealing with energy policy or airlines to committees dealing with transport policy). This strategy offers sufficient guidance for the coding in order to meaningfully test whether these outside connections 'drive' the assignment process. As has been argued above, it is the combination of external interests that is important (Yordanova, 2009). Parliamentary party groups might assign legislators with external interests but then match those members with legislators with interests biased in the opposite direction (making them in fact not 'outlying'). These considerations are addressed in the interviews.

Partisan Rationale: Parliamentary Seniority

A central theme of the partisan theory views committees as part of the reward system of the leadership and used for partisan 'stacking', i.e. that the parliamentary party groups actively influence the membership of the committee system to reflect the preferences of the leadership. Two possible strategies are seen as most likely. The first strategy is to wield influence concerning the equal chances of legislators to be assigned to a committee and 'reserve' more important committees for more experienced legislators. By including it the analysis tests whether incumbents are disproportionately assigned to important committees and whether there is a 'greasy pole' which freshmen have to climb first in order to be eligible for those committees. To measure parliamentary seniority the number of legislative periods was counted. For Germany the data were obtained from *Kürschner's Volkshandbuch*, for the Dáil via *Nealon's Guide* and the homepage of the Dáil. The number of legislative periods of Dutch legislators is based on the information in the biographic archive of the *Dutch Parliamentary Documentation Center* (Parliamentary Documentation Center, 2015).

Partisan Rationale: Legislators' Ideological Distance to the Parliamentary Party Group Mean:

Another hypothesis to test the partisan theory is related to the strategy that the parliamentary party group leadership disproportionately allocates legislators who display a *firm adherence to the party (and the parliamentary party group) and its goals* to high-ranking committees. It is hypothesised that legislators who display a firm adherence by *being ideologically closer to the parliamentary party group mean* are disproportionately assigned to more important committees. Parliamentary party groups have long been treated as unitary actors (mostly for analytical purposes), meaning that all members of a party (or a parliamentary party group) are assumed to share the same preferences. However, this claim has become disputed. Although parliamentary party groups generally pool legislators with similar ideological views they are still relatively heterogeneous organisations. Instead of being monolithic structures, parliamentary party groups are composed of individual legislators who may have *similar but non-identical preferences* (Ceron, 2015). This variation needs to be uncovered by measuring policy preferences of legislators' preferences. A test of this rationale demands more fine-grained data on individual legislators'. Ideally, data would be obtained which would situate each legislator ideologically in relative distance to their colleagues of the same parliamentary party group. Obtaining such data is a central problem of legislative research (Loewenberg, 2008, p. 488). In the empirical analysis of legislatures spatial models of legislative choice are probably the best-known application (Krehbiel, 1988). These models represent policies, parliamentary party groups or legislators as points in a low-dimensional Euclidean space. Political science has developed various methods for estimating such programmatic positions of political actors and distinguishes three broad approaches (Debus, 2009).

The first applications of spatial models are based on the voting behaviour of politicians (by analysing roll-call votes) to locate legislators on one or more policy dimensions. A second option relies on conducting surveys, either via external experts or legislators, and infer an actor's ideological position based on survey responses. Third, the ideological position of relevant actors can be identified via hand-coded or automatic content analysis of relevant documents. Several problems prevent the analysis of roll-call votes and survey data. These mostly relate to the fact that there is hardly any variation in the data when using roll-call votes (due to high levels of parliamentary party group unity in voting) and missing data when using surveys (due to low response rates and the need to maintain all legislators in the analysis). Appendix 11 contains a more extensive discussion of each method and why it was not feasible to rely on those. Given these issues with roll call analyses and surveys for discovering intra-parliamentary party group ideological heterogeneity, this study relies on the *content analysis of parliamentary speeches and questions of MPs* to uncover

underlying ideological distances using automatic content analysis.¹²³ The basic idea is that a legislator's ideological position can be inferred from the words he or she uses in their speeches and that legislators who are closer ideologically use similar word patterns in their contributions (speeches and questions).

Several automatic, computer-assisted content analysis methods¹²⁴ exist. Significant advancements in recent years have produced reliable and valid estimation procedures (for a comparison to other party position estimates see Proksch & Slapin, 2009; Slapin & Proksch, 2008). Computer-assisted approaches to content analysis have been applied across a diverse set of tasks (see for a more extensive overview of methods Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). The two main alternatives are the *Wordscores* approach (Laver et al., 2003) and *Wordfish* (Slapin & Proksch, 2008). Both techniques are categorised as supervised text classification which “makes no assumptions about syntax but treats any text as a simple bag of words” (Scharrow, 2011, p. 5). *Wordscores*, as a pioneering method, was revolutionary as it presented the “first probabilistic technique for coding political text using neither predefined coding dictionaries nor subjective judgement calls by human coders” (Klemmensen et al., 2007, p. 748). *Wordfish* uses unique words as the unit of analysis and compares political texts (e.g. manifestos, speeches, etc.) on the basis of relative word usage in each. It uses an explicit parametric model of word counts and simply scales the word counts to reduce the data to a single dimension generated by a Poisson distribution. The main difference between these two approaches is that *Wordfish* does *not require an a priori definition* of the dimension being estimated. *Wordscores*, on the

¹²³ In the broadest sense content analysis is a research technique for making reliable and valid inferences from data to the context of the data (Krippendorff, 2012). It is applied across all areas of social research to measure “values, sentiments, intentions or ideologies of the sources or authors of the communications” (Williamson et al., 1977, p. 291). In the field of comparative legislative research content analysis of political texts has been used to infer policy positions. The focus on texts as a source is straightforward. Political texts present “a direct by-product of political activity by the political actors whose positions we wish to estimate” (Lowe et al., 2011, p. 124). Once archived, text does not change and can be analysed retrospectively. This has great advantages for the estimation of legislators’ positions in prior legislative periods (it would be very difficult to ‘backtrack’ legislators who discontinued their career via surveys, for example).

¹²⁴ Automatic refers to the fact that the coding is done via language processing software which classifies, organizes, clusters and scales text using specified criteria. An alternative, and arguably the more common procedure to convert text into data is manual content analysis which requires human coders to apply a coding scheme to a text. The debate between machine versus human coded content analysis largely revolved around the trade-off between reliability and validity (Mikhaylov et al., 2012). Hand coded content analysis is still seen as superior when it comes to validity (i.e. how well the coding captures the meaning of a concept). However, whenever the coding is dependent on human decisions reliability may decrease because different human readers are likely to attach a different meaning to the same text (Mikhaylov et al., 2012). Human decision-making is a central feature in the manual coding process. Apart from these methodological issues the biggest advantage of automatic content analysis is a reduction in the costs and the possibility to analyse large collections of text. Manually reading all required documents is very time-consuming. Automated content analysis allows for a systematic analysis of large-scale text collections but massively reducing time and money investments. Given the scope of the study and the large amount of text that needs to be processed manual content analysis is not a feasible alternative.

other hand, is based on a comparison of text pattern in two sets of texts (called 'reference' and 'virgin' texts). The score (including confidence intervals) of the virgin texts are calculated based on scores attached *a priori* to the reference texts. In other words, the researcher has to indicate an 'anchor point' against which all other texts are scored against. The reference scores need to be assigned by the researcher and can originate from several sources like expert surveys, but also context-specific knowledge.

Automatic content analysis has successfully been applied to a number of issues, primarily manifesto research (Laver et al., 2003; Slapin & Proksch, 2008; Hug & Schulz, 2007), but also government statements (Klemmensen et al., 2007). More importantly for the study at hand, however, is the fact that they have also been applied to estimate the ideological positions of legislators through parliamentary speeches.¹²⁵

In this study, the ideological positions of legislators are estimated using the Wordscores approach of all speeches and questions that legislators gave during the legislative period. Not only has Wordscores successfully been applied to speeches in the Bundestag in an earlier study for estimating policy positions of legislators but it also suits the research goal conceptually. The aim is to score individual legislators *with regard to their proximity relative to their parliamentary party group*. Wordscores allows the assignment of scores to 'reference' documents which, in this study, indicate the 'ideal score' of the parliamentary party group.¹²⁶ Subsequently, all legislators are estimated against these reference files. The minutes, as well as the questions for all plenary sessions in the period of investigation, were obtained from the website of the legislatures. Rather than relying on a sample of speeches and run the risk of a biased estimate, all speeches and questions given during the legislative period were used for the analysis. This all-encompassing approach, despite being relatively demanding in terms of computing time, gives a more precise estimation of each individual legislator relative to other members of the same parliamentary party group.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ As the first application, Laver and Benoit (2002) analyse speeches by Irish TDs during a debate of confidence in October 1991. Bernauer and Bräuninger (2009) applied Wordscores to speeches in the 15th German Bundestag and estimate policy positions of legislators. Bäck et al. (2011) use Wordscores to determine whether the distance of an MP to different principals has an effect on being appointed to a ministerial position. Wordfish has been applied by Proksch and Slapin (2009) on the positioning of national parties and their members in European Parliament debates.

¹²⁶ Wordfish infers and calculates the scores based on the data.

¹²⁷ The minutes were prepared for the analysis by first identifying the begin and end point of every speech and matching it to its speaker. Second, all interjections and demonstrations of approval or discontent which are listed in the minutes were taken out. In a third step, only those speeches were kept which retained information about the speaker. Speeches by external speakers and incidental remarks made by the President or his or her deputy were excluded. The content of their speeches is irrelevant for the estimation process of individual MPs. Government ministers were included as they are important for the estimation of the parliamentary party group mean for government parliamentary party groups. As a final step, every speech given by the same MP was merged into a single file containing only his or her speeches. This was done by structuring the minutes in such a way that every line represents one speech. The text file was then cut in $n = \text{'number of row'}$ -files which only contain one speech using a Visual Basic Script. The VBS-

Wordscores requires that the reference files get a score which serves as an anchor point in the estimation of the other ‘unknown’ documents. The reference texts are essential for the application of the method and the estimation of individual scores. The reference texts are built by merging all speeches of all legislators of one parliamentary party group into a single file. For government parliamentary party groups, this also includes ministers. It is important to include the content of their speeches as well as they represent the line of the party in government. The parliamentary party group files (i.e. the reference texts) were scored using the party position scores of the Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project (MRG/CMP) (Volkens et al., 2014) for each election. They served as ‘anchor points’ to which each legislator was compared to. Conceptually, this makes sense as the aim of the estimation was to find the relative distance of each individual legislator to his or her parliamentary party group colleagues. The final score for each legislator was calculated as the absolute value of the difference of each legislator’s score to his or her parliamentary party group’s mean. A higher value thus implicates a legislator who is further away from his or her parliamentary party group mean and is expected to be less likely to be allocated to a more important committee.¹²⁸ This approach made a calculation possible for almost all legislators.¹²⁹ Figure 5.2 on p. 124 depicts the process schematically for five speakers (4 legislators and one minister) from two parties for illustrative purposes. The actual process is much more complex (see the number of analysed speeches in Appendix 12).

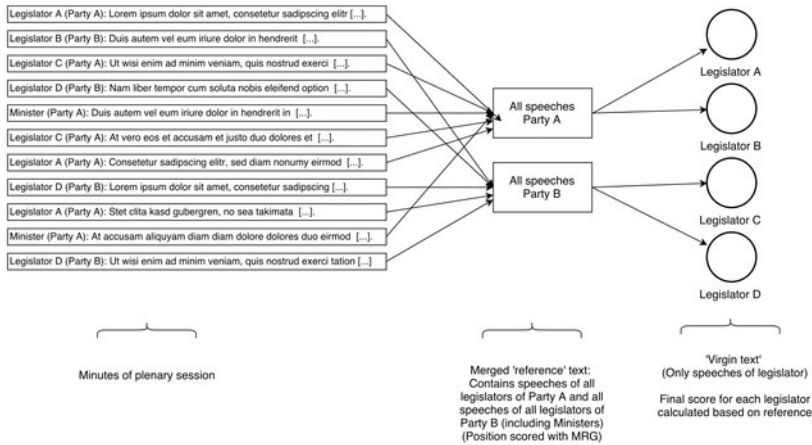
Before the analysis was conducted a validity test was carried out. It would be possible that the calculated scores of legislators who are in the same committee are more similar compared to legislators of one parliamentary party group. Such a situation might occur if, due to being active in the same policy area, the speeches of all legislators in a committee revolve around the topics covered in this committee and they subsequently have similar word frequencies. In this case, parliamentary party group membership is trumped by committee

file can be obtained from the author. These files were then renamed according to the speakers’ names (and a unique line identifier). By merging each file with the same name (excluding the line identifier) all speeches of one MP were again clustered in one file.

¹²⁸ The word frequency matrix needed for the analysis was set up using the ‘`tm text mining package`’ in R (Feinerer & Hornik, 2015). The computation of scores was done using the `austin package` (Lowe, 2015).

¹²⁹ In Germany scores were calculated for 98 per cent of the legislators (missing values for n=91 legislators). Similarly, the Netherlands only 40 legislators out of 1175 individual legislators who were assigned to a committee in the Tweede Kamer between 1994 and 2015 did not give a speech. There are multiple reasons for why a legislator might not have been given a speech, most likely reasons are a change to an executive office or dropping out of parliament. Legislators who could not be scored received the average of the parliamentary party group for the analysis. A separate analysis was run with a recoded variable which assigned those legislators an extreme ‘outlier’-value of 99 (as one could assume that those may rather be outlying members, which may be also the reason why they did not give speeches). This did not change the results (see p. 158). There were no missing values for legislators in the Dáil. This is a very high value and would not be able to be reached via surveys.

Figure 5.2: Depiction reference texts and virgin texts



Source: Own depiction.

membership. For the interpretation of scores, this would be highly problematic. However, this is not the case. Across all legislatures and all parliamentary party groups, legislators from one parliamentary party group are more closely associated with each other than the specialists in each policy area.¹³⁰ Plots of the distribution of scores for parliamentary party groups and committees are shown in Appendices 13 to 15 (p. 304 - 306). All indicate that the scores of legislators from one parliamentary party group are much more closely associated with each other than those of the same committee.

Measuring the Relative Importance of Committees

Several hypotheses relate an effect of factors to the importance of committees. This is of particular importance in order to check for partisan influences in the assignment process and whether committees are indeed 'under the thumb' of leaders. If important committees are disproportionately composed of more

¹³⁰ This was tested by comparing the standard deviation of the rescaled Wordscores scores of members of one parliamentary party group to that of all members of a particular committee. In the Bundestag, the mean standard deviation across all parliamentary party groups is 3.47 and much smaller than the mean standard deviation across all committees (13.31). A similar picture is encountered in the Dáil and the Tweede Kamer. Here, only the larger parliamentary party groups (PvdA, VVD, SP, D66, ChristenUnie, GroenLinks, PVV and CDA; Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour) were included. The mean standard deviation of scores across all parliamentary party groups is 2.81. Across committees, it is 11.33. In the Dáil the scores of TDs from a parliamentary party group are more scattered, which is probably due to the high number of questions which raise constituency-specific issues. Nevertheless, the standard deviations of legislators from one parliamentary party group are still lower than legislators from one committee (parliamentary party group: 3.40; Committees 4.26).

experienced legislators or legislators who are closer to the ideological mean of the parliamentary party group, then this indicates that committees are part of the reward system of the parliamentary party group leadership. Only a central parliamentary party group authority is able to 'reserve' committee seats and disproportionately fill committees with members to such an extent beyond other factors. The relative importance of a committee in this study refers to the importance for a parliamentary party group in terms of *issue saliency*.¹³¹ The reason to focus on this is because the variable tests a rationale deduced from the partisan theory of legislative organisation in which the re-election goal is of central importance.

To construct a meaningful ranking, data are needed on *all* issues that committees deal with. The saliency of some issues (economy, European integration) is covered in e.g. the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker, de Vries, et al., 2015).¹³² but there is, to my best knowledge, no existing database which measures all possible issues including 'minor' issues such as art, sports, and tourism per party. Confronted with the same issue, Hansen (2010) measures the importance or desirability of committees based on a ranking of ministerial portfolios by Druckman and Warwick (2005)¹³³ It is assumed that all parliamentary party groups share "the same rank of committees. Across time the same assumption is also made" (Hansen, 2010, p. 388). Although this approach is used due to data limitations, the assumption is not entirely convincing. It is more reasonable to assume that parliamentary party groups value portfolios differently (see for a discussion Hansen, 2010, p. 388). Social Democratic parties are assumed to put more emphasis on issues concerning social affairs than liberal parties, Green parties are assumed to value environmental issues higher than Christian-Democratic parties etc. The varying importance was also underlined by the interviews in Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland. Legislators from Labor and the SPD referred to the committee for social affairs as a highly important committee while members of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen highlighted the importance of committees which deal with consumer protection and environmental issues. Parliamentary party group-specific rankings are a more realistic representation of reality and are therefore also used in this study.

In an earlier study (Mickler, 2013) a parliamentary party group-specific

¹³¹ The importance could refer to several possible interpretations. Committees could also be ranked in terms of relevance for individual legislators or in terms of parliamentary prestige. Prestige and issue saliency are not necessarily the same thing. As an example, in the Bundestag, the Foreign Affairs Committees is arguably a highly prestigious committee. One legislator mentioned that it is internally referred to as "patent shoe" committee (German: *Lackschuhausschuss*) due to its high density of former ministers and long-standing members. However, Foreign Affairs is not central for most parliamentary party groups in terms of issue saliency, as domestic politics and internal affairs play a higher role for parties in elections. Although the question whether more prestigious committees attract a particular type of legislators is interesting, the application of issue saliency is more straightforward to incorporate into the analysis given the theoretical framework.

¹³² See also Müller (2000); Laver and Shepsle (1996).

¹³³ See also Druckman and Roberts (2008).

alternative to ministerial portfolios was based on the number of motions (German: *Anträge*) and legislative proposals (German: *Gesetzesvorschläge*) that each parliamentary party group initiated in recent legislative periods (12th through 16th) related to a specific committee. It was assumed that the more documents a parliamentary party group has initiated, the more important this issue and, consequently, the committee is. In this approach, all possible committees were initially ranked based on their relative importance. This, however, is an unnecessary complication. It is clear that some committees are more important than others. Yet there is little added value to account for small differences between committees and rank order *all* committees.¹³⁴ It is necessary to understand which committees are of central importance compared to others. Following this, committees were categorised into either high importance or low importance committees. This approach is a more appropriate reflection of reality. This was also confirmed during the interviews. Legislators found it difficult to order all committees into a sensible ranking. Rather they referred to several high importance committees as a group.

The number of important committees cannot be too small, but can equally not be too large. When almost every committee is considered important it is impossible to allow for some meaningful interpretation of the result. In general, not more than one-third of the committees were considered important to give some flexibility to the analysis. The ranking is based on the interviews in the three legislatures which usually listed these committees as important. Most are shared across all parties, but slight differences occur with regard to highly salient issues. In the Dáil and the Bundestag, the committees dealing with the budget (*Haushaltsausschuss*, *Public Accounts Committee*) were unequivocally listed among the most important committees. Contrary to the Budget committees in the other parliaments, the equivalent in the Tweede Kamer (*Rijksuitgaven*) was never mentioned in the interviews as being particularly important. Committees dealing with financial issues and the economy are, across all parties very salient and are thus ranked as those of high importance. Appendices 16 - 18 (pp. 307 - 309) list overviews with committees ranked as important for every legislature and every parliamentary party group.

‘Keeping Tabs’: The Amount of Watchdog Chairs

Hypothesis 16 relates to the number of watchdog committee (vice) chairs. The test for this theory is, therefore, different from the others which have relatively clear predictions for the committee members instead of the committee chairs. The data set built for the study at hand provides an opportunity to test the extent of watchdog chairs in the three legislatures. Next to founding members and transfers it also contains information on the (vice) chair. In order to test the hypotheses, the extent of correspondence of party affiliation between watchdog

¹³⁴ Assuming there are 20 committees, whether committee X ranked as the 15th most important committee is slightly more important than the 16th is redundant information.

(vice) chairs and ministers from the coalition partner is listed. This was done for every cabinet. What determines the durability of a cabinet, i.e. the beginning and the end of it is subject to different conceptions (see for an overview Lijphart, 1984). In this book, the definition of Lijphart (1984) is used. A new cabinet is installed when either of these conditions is satisfied: a) The composition of parties composing or supporting¹³⁵ the cabinet changes, b) the coalitional status of the cabinet changes, c) the prime minister changes, or d) an intervening parliamentary election takes place.

Information on the list of German ministers and their party affiliation was obtained from the overview in Feldkamp (2010). The list of Irish ministers was obtained from the information provided on the website of the Department of the Taoiseach (1997), as well as Took and Donnelly (2002, 2007) for earlier legislative periods. The corresponding lists used for the comparison for the Netherlands were collected from the website of the Parliamentary Documentation Center (Parlement & Politiek, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012).

¹³⁵ These are parties with no actual representation in the cabinet, but which support its survival in office.

Table 5.5: Overview of operationalisation of variables per hypothesis

Variable/Hypothesis	Theoretical origin	Measured via	Source
Dependent variable	/	Membership and specialised committees	Bundestag: Parliamentary archive Berlin and content analysis DÉ: Journals Office of the Oireachtas and content analysis committee minutes Tweede Kamer: Content analysis of committee minutes
H1-0: members' electoral connection	Distributive	Interviews	BT: Field work in January 2015 DÉ: Field work in December 2014 TK: Field work in February - April 2014
H1-1: members' external interests	Distributive	Registered positions in interest groups	BT: Bundestag (1994, 1998, 2002, 2015) DÉ: Website of the Oireachtas TK: Office of the clerks (<i>Griffie</i>)
H1-2: advantages in policy-related knowledge	Informational	Educational background and occupational biographies	BT: Holzapfel (1993, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2013) DÉ: Kennedy and Nealon (2002); Collins and Nealon (2007); Collins (2011); Nealon (1992, 1997) TK: Parliamentary Documentation Center (2015)
H1-3: committee experience	Informational	Committee membership from <i>one</i> immediate prior legislative period	BT: Database on committee membership, see 'dependent variable' DÉ: Database on committee membership, see 'dependent variable' TK: Database on committee membership, see 'dependent variable'
H1-4: Seniority and important issues	Partisan	Number of legislative periods	BT: Holzapfel (1993, 1995, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2012, 2013) DÉ: Kennedy and Nealon (2002); Collins and Nealon (2007); Collins (2011); Nealon (1992, 1997) TK: Parliamentary Documentation Center (2015)
H1-5: Ideological distance and important issues	Partisan	Speeches and questions using Wordscores	BT: Minutes on website Bundestag DÉ: Minutes on website Dáil TK: www.oifcialabekendmakingen.nl
H1-6: Watchdogcommittee (vice) chairs	Keeping tabs	Correspondence watchdog chairs and ministers	BT: Database on committee membership, see 'dependent variable', list of ministers via <i>feldkamp</i> (2010) DÉ: Database on committee membership, see 'dependent variable', list of ministers; Department of the Taoiseach (1997); Took and Donnelly (2002, 2007) TK: Database on committee membership, see 'dependent variable', list of ministers; Parlement & Politiek (1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012)

Source: Own depiction. BT = Bundestag, TK = Tweede Kamer, DÉ = Dáil Éireann

Table 5.6: Overview data set variables per country and legislative period (n.a. = not available)

Legislative period	Prior education	Prior occupation	Committee experience	External interest	Election result	Ideological distance	Nr. party list	Nr. legislative periods	Priority Scores (DW)	Priority Scores (party)
Netherlands 1994	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands 1998	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands 2002	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands 2003	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands 2006	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands 2010	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands 2012	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ireland 1992	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓
Ireland 1997	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓
Ireland 2002	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓
Ireland 2007	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓
Ireland 2011	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	n.a.	✓	✓	✓
Germany 1994	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany 1998	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany 2002	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany 2005	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany 2009	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany 2013	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Own depiction. n.a. = not applicable in this legislative period or parliament.

Analysis and Results Committee Assignment: Who Gets What and Why?

The multiple membership multilevel models were estimated in R using the `lme4` package (Bates et al., 2015b, 2015a).¹³⁶ The information with regard to transfers and founding members (those assigned at the beginning of the legislative period) included in the data set offers the possibility to run several models¹³⁷ and compare the effect of the variables on multiple assignment patterns. The main analysis tests the effect on the *membership of committees (including transfers during the legislative period)*.¹³⁸ All variables are included which are deemed important by the congressional theories.¹³⁹ Descriptive statistics are shown in Appendices 19 - 21 (p. 310 - 315). For each legislative period two models were estimated: one *without* committee experience (in tables referred to as Model 1) and one *including* committee experience (in tables referred to as Model 2)¹⁴⁰. A separate estimation allows for a clearer analysis of the more 'personal' characteristics of legislators, like their prior education and occupation. Two group effects are fitted by including varying intercepts for committees and individual MPs. The Tweede Kamer and the Dáil frequently have small parliamentary party groups ('small' here refers to parliamentary party groups with a number of legislators that is smaller than the number of specialised committees - the size of German parliamentary party

¹³⁶ In order to fit the model the data were arranged in a person-choice data matrix with n = number of legislators \times number of committees. The model includes two random intercepts (individuals and committees) to account for this data structure and the fact that individuals and committees are in the data set multiple times.

¹³⁷ Only full members (including transfers) versus full members excluding transfers (i.e. only founding members) versus only substitute members (including transfers), substitute members excluding transfers (i.e. only founding members) versus full members *and* substitute members (including transfers) versus full members *and* substitute members excluding transfers (i.e. only founding members).

¹³⁸ Because the analysis includes multiple legislative periods per country the number of models is already extensive if only considering *one* of the dependent variables ($n = 20$; 6 legislative periods analysed in the Dáil (legislative period starting in 1992 split into two analyses), 7 in Bundestag, 7 in the Tweede Kamer. The restriction was done to avoid producing an overflow on tables.

¹³⁹ Committee experience, prior occupation, prior education and external interests (all corresponding to each committee, 0 = not present, 1 = present) and two cross-level interactions between a legislator's loyalty (measured as the distance to the parliamentary party group mean) and the number of legislative periods with committee importance per parliamentary party group (0 = low priority, 1 = high priority). The main effects are not further discussed but need to be included in the model as it may otherwise lead to inferential errors. For a more detailed discussion on the consequences of omitting a constitutive term, see (Brambor et al., 2005). The models of Ireland were for testing purposes also estimated using the Druckman and Warwick (2005) scores. In no instance this changed the significance levels of the model.

¹⁴⁰ The committee membership variables in the models analysing full members measures only full membership to a committee in the prior legislative period. For substitute members the variable indicates membership as a full member *and* as substitute member. The test with regard to full members is therefore an even stronger test of committee membership as it only includes those legislators who have been on the committee as full members.

groups in all legislative periods under investigation always exceed the number of committees.¹⁴¹ In order to account for a possible bias because of such small parliamentary party groups a separate model was estimated including only large parliamentary party groups. It is expected that the effect is stronger when only larger parliamentary party groups are included. Small parliamentary party groups do not have similar possibilities to choose among their legislators but have to 'work with' what they have. For each hypothesis the result from the statistical analysis is first presented, followed by statements from the interviews with legislators.¹⁴² The results are discussed in the following section. The detailed output is presented at the end of the chapter (see Table 5.7 for the page numbers of the tables containing the model summaries).

Table 5.7: Overview of placement of model summaries

Legislature	Full members (incl. transfers)	Substitute members (incl. transfers)	Additional model (only large PPGs)
Bundestag	Table 5.13 (p. 177)	Table 5.14 (p. 178)	No small PPGs
Dáil Éireann	Table 5.12 (p. 176)	No substitute members	Table 5.17 (p. 181)
Tweede Kamer	Table 5.15 (p. 179)	Table 5.16 (p. 180)	Table 5.18 (p. 182)

Interpreting the Models: What Explains Assignments to Committees in the Dáil, the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer?

Based on the model summaries of the multiple-membership multilevel models the strongest effect across all countries refers to committee experience (hypothesis 13). The coefficients relating to this variable are significant for all legislative periods. There is compelling evidence for a pattern that legislators who have been on a committee in the prior legislative period are likely to continue on the same committee. Existing committee experience is by far the best predictor for committee membership.¹⁴³ The only case in which the variable does not pass the $p = 0.001$ significance level is the 27th Dáil after the

¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, as a further robustness check additional models were run for the German Bundestag only including the largest two parliamentary party groups of SPD and CDU/CSU. The model summaries (for both full members including transfers and deputy members including transfers presented very similar results to the model summaries including all parliamentary party groups. The output can be obtained from the author upon request.

¹⁴² I would like to thank Michael Meffert and Zoltan Fazekas for their help with the analysis and interpretation of the models. All errors are the sole responsibility of the author.

¹⁴³ How well the variable predicts the assignment to committees can also be underlined by comparing model 1 and model 2 of every legislative period in terms of predictive power. When comparing two or more models smaller values of the Akaike Infinity Criterion (AIC) indicate a better fit. As visible in the output there is a drop in the AIC in all models including committee experience compared to the ones excluding it.

reform of the committee system. Looking at the list of analysed committees (Appendix 8) a range of new committees were established after the reform. This offered legislators more possibilities and is most likely the reason why many discontinued their membership. The frequent re-assignment of legislators to the same committees supports the argument that legislators “cultivate expertise in a distinct policy field, and spend their time managing legislation and conducting oversight in that field” (Davidson & Oleszek, 1996, p. 135). However, as was argued above, it can not yet be argued that the continuation of membership is due to an informational logic.

In order to give an estimate on how much it actually ‘matters’ in terms of an increasing likelihood to be assigned to a committee, the interpretation of the regression coefficients is not very straightforward. To present the results in a more ‘intuitive’ way predicted probabilities were calculated.¹⁴⁴ The discussion is limited to calculations for the last ‘complete’ legislative period before I conducted my fieldwork (Germany: 17th Bundestag 2009-2013; Netherlands: 2010-2012; Ireland: 30th Dáil 2007-2011 before mid-term changes) to give an impression of the magnitude of the effect.¹⁴⁵ The predicted probability of being assigned to a committee with present committee experience as *full member* in the Bundestag is 65 per cent. This is a very high value given the complexity of the assignment process and the fact that around one third to one fourth of legislators in each legislative period were freshmen.¹⁴⁶ With regard to substitute members the value is reduced to 27.5 per cent in the Bundestag. This is still high even though it is a less strict test. As indicated above the variable in the multiple membership multilevel model (MMMLM) analysing substitute members measures committee membership either as full member or as substitute member in the prior legislative period. In the 30th Dáil the predicted probability of being assigned a committee in case a TD has been on the same (or similar in case of a merger, respective split) committee is 21.5 per cent. In the Tweede Kamer, the predicted probability is 48.1 per cent in the legislative period of 2010-2012 for full members who have been *full* members in the prior legislative period. The value is reduced to 7.9 for substitute members which is a quite strong drop. This finding indicates that both German and Dutch legislators have a higher likelihood to stay on a committee once they are a full member but more changes occur with regard to substitute memberships, especially in the Tweede Kamer. The reason for the apparently higher discontinuity rate of Dutch MPs is discussed further below.

The interviews in the three countries also underline this pattern of continuation of committee memberships (and portfolios in the Tweede Kamer) across legislative periods found in the statistical models. Based on the interviews, the strongest adherence to this informal rule is found in the Bundestag. In this legislature, legislators frequently argued that the adherence to the committee experience principle is a very strict rule. It is difficult to push

¹⁴⁴ This was done using the `Zelig` package in R (Imai et al., 2008, 2009).

¹⁴⁵ All predicted probabilities for all other legislative periods can be obtained from the author.

¹⁴⁶ 216 out of 631 after the 2013 general election, 148 out of 612 in 2005, 181 out of 601 in 2002. Numbers obtained from *Kürschners Volkshandbuch*.

someone out of a committee who has served on it and would like to continue (e.g. Interview Bundestag, 150929B; 152901D; 150130B; 150129F; 150119A). However, this is always under the assumption that this legislator did a good job to the general satisfaction of the parliamentary party group and the parliamentary party group leadership (Interview Bundestag, 150119A). If this is the case then legislators had a “first option to buy (German: Vorkaufsrecht)” (Interview Bundestag, 150112A). This evidence ties in nicely with the high predicted probability of being assigned to the same committee from the statistical analysis.

Comparable responses were also obtained from legislators in the Tweede Kamer (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423A and 150520D) and the Dáil (e.g. Interview Dáil, 141203D ; 141202A; 141209C). A legislator in the Dáil argued that if someone has served on the committee and would want to stay on the same committee then “efforts would be made to facilitate that” (Interview Dáil, 141202D). Interviewed legislators highlighted that this is not a fixed rule (which it also is not in Germany but appears to weigh relatively heavy). In the Tweede Kamer and the Dáil, legislators argued that there is a re-evaluation period after each election in which changes are possible. An interviewed Irish legislator highlighted that if a new legislator “would have a compelling case, then he or she would also be listened to” (Interview Dáil, 141202D). The main reason to be able to stay on a committee depends on whether somebody did a ‘good’ job. If this was the case then it is possible to continue. A Dutch legislator argued:

“There is a new situation [after an election]. But you see a continuation for those who worked on a portfolio for some time if it is their first choice. Unless that person has not done it well. Then it is time to change” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150430A; also 150423A and 150520D)

This contradicts the prediction of the distributive theory, as the parliamentary party group reserves the right to prevent a legislators from joining a committee in certain circumstances. The adherence to a pattern of continuation of membership certainly makes sense. Re-assigning legislators to committees most likely contributes to the continuity of the committee’s work schedule and makes the work for the legislator easier. This is also beneficial to the parliamentary party group. The very specific and technical content of the policy making process takes time to get used to. Frequently being ‘forced’ to read into the content of an unfamiliar topic certainly has downsides. During the interviews, legislators were asked about the time they needed to get acquainted with the nuts and bolts of a topic. Responses varied between estimates of about one year (Interview Bundestag, 150126A; Interview Tweede Kamer, 150429A) and two years (Interview Bundestag, 150112A; 150130A), with a minimum of half a year to be “able to speak up and say something meaningful” (Interview Bundestag, 150114H). Others even mentioned that the first legislative period in a new subject area is needed as a whole (Interview Bundestag, 150113A;

Interview Tweede Kamer, 150422E). Such estimates should be interpreted with caution. Topics are very diverse and legislators differ in their style of approaching a topic. Some prefer to read about a topic first, while others have a more 'hands-on' mentality. In any case, it takes time to get acquainted with a new topic.

In the Bundestag, another important factor which would be negatively affected by frequent changes is the personal staff of the legislator. Contrary to the Tweede Kamer, in which the staff responsible for policy-related questions (Dutch: *beleidsmedewerkers*) are employed at the level of the parliamentary party group, they are personal employees of the legislator.¹⁴⁷ In many cases they were chosen because of the specialisation of a legislator (Interview Bundestag, 150114A; 150119A; 150114E; 150114I) and were often referred to as being of great importance.

"I inherited my personal assistant from my predecessor. He is an absolute expert. You are really stranded without personal assistant [...]. Only with them you can accomplish good things" (Interview Bundestag, 150115B)

Only very few legislators saw negative consequences of sticking to a topic for too long. One legislator noted that after a while it is good to change in order to prevent "wearing out and mental fatigue. At a certain moment, you loose the impartiality and that means that after elections it is a good moment to switch and do something else." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150416B). One legislator gave another interesting assessment on why a legislator might want to switch.

"There is also the other strategy which is to switch into as many different committees as possible in order to be fit for every purpose, so to speak. [...] And you can understand this because this is the group from which ministers and state secretaries are recruited" (Interview Bundestag, 150513B).

Reasons to deviate from this continuation and seek change vary. Several interviewed legislators indicated that according to their feeling they had achieved most things that were on the agenda and there was "not much exciting left" (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150429A, also 150423B; Interview Dáil, 151202A). The re-orientation sometimes also had personal reasons:

"In the second legislative period there were internal, personal problems in the work group [group of legislators of one parliamentary party group in a committee]. I cannot say it differently. And this was the reason for me to switch. There were very many internal quarrels, to put it straight. Sharp conflicts, and then I said I do not want to deal with that any more." (Interview Bundestag, 150202A)

¹⁴⁷ parliamentary party groups also have staff at the parliamentary party group level (German: *Fraktionsreferenten*).

In many instances, a change in portfolios (within a committee) or committees was induced because an opportunity arose to be assigned to a position that was seen as ‘a step upwards’ (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423B) or because the spot preferred earlier became available. These situations occur mostly after other legislators dropped out of parliament or joined the cabinet. In such instances, having done a good job in the earlier function was mentioned as being noticed by the parliamentary party group leadership and as a reason to be considered for a new task (Interview Bundestag, 150119A). In some cases, the parliamentary party group leadership would steer this process and approach legislators with a request to serve on a committee or a portfolio. An interviewed Dutch legislator described such requests as a situation in which you “formally have to think about it for five minutes but then, of course, you say ‘yes’” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423B).

In the Dáil, reshuffles were sometimes induced by the parliamentary party group leadership with very little feedback to the legislators. Although such a procedure is not necessarily what always happens, it shows how much the leadership actually decides autonomously apart from the initial assignments. Similar proceedings were not mentioned by legislators in the Tweede Kamer and the Bundestag. A TD told from his own experience how little feedback was given with regard to a reshuffle:

“I was not hugely consulted in it, to be honest, but when I saw it was happening I went along with it. But the [new committee] wasn’t something that I would have been hugely in favour of.” (Interview Dáil, 141209A)

This strong impact of committee experience in the assignment process is an interesting first pattern which supports the informational rationale. However, committee experience is an ‘acquired’ skill by legislators due to their committee membership in the prior legislative period. The more ‘personal’ characteristics of legislators such as prior education, prior occupation and interest group affiliation but also their ideological closeness are discussed in the upcoming section.

The Effect of ‘Advantages in Knowledge’ of Legislators

Based on the theoretical framework an informational logic of the assignment process is supported if the advantages in terms of knowledge of individual legislators increase the likelihood to be a member of the respective committees (hypothesis 12). The regression coefficients of prior education and prior occupation show a clear positive connection between a legislator’s prior occupation and the membership to a committee in the 12th to 18th Bundestag. This effect is remarkably stable across all legislative periods. Advantages in knowledge gained by legislators’ prior education or occupation have a significant influence (continuously passing the $p < 0.001$ threshold). Committees in the Bundestag are disproportionately filled with legislators whose

prior occupation or education is linked to the topic of a committee. This overall picture is also encountered with regard to the assignment patterns of substitute members (Table 5.14).

To check whether a strong correlation between these variables biases the results of the Bundestag the association between these variables was calculated using the Phi coefficient (Φ).¹⁴⁸ The data indicates some positive correlation, but it is far from being complete.¹⁴⁹ This suggests that there is some variation in what legislators have done in their studies/job training and what their eventual occupation is. Given that the same variables show similar levels of association in the Dáil (average over all legislative periods between prior education and occupation $\Phi = 0.509$, $SD = 0.05$) this could be interpreted as evidence that prior education explains cases when prior occupation does not fit.

Model summaries of the analysed legislative periods in the Dáil also indicate a relationship between a legislator's prior occupation and their membership to committees. Contrary to the Bundestag, no significant influence of prior education is visible. This is an interesting finding as the process in the Dáil allows (even after the evaluation of preferences) for parliamentary party group leaders to make assignments based on their best judgement. Given that the occupational background possesses some explanatory power this is an indication that the process should not be understood as a top-down approach of dictating committee allocations without considerations of knowledge obtained through prior education or occupation. Some legislators mentioned that not all wishes were satisfied and that there is always unrest (Interview Dáil, 151203E). Nevertheless, interviewed legislators usually indicated that they were assigned to topics which resonate with their strengths (see e.g. Interview Dáil, 151202B; 151203A; 151204A; 151209A; 151211A) and they could understand why they were assigned to the committee they eventually got. The majority of legislators highlighted the 'good call' by the parliamentary party group leader.

"I am an accountant, I tend to deal with [finance] areas. The area of justice, I do not deal with much. Gaeltacht, or sports, these are areas where I am not strong, so I don't go there. So, no: most people would not express a preference to the leader after the election. You just wait for what he does because he [the parliamentary party group leader] has a good idea." (Interview Dáil, 141203E)

This is also reflected in the statistical model in which prior occupation is by far the best predictor of committee assignments. Even in those parliamentary party groups in the Dáil in which the decision is made by the parliamentary party group leadership without the evaluation of preferences, this factor seems to be taken into consideration. When asked, whether it mattered that there is

¹⁴⁸ The Phi coefficient can be used for two binary variables. It is similar to the Pearson correlation coefficient in its interpretation (0 indicating no correlation, 1 total positive correlation and -1 total negative correlation).

¹⁴⁹ Φ 12th Bundestag = 0.543, Φ 13th Bundestag = 0.526; Φ 14th Bundestag = 0.739; Φ 15th Bundestag = 0.517; Φ 16th Bundestag = 0.466; Φ 17th Bundestag = 0.548; Φ 18th Bundestag = 0.524.

a link between the occupational background and the committee of the TD, the legislator answered “I would hope that this is the motivation behind it” (Interview Dáil, 141209A). The effect of prior occupation becomes slightly stronger when only the larger parliamentary party groups are included in the analysis.¹⁵⁰ This supports the expectation that smaller parliamentary party groups are ‘forced’ to allocate their legislators more often to non-corresponding committees.

The model summaries for the Dutch parliament also show a strong influence of prior education and occupation with regard to full members across all analysed legislative periods (Table 5.15, p. 179). Both have a highly significant influence on being assigned to a committee as a full member. This effect vanishes when analysing the assignment patterns of substitute members (Dutch: *plaatsvervangers*) (see Table 5.16, p. 180). Although the effect is significant for some legislative periods, it cannot be concluded that advantages in knowledge structurally account for the assignments of substitute members. Similar to the Dáil, the effect of prior occupation becomes slightly stronger when only including the larger parliamentary party groups.¹⁵¹ This supports the expectation that smaller parliamentary party groups are more restricted with regard to the ‘pool of talent’ than larger parliamentary party groups.

Based on these results a strong case can be made that legislators with relevant knowledge in a subject area have a higher likelihood to be assigned to a relevant committee in this area. With regard to the effect of the advantages in knowledge, the predicted probabilities indicate how much ‘real’ advantage a legislator has. In the Dáil the predicted probabilities to be assigned to a committee with matching prior occupation are 12.2 per cent (model 1) and 10.9 per cent (model 2). This effect is much higher than the predicted probability of the effect of prior education (the effect is basically non-existent in model 1 and only 1.2 per cent in model 2).

In the 17th German Bundestag, the predicted probability of being assigned to a committee in the case of a relevant prior occupation is 6.3 per cent, holding all other variables constant at their means (model 1). When committee experience is included (model 2) this value is reduced to 4.1 per cent. These values may seem small at first sight but must be seen in the context of a very complex assignment process. Across all models a significant effect of advantages in knowledge and the assigned committee is visible and it is highly significant. As in the Dáil, the effect of prior education is much weaker in almost all legislative periods compared to prior occupation in the Bundestag.

Interestingly, the effect of prior education is stronger than the effect of prior occupation for committee assignments in the Tweede Kamer. An exception to this general pattern is the 2006 legislative period. In this particular legislative period, the effect is reversed. In terms of predicted probability for the 2010 legislative period, the effect of matching prior education is 11 per cent in model

¹⁵⁰ Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour for all legislative periods and additionally Sinn Féin for the 31st Dáil.

¹⁵¹ For the Tweede Kamer large parliamentary party groups are the PvdA and the VVD for all legislative periods, D66 (1994, 1998), CDA (all except 2012), LPF (2002), PVV (2006, 2010).

1 (7.5 per cent in model 2) compared to a predicted probability of prior occupation of 6.5 per cent in model 1 (3.8 per cent in model 2). This means that when it comes to committees, ‘immediate’ work experience is less important than prior education for committee assignments of parliamentary party groups in the Tweede Kamer. The explanation for the Dutch pattern lies in the peculiar concern of Dutch parliamentary party groups to give a ‘wrong impression’ of being too invested in a topic. This is discussed in greater detail further below.

The connection between occupational and educational background and committee assignments was backed up in the interviews. Respondents from all parliamentary party groups indicated that the occupational and educational background of legislators are often linked to their committees. Parliamentary party groups try to ‘tap the talents’ of their legislators. Even if their personal occupational and educational background did not explain their actual assignment to committees, interviewed legislators could easily think of examples in which their colleagues’ preferences and assignments were influenced by it. Only one legislator in Germany argued that there is *no* link whatsoever between occupations and the committees, and subsequently the portfolio specialisation (Interview Bundestag, 150116A). However, other legislators from the same parliamentary party group contradicted this view and it also ‘clashes’ with the results of the statistical model. The assessment of this legislator should therefore not be overstated.

In the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer, where preferences are evaluated, most assignments followed a request from the legislators themselves. Some legislators argued, that the parliamentary party group leadership also follows this logic in certain cases when trying to find a fitting committee. An interviewed German legislator, who was unable to get the preferred committee spot, because other legislators already served on the committee and wanted to continue, explained:

“And then they [the parliamentary party group leadership] looked at my biography and saw that I used to be a postman and then they said that would fit with the committee dealing with post and telecommunication” (Interview Bundestag, 150128H)

In certain areas, it is almost seen as a necessity to have a particular background knowledge. The committees and portfolios dealing with legal affairs (*Rechtausschuss, Commissie voor Veiligheid en Justitie*) were mentioned as being particularly complex and technical (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423B; Interview Bundestag, 150128H). Other examples that were mentioned are committees dealing with finance, tax issues and to a certain extent health. With regard to legal affairs, a corresponding background is of great importance, if not a prerequisite. Although these rules are certainly not set in stone and legislators were able to name exceptions with regard to these technical committees, it greatly enhances an MP’s chances if previous knowledge is present.

“If someone wants to be a member of the legal affairs committee, he

or she should be a fully qualified lawyer (German: Volljurist). Legal matters become so complex, the person can otherwise hardly defend himself against others. Every bill is counter-checked in the legal affairs committee and if we would have a community college teacher on the committee, they [the other legislators] will roll over him.” (Interview Bundestag, 150128H)

In the Netherlands, such considerations also drive the composition of the candidate list. Next to regional variation, among those people “who are elected we need a jurist and an economist” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150430B). Smaller parliamentary party groups in the Tweede Kamer try to prevent such a situation during the run-up to an election as well. Parliamentary party groups purposefully place legislators with varying kinds of expertise on the party list to be prepared. A legislator from a small Dutch parliamentary party group argued that ‘blocks’ are created to have a certain variety of expertise, also in case numbers are not favourable after the election. This is strong evidence that parliamentary party groups are interested in ‘tapping the talents’ of their members, which supports the informational rationale.

“So what the parliamentary party group leadership has done was to pay attention that with every six seats we would have members in parliament who could fulfil the different portfolios from their knowledge and expertise.” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150521D)

For the Tweede Kamer, the smaller effect found in the analysis of full assignments as well as the non-finding of assignments in the analysis of substitute members was addressed in the interviews. It became apparent that the explanation lies in a particularity of the Dutch system. As has been pointed out above, legislators in the Bundestag and Dáil (for larger groups) give their preferences directly for *committees*. Legislators in Tweede Kamer become spokespersons of the parliamentary party group first. This distinction has consequences for the assignment process and is important to understand the results. After being named parliamentary party group spokesperson in a particular area, the portfolios determine to a large extent the committees to which the legislators are assigned to. First, MPs with specific portfolios are allocated to the matching committee. These MPs are also present at most meetings of the committee. However, the number of legislators occupying the portfolios and the number of seats on a committee usually do not match. Due to numerical necessity (VVD and PvdA have seven, respectively six seats on each committee) the other seats are filled with legislators whose portfolios have some rudimentary overlap but may not necessarily be close to the committee’s jurisdiction.

Whether a committee is filled to a greater or lesser degree with legislators who have a central interest in the committee depends on how many spokespersons are assigned in a given policy area. As parliamentary party

groups are free to divide their portfolios in the way they see as most appropriate for carrying out their work, there is some variation across parliamentary party groups. Taking the PvdA as an example, the health portfolio is split into relatively small ‘chunks’ with one legislator being responsible for long-term care including handicapped people and the elderly, another for hospitals, a third for general practitioners and a fourth for medical-ethical questions (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423D). Other portfolios are shared between only two legislators. Nevertheless, some of the legislators who are formally members of a committee do not serve on them in a similar way as the spokespersons. The main purpose of those legislators is to be present at the procedural meetings (Dutch: *procedurevergadering*) to secure a majority for the government. Procedural meetings schedule a committee’s agenda for the upcoming weeks and months and take place every week. These negotiations usually go along without any problems. In certain cases, the opposition tries to push an issue and place it on the agenda. In these cases a vote requires the committee’s delegation to be present at the meeting in full numbers. This was metaphorically described as “full battle formation”.¹⁵² This process is formally coordinated by the deputy secretary (Dutch: *ambtelijk secretaris*) who is involved in the organisation and administrative issues of a parliamentary party group. The deputy secretaries rely on the spokespersons to inform them when the presence of other legislators in the committee is needed.¹⁵³ Content-wise the other legislators do not participate in the regular meetings and would only do so in case all regular spokespersons would be absent. Otherwise, they have their own home-turf committee(s) in which they have their primary focus. The role was described as ‘voting cattle’ (Dutch original: *stemvee*)” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150604A).

"In the two committees of which I am a member, I am only on standby in case something is happening in a procedural meeting and I need to vote. Another reason might be that a colleague is sick for a longer period. But this we usually solve differently. (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150429A)

This means that the analysed group of committee members is ‘contaminated’. The ‘randomness’ of the results with regard to substitute members can be attributed to this. Keeping these qualifications in mind, the variables in the models analysing full members perform surprisingly well. It can even be assumed that a future analysis, which only focuses on spokespersons will find an even stronger effect of the variable. However, as assignments as substitute members are even more intended to merely ‘fill’ committees, they are

¹⁵² Dutch original: “Wij noemen dit dan een beetje op volle oorlogssterkte aanwezig zijn” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150416B)

¹⁵³ On a side note, substitute members and full members in the Tweede Kamer are paired, i.e. only a particular substitute member can replace a missing full member. In the Bundestag and the Dáil, every substitute member can substitute a full member.

mostly simply decided by the parliamentary party group leadership. Some legislators were not entirely sure on which committee they actually serve as substitute members and as full members outside of their 'central' committee (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150416B; 150604A).

In the Bundestag, the similarities between the assignment patterns of full members and substitute members indicate that the choice of a particular committee is more carefully considered. This may also be because the decision to be a substitute member has stronger ramifications with regard to the information flow. Via the official routes, only full members and substitute members receive the documents of a committee (Interview Bundestag, 150112A). Such restrictions do not exist in the Tweede Kamer. All documents of all committees are accessible via the internal system (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150506A). German legislators usually had particular reasons for why they became substitute members in a particular committee when asked during the interviews. One legislator mentioned that substitute members might be particularly interested in a topic outside their formal specialisation (Interview Bundestag, 150112A), have a constituency link (Interview Bundestag, 150112A; 150119A) or possess very specific knowledge in a small area:

“There is a whole range of substitute members for whom you wish to use their knowledge. [...] With certain topics you say ‘Hey, [name of legislator] is needed as a substitute member. He is well versed with collective bargaining law or something’”(Interview Bundestag, 150112A)

For the content-related work of the legislators, their advantages in knowledge through their past occupation and education indeed has an added value. Many legislators indicated that their advantage in knowledge is beneficial for them when dealing with an issue in their policy areas. For freshmen, being already familiar with a particular topic can help to reduce the problem of getting to know two new things, i.e. the policy area and finding their way in the legislature. Legislators frequently highlighted the peculiar working procedures within parliaments (see e.g. Interview Tweede Kamer, 150422B) which takes time to get used to. In these instances, a familiarity with the topic can help to not feeling overwhelmed.

“I have said it often in my first one and a half years in the Chamber. I was very happy to be in my field of expertise as spokesperson. Because I already had the knowledge and the network. This helped me a lot with the content of my work and I had the time to get acquainted with parliamentary conventions and the instruments to steer things. This is, by the way, applicable to all my colleagues who were new.” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150521D).

Familiarity with a topic can also stem from other areas. Respondents frequently mentioned that a familiarity with political processes due to

experience gathered in municipal councils (e.g. Interview Tweede Kamer, 150422B) or in legislatures at the level of federal states (Interview Bundestag, 150114B, 150113B, 150130E) was helpful. In certain instances, the occupational past can also be detrimental to the chances of being assigned to a committee. A Dutch legislator mentioned that as soon as a 'line is crossed' and corporate interests could give the wrong impression to the public, the parliamentary party group is very cautious. The legislator also indicated that parliamentary party groups in the Tweede Kamer handle these things differently and these are decided from case to case (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150615A). This is remarkable, as it fits in nicely with the results of the statistical model in which the effect of prior occupation was not much stronger, compared across all analysed legislative periods than the effect of prior education. This is additional evidence that Dutch parliamentary party groups more carefully consider a negative effect of a prior engagement in a legislator's occupational background.

Several respondents who did not make use of their advantages in knowledge also highlighted the positive aspects of it. Interviewed legislators in Germany and the Netherlands similarly noted that it is not expected to become an expert on an issue, but one needs to be able to make political choices in the legislature (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423A; Interview Bundestag, 150130E). An Irish TD, although referring to ministers, mentioned a similar problem of too little objectivity if someone is 'too' involved (Interview Dáil, 141203E).¹⁵⁴ A Dutch MP noted:

"There are people who actively choose a policy area in which they have a lot of knowledge. I notice that my choice to be the spokesperson on a new policy area is often better politically. Eventually, a legislator needs to make a political judgement - what do my supporters (Dutch: achterban), my parliamentary party group and I think of it. And you need to do this impartially (Dutch: En dat moet je onbevangen kunnen doen)" (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150416B).

Despite these exceptions, there is a strong case to be made that the informational rationale has great application with regard to committee assignments in all three analysed legislatures. However, interviewed legislators in the Bundestag mentioned that there are examples of occupations which 'go too far'. A frequently given example was a conflict of interest from having been a production manager at an armament manufacturer in combination with the Defence Committee or the Budget Committee (Interview Bundestag, 150114D). However, there is an invisible line when conflict situations become problematic and cases are looked at individually. The same legislator argued:

"However, if it is a trade union secretary (German: Gewerkschaftssekretär) or a secretary at the employers' association

¹⁵⁴ "Doctors don't always make the best health ministers because they have a particular view on things as doctors and they may not have the best view on the broader things. [...] You know, a Garda does not make a good minister of justice or a solicitor a good minister of justice."

that is then all right again. Because they bring in specialised knowledge (German: Fachwissen). But they are not committed to a specific company but rather to an industry, to a whole scene."
(Interview Bundestag, 150114D)

Committee Membership and External Interests

A distributive rationale predicts assignments to be driven by external interests (hypothesis 11). The statistical model tests this rationale via the presence of official functions in organisations and companies. The model summaries indicate clearly different approaches in how this is handled across the three legislatures. Based on the results it can be concluded that external interests do not drive the assignments in the Dáil. An exception is the 29th Dáil session which shows a significant effect of legislators' external interests connected to the jurisdiction of a committee. This special case is discussed further below.

Two possibilities can most likely account for this 'non-finding'. Always assuming that legislators indeed follow their own rules and indicate their positions outside parliament, TDs could have these external interests but are subsequently not members of the respective committees (i.e. they are prevented from becoming a member of the committee or do not ask for it voluntarily). Another explanation could be that there is not enough variation in the data. Inspecting the data more closely shows that the non-effect of external interests can be explained through the very low number of interests which TDs have declared (see Table 5.8). With regard to the variable of interest *remunerated positions* and *directorships* are the primary indicators of an eventual external interest.¹⁵⁵ The overview indicates that the number of TDs who did not declare any remunerated position is very high (constantly above 95 per cent of legislators without *any* connection).

Table 5.8: Percentage of Members of Dáil Éireann declaring 'Nil' in occupational income, directorships and remunerated positions (1998-2010)

	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10
Occupational Income	45.4	46.1	46.0	46.4	43.4	43.9	47.2	48.5	38.7	45.7	44.9	49.4
Directorships	74.2	70.3	69.9	67.5	66.3	73.2	71.8	69.3	73.0	75.6	75.2	75.0
Remunerated Positions	95.7	95.8	96.9	94.0	96.4	97.0	100	99.4	100	97.0	97.6	97.0

Source: Own calculation, Register of Members' Interest obtained from <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?m=&DocID=-1&CatID=20>, access date: March 17, 2014.

This low percentage of registered interests is striking. A possible explanation of this almost non-existence of links to interest groups might be found in the

¹⁵⁵ The table excludes descriptive statistics on shares, land, gifts, property and services, travel facilities and contracts which were excluded for the coding.

strong local roots of Irish TDs (see D. M. Farrell et al., 2012). This might urge candidates to be very cautious to give the wrong impression by having too many connections to interest groups at the national level. One interviewed legislator argued that Irish society is so small and very informal that it would be known if a legislator would have an interest or a connection (Interview Dáil, 141203D). Parliamentary party groups and legislators seem to be very keen to avoid giving the wrong appearance. One outlier to this general pattern is the 29th Dáil. In this particular legislative period, external interests have an unexpectedly strong effect on being assigned to a particular committee. This is puzzling given the very low number of 'positive' values in the first place. Such a strong effect can most likely be accounted for if a large number of successful assignment to a committee can be linked to these few external interests. When inspecting the data more carefully it becomes obvious that this is the case in the 29th Dáil. Although only ten TDs have a connection which qualifies as *external interest*, four of them have a directorship in a company or an organisation which can be directly linked to their membership in a committee this legislative period.¹⁵⁶ This inflates the coefficient and, relatively speaking, overestimates the influence of this variable in absolute terms. The coefficient, therefore, should be seen as an outlier and not over-interpreted. This data anomaly occurs only in the Dáil in this particular variable and legislative period, all other variables provide enough variation for a meaningful analysis (see descriptive statistics in Appendices 19 - 21 pages 310 - 314).

In the Tweede Kamer, the model summaries for the multilevel models indicate a more complex picture when studying the various models. The connectedness of external interest and parliamentary party groups, during the period of pillarisation (Dutch: *verzuiling*), led to "reserved 'quality seats' seats for representatives of the affiliated interested associations of the pillar" (Andeweg & Irwin, 2014, p. 91). Although this is not a widespread practice any more, some of the larger parties still place representatives of affiliated interested associations on the candidate lists. Looking at the models analysing full membership to committees across all parliamentary party groups (Table 5.15, see p. 179) external interests have some explanatory powers when excluding committee experience (model 1). The variable passes the 5 per cent significance level in two legislative periods and the 10 per cent threshold in three legislative periods. However, the effect gets much weaker when committee experience is included. Contrary to the full membership models, the models with regard to substitute members again indicate no effect of the variables. As discussed

¹⁵⁶ The legislators are: Pat Carey who has a non-executive directorship at the Irish Council for the European Movement and was assigned to the Select Committee on European Affairs; Jim Glennon who is director at 'Just Sport Ireland Lt' and member of the Select Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; Arthur Morgan who possesses a non-executive directorship in a seafood processing company and was a member of the Select Committee on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources; Dan Neville, non-executive directorship at the Irish Association of Suicidology and was a member of the Select Committee on Health and Children.

above, this is not surprising given the assignment process which is aimed to fill committees, but not to achieve the ‘best’ match. Much more interesting are, however, the results of the analyses excluding small parliamentary party groups (see p. 182). Being of some explanatory power in the legislative period after the election in 1994 the effect vanishes after the 2002 election. Afterwards, there is no significant effect of external interests on committee membership. It is striking that this effect occurs in this particular legislative period given that in 1997 the rules regulating the side functions of members of parliament were toughened. This occurred in the aftermath of VVD-party leader Bolkestein having sent several letters as a member of the supervisory board (Dutch: *commissaris*) of a pharmaceutical company to the Minister of Health. This could be a coincidence, but the timing of this change is remarkable.

The evidence from the interview with legislators of VVD and the PvdA disclosed that the side functions of legislators (Dutch: *nevenfuncties*) are indeed a big concern in the assignment process (e.g. Interview Tweede Kamer 150521A; 150527B; 150521A)

"It can happen that the parliamentary party groups says 'listen for a second...'. We had that recently with [...], the side functions were really close to the portfolio. That is not possible. (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150527B)

The effect might be particularly strong given the fact that the two largest parliamentary party groups (PvdA and VVD) form the governing coalition in the legislative period starting in 2012. However, this rule appears to exist also when in opposition. Smaller parliamentary party groups are less restrictive concerning the side functions but the situation cannot be described as ‘anything goes’. An interviewed legislators from one of the smaller parliamentary party groups indicated that he would see it as “inappropriate” (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150521A) to sit on an executive board of an organisation close to his portfolio.

"Let's assume someone has worked for a bank. Or an even extremer example: A person has for years worked at [company name] and has also done some lobby-work for that company. Then it would be really bad to name him the spokesperson in this area. This gives the impression to the outside world that the company has placed him here and that he now represents their interests from within the legislature. [...] If it really connects corporate interests and the same topic then we think this is a bad idea." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150615A)

This informal rule is also a two-way street. Legislators with a particular portfolio would not accept an external position which would be conflictual. If this is the case the parliamentary party group leadership needs to be consulted and can make the call. Legislators are then faced with a choice:

At some point, I was asked to sit on the executive board of [a foundation in the area of my portfolio]. I have consulted the parliamentary party group leadership (Dutch: fractiebestuur) and they told me I that I should not do it or otherwise I would have had to hand in my portfolio. And then I said I do not want to do that and said 'no' to the foundation." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150519A)

How far these considerations go was hinted at by one respondent who mentioned that the situation of a legislator's spouse is also considered:

"It is really looked after that you do not have conflictual interests. Or, in any case, that there is nothing that can be reproached. As an example, you may have worked in a prior function for a company which might lead you to be inclined to do something. That is well-looked after. Also what your partner does, that you cannot be accused, so to speak, of conflictual interests." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150520E, also 150415A).

Dutch MPs hinted at the 'blurriness' of the rule. In some policy areas (e.g. labour and health) the background is not problematic. In other areas, it is simply not done. In this sense, even legislators indicated a "double standard" (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150506A). This fits nicely with the results of the statistical analysis which provided a weak effect but nothing which can structurally account for the assignment. As the external interests do not explain much of the assignment process, there is also very little possibility for parliamentary party groups to 'match' outlying external interests with interests biased in the opposite direction Yordanova (2009). Interestingly, legislators frequently saw the problem of an assignment of the legislator less in terms of undesired policy output but rather in terms of a negative perception of the media and the voters and to self-protect the legislator and the parliamentary party group (see quote above from Interview Tweede Kamer, 150520E). Unfortunately, I was unable to determine during the interviews what is different about the Dutch media or the Dutch voter in order to explain why Dutch parliamentary party groups appear to be more vigilant (compared to German and Irish parliamentary party groups).

Compared to this strict handling by Dutch parliamentary party groups, the results for the Bundestag present a different picture. There is a highly significant effect of external interests with regard to full members across all legislative periods (Table 5.13). With regard to substitute members, the effect is also significant with the exceptions of the complete models of the 12th and 16th Bundestag (Table 5.14). Looking at the predicted probabilities the effect of external interests is even stronger than the occupational background (9.8 per cent in model 1 compared to 6.3 per cent for the occupational background, model 2: 4.3 per cent of external interest compared to 4.1 per cent for the occupational background).

The interviews in Germany indicate that there are no strict rules regarding side functions comparable to those in the Tweede Kamer. Being connected to interest groups is not seen as problematic *per se* (e.g. Interview Bundestag, 150115C). Interviewed legislators were able to recite frequent examples of such assignments like the head of the general employee organisation (German: *Gesamtbetriebsratsvorsitzender*) of Frankfurt Airport and the Traffic Committee (Interview Bundestag, 151401C), the president of the German Labor Union and the Social and Labor Affairs Committee (Interview Bundestag, 151401E), or an operative of the Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (German: *kassenärztliche Vereinigung*) and the Health Committee (Interview Bundestag, 150114I).

“If you look at the side functions, for example from people in the banking sector, the finance sector, or from big corporations, automobile industry, energy sector, the classic power stations, there are connections which are also visible in the involvement outside parliament. In the Union parliamentary party groups those people never had a problem.” (Interview Bundestag, 150113B)

Since the external interests of legislators influence much of the assignment process in the Bundestag, this legislature offers the possibility to check whether parliamentary party groups aim for heterogeneous preference outliers and ‘counter’ the clustering of particular groups in a committee (see Yordanova, 2009). There was very little evidence of an active interference by ‘matching’ outlying committees with legislators who have interests biased in the opposite direction. After referring to the assignments which are linked to external interests, legislators did not highlight that in these committees legislators would be searched for which represent the other side of an interest. This might happen, of course, when legislators of different groups are interested in the same committee. Nevertheless, there is no evidence of a ‘structuring hand’ of the parliamentary party group leadership or a desire of the other members of the parliamentary party group to find people from among their midst to serve as ‘opposite pole’. Committees in the Bundestag can be truly ‘outlying’ with interests biased in one direction.

The strong influence of the variable is striking. Based solely on the results, one might be tempted to interpret this result as ‘shady’, especially since the side functions and additional incomes of German MPs have been the subject of discussion in the media in the past (see e.g. Reyher, 2010; Elmer & Hebel, 2015; Tillack, 2012). A recent calculation by ‘*abgeordnetenwatch.de*’, an internet portal aiming to increase transparency in German government, estimated that German legislators receive *at least* 21.4 Million Euro annually through their side functions¹⁵⁷ (for more details see Reyher, 2015). However, all that can be

¹⁵⁷ The calculations are not exact, as the Bundestag requires legislators to indicate the remunerations in steps, i.e. step 1 comprises everything between 1000 and 3500 Euro, step 2 until 7000 Euro and so on. Step 10 indicates a salary over 250.000.

concluded from the statistical model so far is that a significant share of the *assignment process* of German legislators is connected to the side functions they have. The last part (p. 186) of the analysis provides more insight into the actual committee proceedings. Only if these legislators would be able to work according to the distributive rationale, i.e. relatively autonomous, we might be able to draw such a conclusion.

During the interviews, a respondent also provided an interesting insight by suggesting that only those legislators will not get a problem “who are in the mainstream of the parliamentary party group” (Interview Bundestag, 150113B). This is additional supporting evidence that parliamentary party groups are aware of the negative effects and might reserve the right to act. In all parliamentary party groups such cases are looked at individually and it is carefully considered whether a high-demander should be allowed to join a committee or whether there are potentially harmful effects. This could lead a legislator not being assigned to a particular committee. This has important ramifications when discussing the applicability of the distributive theory. ‘Outlying committees’ may be created. There is no hard line which prevents the combination of external interests and committee membership altogether, but parliamentary party groups still remain the main principal and reserve the right to step in.¹⁵⁸

In order to not count as problematic, it helps if an organisation is non-profit oriented. This was argued by one legislator with respect to that legislator’s own close connection to an interest group and past work as a lobbyist for this group (Interview Bundestag, 152301A). Legislators of the Green party expressed more caution with regard to this assignment logic than other parliamentary party groups during the interviews. They indicated that within their parliamentary party group such combinations are generally viewed with suspicion (Interview Bundestag, 150114I).

District Characteristics and ‘Outlying’ Committees

A second variable related to the distributive rationale concerns *district characteristics*. As mentioned above, I was not able to test this hypothesis in the statistical analysis. During the interviews, legislators were asked whether this

¹⁵⁸ The validity of this statement was tested by re-running the models for Germany (full members including transfers) including an interaction effect of the variable indicating particularistic interests and the variable measuring the legislators’ ideological distance from the party group mean. The results support the statement of the legislator to a certain extent. The effect indicates a negative relationship (which is what the legislator argues) but the effect is not significant, with the exception of the 15th legislative period. When plotting the result it can be seen that the likelihood to be assigned to a committee (regardless of it being of high or low importance) is higher when interest group affiliation exists but decreases when the ideological distance increases. When no connection to interest groups is present the likelihood to be assigned is lower and there is almost no change when the ideological distance to the party mean increases. However, when testing for a difference between high and low importance committees (by including a three-fold interaction (interest group affiliation × ideological distance × high importance committees) there is no effect.

factor plays a role in the assignment process. The evidence of this section solely relies on the self-report of legislators during the interviews. In terms of the importance of the factor, the Dáil is, in this regard, the 'most likely' case for such a rationale, as all TDs possess a clear link to a small constituency. Irish TDs are characterised by having a strong local focus and the importance of the local connection is acknowledged to structure the work of TDs (D. M. Farrell et al., 2012). The home base of a legislator is of great importance. The accessibility of TDs for their voters is remarkable. One respondent noted:

“In Ireland you can go down to your local pub on a Saturday and sit in a back room with your TD and say ‘listen I have an application form for a social welfare pension I would like you to deal with it for me’ and they say ‘Yes, I will fill it out for you.’ We are very very close.” (Interview Dáil, 141205B)

During the interviews in the Dáil the constituency link was a reoccurring factor. This supports the prediction of the distributive rationale of committee assignments. Constituency work is clearly reflected in the choice of committees. A frequently cited underlying reasoning was that it is a TDs' "job [...] to represent his or her constituency" (Interview Dáil, 141202A). The committee is a part of this. Being on a committee that represents the interests of a constituency was characterised as "very, very typical" (Interview Dáil, 141202A). Based on the assessment of a respondent, the assignment process in the Dáil can best be described as "a mixture, I suppose, of personal interests, educational background or professional background and then kind of a constituency impact as well" (Interview Dáil, 141208B). According to a legislator, all speeches and general actions in the House, therefore also committee membership, is influenced by the constituencies. TDs were able to point to general links between constituency characteristics and a fitting committee. As an example, TDs from an urban constituency were seen to be more interested in the urban planning and housing committee (Interview Dáil, 141203D) or the justice committee (Interview Dáil, 141204B) due to crime rates. TDs from inner city areas with a higher unemployment rate would tend to the Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation whose task includes finding new ways to promote job creation (Interview Dáil, 141204C). The link sometimes went so far that not general characteristics, but the presence of particular institutions were enough to qualify for a reason to be assigned:

“If [a legislator] has, for example, Curragh Camp [the biggest army barracks in Ireland] in the middle of his constituency, then he might have an interest in it [the Defence Committee]. Because there are a lot of votes there and he represents them. And he should look out for their interest and serve as best as he can and serve on this committee. [...]. Somebody from Mayo, where there are no army barracks within 100 miles, would not want to be on the Defence Committee.” (Interview Dáil, 141202A)

How important constituency work is for Irish TDs is also reflected in the statement of a TD who argued that, for some committees with a very high workload (specifically the Public Accounts Committee), legislators are assigned from constituencies close to the Dáil. With this combination, they are able to be active in the constituency and take care of the committee as they are able to “get in and out of [their] constituency quite easily” (Interview Dáil, 141203C). This is not related to the distributive assignment logic but underlines the importance of the local sphere. In general, the interest to be assigned to a particular committee is certainly influenced by constituencies.

The Bundestag represents a mixed-member case. Half of the legislators are elected in nominal districts while the other half are elected via party lists. It was included in the analysis as a case in order to test whether two ‘assignment logics’ exist. It should be noted that it would be too simplistic to make a 50/50 ‘clear’ cut between those two groups. Despite being the one group with a clear *electoral* connection to single districts, legislators elected in a district have “no monopoly on constituency representation” (Saalfeld, 2008, p. 219).¹⁵⁹ Legislators frequently run as dual candidates by being placed on the party list and running in a district. Zittel and Gschwend (2007) calculate that in the 2005 federal election, around 45 per cent of the candidates ran in both a nominal district and on the party list.¹⁶⁰

When asked to what extent the connection to electoral districts (German: *Wahlkreise*) plays a role in assignments to committees, legislators generally answered affirmative (e.g. Interview Bundestag, 150119B, 150119A; 150115D, 151901C). No legislator denied such a connection even if it was not applicable to him or her personally. Some committees, i.e. those dealing with agriculture, traffic, energy, etc. are more prone to such connections. Reasons given had mostly recourse to the constituency characteristics (Interview Bundestag, 150119B; 150119B), i.e. rural areas and the committee dealing with agriculture or the constituency being an important traffic junction and the transport committee (Interview Bundestag, 150115D). Like in the Dáil, the presence of particular institutions was seen to motivate some legislators to seek out particular committees, e.g. army barracks and the Defence Committee (Interview Bundestag, 150114E, also 150119B) or power plants and the committee dealing with energy policy (Interview Bundestag, 150127A). However, legislators saw clear limits to this logic. As an example, several committees have very limited salience for the work in the district or none at all (e.g. those with an international focus) but are still highly sought after (i.e. Foreign Affairs Committee). Nevertheless, for several legislators it was a well-considered choice to sit on a committee which has a connection to his or her district.

Interestingly, German legislators frequently highlighted the connection to electoral districts with regard to their substitute membership to a committee,

¹⁵⁹ See also the analysis conducted by Gschwend et al. (2009)

¹⁶⁰ Only 18 per cent ran only in one of the 299 electoral districts and 37 per cent only via a party’s list (see Zittel & Gschwend, 2007, p. 988).

often relating it to the above-mentioned peculiarities with regard to the information flow. A legislator, although having entered the Bundestag via the party list, was still 'responsible' for two constituencies and argued:

[My membership of the committee] is predominantly for the information. I am from a tourism region [...] and I am also in charge of Landkreis X¹⁶¹. These are both great tourism and wine areas. [...] My immediate opponent in the district was chairman of the Tourism Committee and has always tried to score points with that [...]. And that is why it was very important for me to get the information."
(Interview Bundestag, 150114A)

Similar considerations were expected to be absent in the Dutch Tweede Kamer to which legislators are elected in a single nation-wide district. For the content-related work of legislators, the interviewed MPs provided further supported for the finding that for the majority of legislators local considerations did not play a role in their portfolio or committee work. However, during the interviews several legislators indicated that local considerations play a limited, but noticeable role. Parliamentary party groups try to make sure to have some regional spread when the lists are drafted (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150520D, also 150423A, see also Thomassen & Andeweg, 2004, p. 62 for a more detailed description of the candidate selection process). Some legislators mentioned that their local connection influences their work in parliament. One legislator noted that in his province (Brabant) "it is expected from me to put the most important topics from that region on the political agenda. And I take that extremely seriously. My colleagues from Groningen and Friesland and Limburg do the same thing." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423A). For this legislator the local level was not reflected in the portfolio, but another respondent mentioned that the portfolio was directly influenced by such considerations.

"As an example, I am from Friesland. That is a province in which I can develop the best profile with nature, agriculture, water and tourism. This is why I was the spokesperson for recreation. [...] These things do not 'hit' in Amsterdam. So they often look at where somebody can develop the best profile. And this has, among other things, to do with where you live." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150430A)

However, even in this case, the legislator at some point shifted to topics which are not closely connected to the local level any more (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150430A). The effect of local considerations can, therefore, best be described as being applicable to a small group of legislators, especially those from the provinces outside of the 'Randstad'¹⁶², without forming a general pattern.

¹⁶¹ A 'Landkreis' is an administrative district.

¹⁶² The Randstad is not a metropolis but "a conurbation of four big cities - Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht - and at least six smaller ones, which are linked by suburban extensions." (Kooij & van de Laar, 2002, p. 111).

To conclude, the district appears to play a significant role in the assignment process in the Bundestag and the Dáil. Subsequently, the question arises how important committee work is for the legislators in serving his or her constituency. The distributive theory is very clear on why legislators choose particular committees: They want to be re-elected and committee membership facilitates this. Interestingly, although the interviews suggested that it influences the allocation process, Irish legislators, as well as German legislators, were sceptical about the added value of committee work for their re-election chances. In terms of electoral success, one Irish respondent argued that committees “have no value” (Interview Dáil, 141205B). Voters, it was argued, are not generally interested in committee work and would not seek to discuss committee-related issues with their legislators. What happens in committee is seen as the nuts-and-bolts of policy-making (Interview Dáil, 141205A). TDs indicated that they try to balance the two responsibilities of the national and local sphere (Interview Dáil, 141214C). With only a few exceptions “[...] people would not naturally gravitate towards you because of your committee membership.” (Interview Dáil, 141204B).

When asked, whether the membership of a committee and the work related to it is something which is noticed in the constituency, an interviewed German legislator similarly argued that it is “relatively irrelevant” (Interview Bundestag, 151201A) to the general voter. The work in committee is not something that voters are particularly aware of or interested in. This assessment is similar to the experience of TDs. Legislators frequently highlighted that within their districts they are not the specialised experts that they are in their parliamentary party group. Rather they need to have a universal view on matters. One legislator described their role as the “Eierlegende Wollmilchsau” [literally: ‘oviparous woolen milk dispensing sow’, best translated as jack of all trades] (Interview Bundestag, 151201A; also mentioned in interviews 151401A and 150130D). Topics discussed in committees are too specialised and too ‘far away’ from the concerns that voters have. It frequently happens that legislators in a district have to talk about topics which are not their main area of expertise. When asked about an issue concerning e.g. health policy a legislator would be “ill-advised” (150130D) to reply ‘I am not on that committee’. At best, committee work is acknowledged in a highly stylised fashion, i.e. a legislator who has specialised in a particular field (e.g. with regard to traffic policy but who, in the Bundestag is responsible for only a sub-topic and shares the portfolio with other MPs from his parliamentary party group) would be seen as a general traffic policy politician (Interview Bundestag, 150119A).

In terms of being able to work on a committee on a particular problem *for* a district was seen as hardly possible. These statements pose clear limitations to the applicability of the distributive theory. The size of districts makes it very difficult to see them in terms of a clearly characterised constituency which can be catered to by one specific committee. Even if a legislator were assigned to a specific committee, an electoral district, so it was argued, is not static and does

not always deal with the same problems (Interview Bundestag, 150112B). A district may face high unemployment rates or a transport issue, but these can change. If there is some electoral value, an interviewed legislator argued that it goes back to specific positions or committees in general, rather than the content of the work:

“So when one can say ‘I am the vice chair of the Budget Committee’, that is important because it involves money and everybody wants to get in there. Or if someone can say that he or she is the vice chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee.” (Interview Bundestag, 151201A)

This is very reminiscent of the considerations which were mentioned in the Dáil. Voters were seen as being more interested in the status of a legislator (the chair of a committee) and that somebody like him/her would represent them. However, it is “obviously better again if you are a minister or minister of state”. (Interview Dáil, 141202B). These statements propose clear limitations of the prediction of the distributive theory. One might object that, because these are self-reported estimates from legislators about their constituents, they should be interpreted with caution. However, legislators are very capable of giving an assessment about this. The assessment was shared by a number of legislators and is based on their interactions with their constituents. Legislators know very well what types of questions they receive in their frequent discussions with voters in their district.

Only one legislator argued that his assignment to his preferred committee was based on the pragmatic reason to give him a chance to equalise a possible disadvantage he would otherwise have in the upcoming election against another TD:

“My constituency colleague in my parliamentary party group became a junior minister. And I made the point that I need to be given something in order to work on my profile and my knowledge. So I can be a better TD and this is the only way to do it. So he [the parliamentary party group leader] said OK.” (Interview Dáil, 151203C)

This legislator was, however, the only legislator who argued this and even in this instance, the reasoning does not fully resonate with the distributive logic. Although the committee is supposed to have an added value, it is more connected to the status of the legislator and the knowledge he gains rather than offering the possibility to provide particularistic benefits to his home district. The question arises why legislators would join committees which resonate with the characteristics of their districts if it does not have immediate electoral value? The answer still lies in the interactions with constituents despite the fact that constituents would not gravitate towards a legislator because he or she might be able to work for the constituency via the committee system. Committees are the primary source of topical information on an issue.

Although voters inquire about many topics, legislators seem to anticipate that, beyond questions about actual affairs, many questions will still be on topics close to the committee's jurisdiction and try to be prepared for this situation.

Evidence of a Leadership-Controlled Composition of Committees?

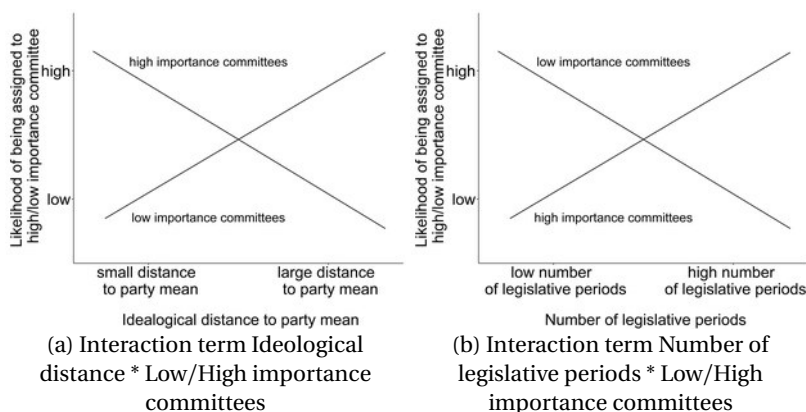
No significant impact is visible in the model summaries of the Dáil with regard to those variables which are related to a partisan rationale (hypothesis 13 and 14). With regard to the interpretation of the results, the interaction effects indicate the probability of an ideologically close or distant MP to be assigned to a committee that is regarded as highly important by the party compared to committees that are regarded as unimportant. Neither the interaction effects between high importance committees (HICs) and the ideological distance between a legislator and his or her parliamentary party group, nor the number of legislative periods served, have a significant effect on being assigned to important committees. Some outliers with regard to ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean can be found in the models of the 27th Dáil under the 'old' committee system and of the 30th Dáil, but even here the effect is not strong. Likewise, when excluding small parliamentary party groups there is no evidence that these variables can significantly predict membership of highly salient committees. This means that high importance committees are not disproportionately filled with legislators who are very experienced or who are very close to the parliamentary party group mean in terms of ideological preferences compared to those that are regarded as unimportant.

The `Zelig` (Imai et al., 2009) package in R provides the possibility to plot these interaction effects.¹⁶³ This facilitates the interpretation of the model. Figure 5.3 plots the (ideal) predicted probabilities of the interaction effect of ideological distance (left plot) and the number of legislative periods (right plot) for both low and high importance committee. To provide evidence for the partisan logic the plots should, ideally, show a decreasing likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee with growing ideological distance to the party mean and / or an increasing likelihood to be assigned to a low importance committee with growing ideological distance to the party mean. With regard to the number of legislative periods, the plots should indicate an increasing likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee with an increasing number of legislative periods. The likelihood to be assigned to low importance committees should be higher with a low number of legislative periods and is predicted to become smaller with a decrease in legislative periods.

Figure 5.4 plots the actual effect of the analysis of the 30th Dáil. The plots for the data of the 30th Dáil provide some evidence that a pattern with regard to the ideological distance exists. The plots presented below visualise the interaction effects of Model 2 (including committee experience). Plots of the effect of the

¹⁶³ The interaction effects model the likelihood of being assigned to an important committee.

Figure 5.3: Visualisation of the prediction of the interaction effects of ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean (left plot) and number legislative periods (right plot) with high and low importance committees



Source: Own depiction. The two plots indicate the ideal effect of the interaction term.

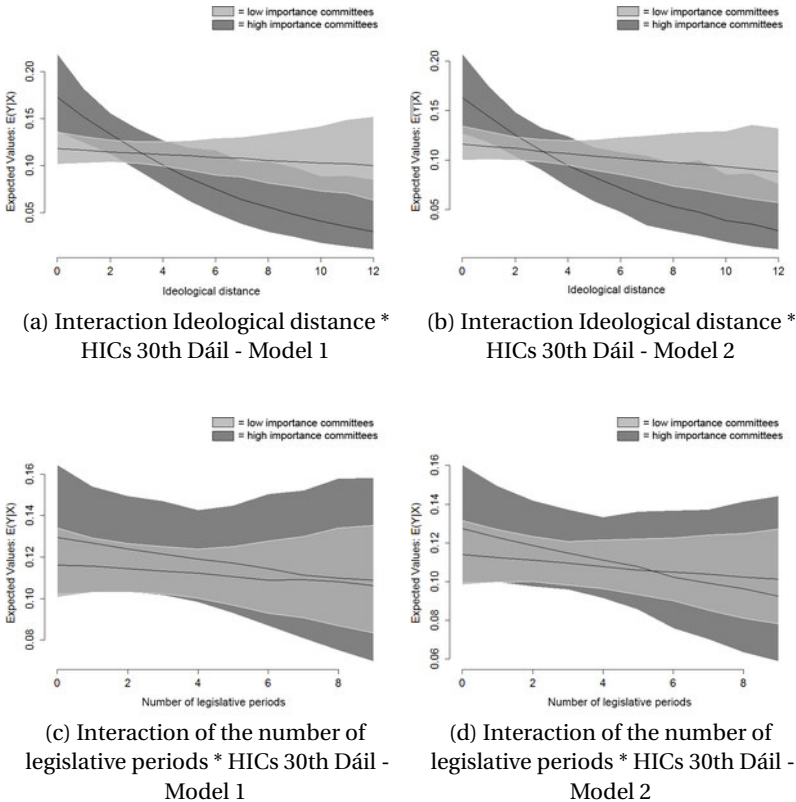
interaction effect of Model 1 indicated very similar trends.¹⁶⁴ When comparing the predicted probabilities the prediction of the partisan perspective is somewhat supported. Legislators who are closer to the parliamentary party group mean have a higher probability to be assigned to a high importance committee (dark grey confidence interval) compared to committees that are regarded as less important. The likelihood to be assigned to a high important committee decreases when the ideological distance increases. For low importance committees (light grey confidence interval) the likelihood does not decrease so strongly (see plot a) in Figure 5.4). The plot for ideological distance in Model 2 (including controlling for the effect of committee experience) shows a similar picture (plot b) in Figure 5.4). However, the effect only barely passes the 10 per cent significance threshold and should be interpreted with caution. With regard to the number of legislative periods (see plot c) and d) in Figure 5.4) there is very little evidence of a pattern.

The interviews in the Dáil underline this result and provide little evidence that these factors play an important role. Legislators rather highlighted the occupational background as well as the constituency link. The only frequently mentioned factor in which parliamentary seniority plays a role was with regard to the distribution of committee chairs (Interview Dáil, 141202B). It was argued to be “very unusual” (Interview Dáil, 141203D) for a freshman to be assigned as chair. Looking at the number of legislative periods of chairs in the 28th and 31st Dáil this is a valid assessment. Out of all TDs marked as vice chairs or chairs in the data set in these legislative periods, only 7.7 per cent¹⁶⁵ were freshmen in

¹⁶⁴ All interaction plots can be obtained from the author upon request.

¹⁶⁵ 96 (vice) chairs, of which eight were freshmen.

Figure 5.4: Visualisation of the interaction effects of ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean (upper row) and number legislative periods (lower row) with high and low importance committees 30th Dáil (Model 1 shown in first column, Model 2 shown in second column)



Source: Own depiction. The two plots per legislative period show the effect of the interaction term for the model excluding committee experience (left column) as well as the model including committee experience (right column). The plots show the likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee (dark grey confidence interval) and a low importance committee (light grey confidence interval). The Y-axis was cropped in some plots to better visualise the effect.

the Dáil when appointed to the position. During the 28th and 31st Dáil roughly 1/3 of the legislators were new members of the chamber (36.6 per cent). This indicates that freshmen do not often become committee (vice) chair. The few exceptions mostly relate to situations in which large numbers of new TDs join a parliamentary party group or when parliamentary party groups are small. It became apparent from the interviews that for the larger government parliamentary party groups, the assignment follows a certain sequential pattern: In a first step ministers and junior ministers are appointed from the pool of TDs.

The next type of positions which are distributed are chairs and vice chairs.¹⁶⁶ Only afterwards regular committee members are assigned (Interview Dáil, 141202B). The two former two groups, (junior) ministers and (vice) chairs, are most likely disproportionately stacked with more experienced legislators. This might explain why the assignment of committee members is not particularly influenced by this any more, at least not significantly. Given the small size of the legislature (166 seats) a reduction of 30 TDs (15 Ministers including Taoiseach and Tánaiste as well as 15 Ministers of State) does not leave much variation in the data. To put it bluntly, there are simply too few experienced TDs available to be assigned to committees (see also O'Malley, 2006).

So far, the analysis has focused on the probability of being assigned to committees of low and high importance. But in fact, legislators can be assigned to multiple committees and all of them or none can be of high importance. It is worthwhile to check whether those who are far away from the party ideologically or have a small number of legislative periods get assigned to fewer committees (regardless of whether these are considered to be of high or low importance). This was done by running a simple linear regression analysis which uses the overall number of committees that a legislator has served on in the course of the legislative period as the dependent variable and the two partisan variables (number of legislative periods and ideological distance to party mean) as independent variables.¹⁶⁷ With regard to the data of the 30th Dáil, the coefficient of the variable ideological distance indicates a significant negative relationship with the total number of committees ($\beta_1 = -0.081$, $p = 0.043$). This is an interesting finding. Although the variable indicating the importance of committees does not significantly moderate the impact of the two partisan variables, the data suggests that legislators who are further away from their party mean get fewer committee assignments. The number of legislative periods does not significantly predict the number of committees ($\beta_2 = -0.028$, $p = 0.439$). Similar patterns can also be found in other legislative periods, although only to a certain degree. In the 29th Dáil neither of the variables pass common significance levels (although the variable measuring the number of legislative periods barely misses the 10 per cent threshold ($p = 0.117$). In the 28th Dáil both variables significantly predict the number of committee assignments (ideological distance $\beta_1 = -0.007$, $p = 0.064$; number of legislative periods $\beta_2 = -0.063$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate the presence of partisan influences when parliamentary party groups decide on the overall allocation of committees (regardless of their importance). However, none of the interviewees mentioned such partisan considerations during the interviews to provide further evidence.

¹⁶⁶ In the Irish context, S. Martin (2014b) refers to positions such as (junior) ministers, committee (vice) chairs as 'mega-seats'. His analysis shows that the mechanism for allocating these positions has a significant influence on the behaviour of legislators.

¹⁶⁷ $\text{Number.of.committees}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 * \text{ideol.dist}_i + \beta_2 * \text{nr.of.legisl.periods}_i + \epsilon$, where the first variable indicates the ideological distance to the mean of the parliamentary party group and the second measures the number of legislative periods a legislator has served.

In the Bundestag, the ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean significantly affects the assignment probability to being assigned to a committee (compared to committees that are regarded as unimportant). Although not highly significant the effect is found in several legislative periods and is also present when committee experience is included. The findings are much more diverse with regard to the number of legislative periods. Only in the 12th, 13th (model 1), 17th (model 1) and 18th Bundestag the variable has a significant effect. Contrary to the assignment patterns of full members, which can at least partially be linked to partisan considerations, the assignment of substitute members cannot. Conceptually, this is not surprising. *If* a parliamentary party group might decide to intervene with regard to high importance committees, the choice to do so for full members is much more logical.¹⁶⁸ To facilitate the interpretation of the effects Figure 5.5 plots the predicted probabilities of the ideological distance and the number of legislative periods with regard to both types of committees for the 17th Bundestag.

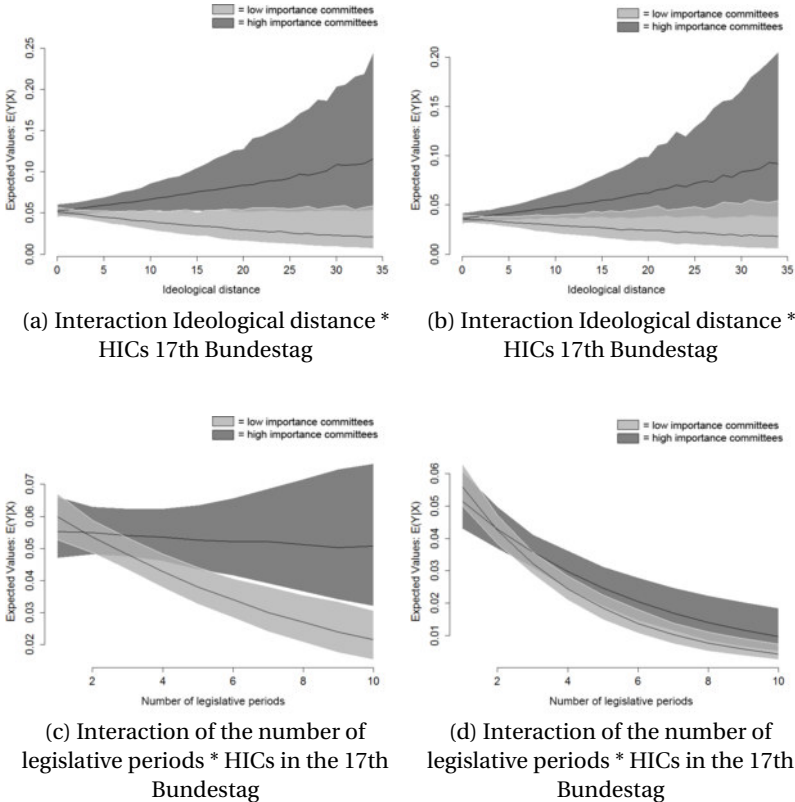
To summarise from this data, partisan considerations with regard to the number of legislative periods are not entirely absent in the Bundestag (see plot c) and d) in Figure 5.5). Interaction terms for the 14th to 17th legislative periods presented similar patterns.¹⁶⁹ With regard to the other partisan variable, the plot displays what is already indicated by the negative coefficient of the interaction of ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean and high importance committees: the probability to be assigned to a high importance committee actually *increases* with growing ideological distance from the parliamentary party group (see both pictures in the upper row). This completely reverses the prediction of the partisan theory (see plot a) and b) in Figure 5.5). Based on this data one is even more likely to be assigned to a high importance committee compared to a committee of low importance, the further away a legislator is ideologically from the mean of the parliamentary party group. This interesting finding was approached in the interviews and will be further addressed later in the chapter.

With regard to the number of legislative periods (lower row) the figure

¹⁶⁸ As has been described above, legislators who could not be scored with the Wordscores approach (because they have not given a speech) received the average of the parliamentary party group for the analysis (see p. 123). These are usually members who dropped out of parliament shortly after the start of the legislative period. However, it could be argued that those may rather be outlying members, which may explain why they did not give a speech. I checked this by re-running all analyses for Germany and the Netherlands (there were no missing values in the Dáil) but assigned those legislators who initially received a mean score the most extreme value of 99. There are basically no differences in the results in terms of significance levels of the other variables. Some minor changes occur with regard to the interaction effect. In Germany, the variable passes the 10 per cent threshold in the 13th Bundestag (which it did not before) but the effect that was found in the 17th and 18th Bundestag in the other model vanishes. In the Netherlands, there was no noteworthy change, either. The only change is that the effect found in Model 1 of the current legislative period for full members vanishes when including the new variable. The number of legislators who received a different score is very low. As was indicated above, the change only applies to n=91 legislators in Germany and 40 out of 1175 legislators the Netherlands.

¹⁶⁹ The output and plots can be obtained from the author.

Figure 5.5: Visualisation of the interaction effects of ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean (upper row) and number legislative periods (lower row) with high and low importance committees 17th Bundestag (Model 1 shown in first column, Model 2 shown in second column, only full members)



Source: Own depiction. The two plots per legislative period show the effect of the interaction term for the model excluding committee experience (left column) as well as the model including committee experience (right column). The plots show the likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee (dark grey confidence interval) and a low importance committee (light grey confidence interval). The Y-axis was cropped in some plots to better visualise the effect.

indicates an interesting pattern. The two slopes cross at two legislative periods (i.e. not being a freshmen) and thus indicate that the higher the number of legislative periods the smaller the chance of being assigned to a low importance committee compared to a high importance committee. With regard to high importance committees, the likelihood does not decrease equally sharp. Due to the inclusion of committee experience as a predictor (which is the only difference between Model 1 and Model 2) the effect is not strong in the plot for Model 2 (see plot d) in Figure 5.5). Even though the general pattern is still

present in the data, the effect is not significant and is very small when compared to the effect of external interests, advantages in knowledge and committee experience.

Similar to the additional test in the Dáil it was also checked whether the overall number of committees (regardless of whether these are considered to be of high or low importance) varies with regard to ideological distance and the number of legislative periods.¹⁷⁰ Interestingly, the data of the Bundestag indicates that there is indeed a relationship between the number of legislative periods and the number of assignments. In the 17th Bundestag there is a significant negative relationship of the number of legislative periods with the total number of committees ($\beta_2 = -0.077, p < 0.001$). The ideological distance does not pass common significance levels ($\beta_1 = -0.009, p = 0.224$). Similar patterns with regard to the number of legislative periods can also be seen in earlier legislative periods¹⁷¹ as well as the current 18th legislative period ($\beta_2 = -0.087, p < 0.001$). There appears to be a pattern that more senior legislators get assigned fewer committees. There is, however, no evidence that those legislators who are further away from their party mean get fewer committee assignments. Strictly speaking, a significant relationship of the ideological distance with the number of committees would be a clearer indication of withholding committee assignments. It is plausible to assume that long-standing members might be given fewer committees. They might be given certain responsibilities within the parliamentary party group which are more demanding in terms of time and effort (coordinating policy areas or becoming spokespersons) and are therefore 'compensated' by being given fewer committees. A 'structuring' hand of the parliamentary party group leadership based on ideological closeness is not present.

To summarise the results of the statistical model, some evidence is visible for the effect of the number of legislative periods on committee assignments in the Bundestag. This was also highlighted in the interviews which confirmed that a certain hierarchical order is present. Several respondents argued that for freshmen it is sometimes difficult to get into crucial committees (e.g. interviews German Bundestag, 150130B; 150212A; 150120A; 150202A; 150119B). However, this is not a fixed rule which would trump factors like a fitting aptitude of a legislator. Legislators frequently argued that a "mixture" is aimed for (Interview Bundestag, 150128B, also 150129A). They were e.g. able to give examples of freshmen in the Budget Committee (Interview Bundestag, 150130B). This fits nicely into the large picture that committees are first and foremost used for the policy-related work of the parliamentary party group. Rather than clustering very experienced MPs in one committee, parliamentary party groups appear to

¹⁷⁰ $\text{Number.of.committees}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 * \text{ideol.dist}_1 + \beta_2 * \text{nr.of.legisl.periods} + \epsilon$, where the first variable indicates the ideological distance to the mean of the parliamentary party group and the second measures the number of legislative periods a legislator has served.

¹⁷¹ 16th Bundestag: $\beta_2 = -0.060, p < 0.001$; 15th Bundestag: $\beta_2 = -0.094, p < 0.001$; 14th Bundestag: $\beta_2 = -0.095, p < 0.001$. The ideological distance does not pass significance levels in any of these legislative periods.

be wary of risking to leave a knowledge gap in a committee once those legislators discontinue their career. There is no evidence of ‘reserving’ seats for experienced legislators. On the contrary, the system can best be described as self-selection with restrictions. How little the parliamentary party group leadership intervenes in committee assignments in the Bundestag was underlined by an interviewed legislator who argued that several committee delegations of a parliamentary party group¹⁷² are indeed outlying with regard to their ideological views. This has ramifications for how the parliamentary party group views what is ‘going on’ in the discussions among the member of this committee delegation.

“In practice, for some committee delegations of my parliamentary party group, and that is especially applicable to the one I am in, which do not reflect the political majority in the parliamentary party group, the distrust [of the parliamentary party group] is greater”
(Interview Bundestag, 150130E)

When asked why such an outlying group of legislators was ‘allowed’ to cluster in a committee, the legislator depicted the role of the parliamentary party group leadership as largely absent:

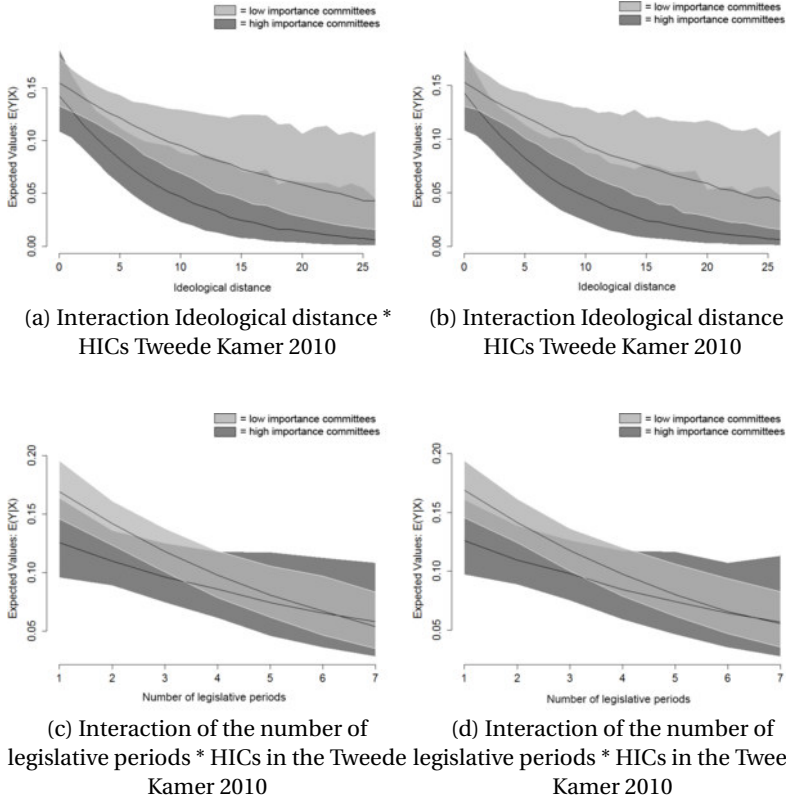
“Those legislators wanted in and the parliamentary party group leadership did not argue about it. They could have said ‘we don’t want you and you to be in there but would ask him or her’. But they did not and because of that it is politically unbalanced, so to speak.”
(Interview Bundestag, 150130E)

In the Tweede Kamer, there is little evidence that partisan influences occur with regard to committees of high and low importance. With only two exceptions in the 1998 legislative period, none of the partisan variables pass common significance levels. Contrary to the Bundestag and the Dáil in which the coefficients mostly point into the same direction across all legislative periods (two exceptions in each of the legislatures) there is a less stable pattern in the Tweede Kamer. Based on the model summaries, the effect is reversed in many models. The pattern is also not much clearer when excluding small parliamentary party groups. Figure 5.6 plots the interaction effects of ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean (upper row) and number legislative periods (lower row) with high and low importance committees for the 2010-2012 legislative period.

Contrary to the prediction of the partisan theory, the likelihood to be assigned to high or low importance committees in the Tweede Kamer also fails to show a meaningful pattern. Looking at the effect concerning the ideological

¹⁷² In the Bundestag, legislators from the same committee form a within-PPG work group. A within-PPG work group refers to a group of legislators from one parliamentary party group who work on the same broader policy area.

Figure 5.6: Visualisation of the interaction effects of ideological distance from the parliamentary party group mean (upper row) and number legislative periods (lower row) with high and low importance committees in the Tweede Kamer 2010-2012 (Model 1 shown in first column, Model 2 shown in second column, only full members)



Source: Own depiction. The two plots per legislative period show the effect of the interaction term for the model excluding committee experience (left column) as well as the model including committee experience (right column). The plots show the likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee (dark grey confidence interval) and a low importance committee (light grey confidence interval). The Y-axis was cropped in some plots to better visualise the effect.

distance (see plot a) and b) in Figure 5.6) and the number of legislative periods (see plot c) and d) in Figure 5.6) it is difficult to see a meaningful pattern in the data. Interviewed legislators backed this general impression from the statistical analysis, but several legislators hinted at the existence of a hierarchical principle (e.g. Interview Tweede Kamer, 150527A, 150423A, 150430B). One interviewed legislator argued that it would be logical that “someone who has been in the Chamber for ten years and has much experience would rather get a central portfolio than someone who is 28 years with little life experience” (Interview

Tweede Kamer, 150423A). However, legislators generally argued that a seniority principle is not applicable any more because the Dutch parliament has developed into one with a relatively high turnover (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150422B). One legislator mentioned that a seniority principle would have been applied more clearly in the past, but not any more:

“In earlier legislative periods there were fights over, let’s say, the portfolios on infrastructure and traffic within the VVD. But the portfolios differ across parliamentary party groups. That was natural, the car was an issue that belongs the VVD. And a newcomer would really not get that portfolio. And now we have a relatively new member on it. So that simply changed, they look at it more businesslike. It is also less so that those with seniority can claim it.”
(Interview Tweede Kamer, 150527C)

As the last step, it was tested what influence the ideological distance and the number of legislative periods has with the overall number of committees (regardless of whether these are considered to be of high or low importance).¹⁷³ Small parliamentary party group (who are often formally member of a committee) were excluded from the analysis in order to prevent a bias. In several of the analysed legislative periods the variable ideological distance is negatively related to the number of committees and passes common significance levels¹⁷⁴ The number of legislative periods does not pass significance levels in the analysed legislative periods with one exception (1998 legislative period: $\beta_2 = -0.208$, $p = 0.021$). There is some evidence that legislators who are further away from their party mean get fewer committee assignments in the larger parliamentary party groups of the Tweede Kamer.

The implications of these results with regard to the theoretical framework are mixed. It is clear that the parliamentary party group leadership coordinates the assignment process (usually through the whip). Legislators who wish to serve on a committee need to go through these ‘gatekeepers’. However, in terms of autonomous decisions of the parliamentary party group leadership, the evidence is more nuanced. All legislators in the Tweede Kamer and the Bundestag highlighted the possibility to voice their wishes and also the responsiveness of the parliamentary party group leadership which tries to accommodate these wishes. The analysis indicates that a pattern exists in the assignment patterns of legislators to high and low importance committees based on the number of legislative periods. The effect is, however, small and should not be overstated. There is no evidence of a clear distinction between legislators and a ‘greasy pole’ that freshmen have to climb in order to ‘qualify’ for a more important committee. The effect is also not stable across all

¹⁷³ $\text{Number.of.committees}_i = \alpha + \beta_1 * \text{ideol.dist}_i + \beta_2 * \text{nr.of.legisl.periods}_i + \epsilon$, where the first variable indicates the ideological distance to the mean of the parliamentary party group and the second measures the number of legislative periods a legislator has served.

¹⁷⁴ 1998 legislative period: $\beta_1 = -0.141$, $p < 0.001$; 2003 legislative period: $\beta_1 = -0.063$, $p = 0.024$; 2010 legislative period: $\beta_1 = -0.119$, $p = 0.052$.

legislative periods but is only significant in half of the analysed terms. However, an effect is visible and cannot be ruled out entirely. The same goes for the additional analysis that was carried out which tested the effect whether the ideological distance and the number of legislative periods are related to the overall number of committees (regardless of whether these are considered to be of high or low importance). The results vary and no clear stable pattern emerged. An interesting result refers to the data of larger parliamentary party groups in the Tweede Kamer. Although there does not appear to be a structural effect across all legislative periods, the data suggests that those legislators who are further away from their party mean get fewer committee assignments. This could hint at a more proactive role of the parliamentary party group leadership which may not withhold high importance committees to legislators who are further away in terms of their ideologically but keep them from joining committees in the first place. However, the results of the simple regression analysis should also not be overinterpreted. The effect is only visible in one legislature and even there it is not consistent across legislative periods. Furthermore, it was not highlighted by any of the interviewed legislators.

Are Committees Used to Control Coalition Partners? The Frequency of ‘Watchdog’ Chairs

The test of the ‘keeping tabs’ rationale in this study concerning the *assignment patterns* is the number of watchdog chairs for each cabinet.¹⁷⁵ What constitutes a new cabinet follows the conditions by Lijphart (1984) (see for a short summary p. 127). The data set built up for the study at hand provides a possibility to extend the study by Kim and Loewenberg (2005).¹⁷⁶ How the parliamentary party group membership of (vice) chairs in all analysed committees¹⁷⁷ is related to the party membership of government ministers is shown in Table 5.9 for Germany (1998-2013), Table 5.10 for Ireland (28th - 31st Dáil)¹⁷⁸ and in Table 5.11 for the Netherlands (1998 - 2012).¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Information on government formation in Germany based on *Datenhandbuch zur Geschichte des Deutschen Bundestages 1990 bis 2010*, (Feldkamp, 2010); in Ireland: Department of the Taoiseach (1997, 28th Dáil) Took and Donnelly (2002, 29th Dáil); Took and Donnelly (2007, 30th Dáil); In the Netherlands: Parlement & Politiek (1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012).

¹⁷⁶ Kim and Loewenberg (2005) shows that the CDU/CSU and the SPD place watchdog chairs only about half as often as they could have between 1961 and 1998. In a coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP they were put in place nearly all of the possible time (Kim & Loewenberg, 2005, p. 1113)

¹⁷⁷ For the list of analysed committees, see p. 286.

¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the list of committee assignments obtained from the Dáil did not list the committee chairs. It was possible for me to find data on the 28th and subsequent legislative periods in the committee minutes, but I was not able to find data on the 27th Dáil.

¹⁷⁹ In case a minister was shadowed by more than one committee, each committee chair was counted. For example, during the 27th Government of the 30th Dáil (14 June 2007 until 7 May 2008), the Minister of Arts, Sport and Tourism well as the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs were shadowed by one committee: the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Sport, Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Formerly Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs). Both chairs were legislators of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party group. Ministers without party affiliation were excluded from the overview.

Table 5.9: Overview of parliamentary party group membership of committee (vice) chairs in relation to the party membership of government ministers in Germany (1998-2013)

Government (starting in)	Coalition PPG	Number chairs ¹⁸⁰	'Watchdogs' (%)	Number vice chairs	'Watchdogs' (%)
<i>Germany</i> ¹⁸¹					
Kohl IV (1990-1994)	CDU/CSU	9	44.4 %	8	25 %
	FDP	2	100 %	2	100 %
	Others	7		8	
Kohl V (1994-1998)	CDU/CSU	9	33.3 %	6	0 %
	FDP	2	100 %	1	100 %
	Others	5		9	
Schröder I (1998-2002)	SPD	9	33 %	3	0 %
	B 90/GR	1	100 %	2	50 %
	Others	5		9	
Schröder II (2002-2005)	SPD	7	28.5 %	5	20 %
	B 90/GR	1	100 %	1	0 %
	Others	5		7	
Merkel I (2005-2009)	CDU/CSU	5	100 %	4	50 %
	SPD	6	83 %	4	50 %
	Others	3		5	
Merkel II (2009-2013)	CDU/CSU	5	80 %	5	0 %
	FDP	3	100 %	1	100 %
	Others	6		8	
Merkel III (2013-)	CDU	7	43 %	6	50 %
	SPD	5	100 %	4	50 %
	Others	2		4	

Looking at the distribution of committee (vice) chairs in the Bundestag it is noticeable that a relatively large number of (vice) chair positions are held by opposition parliamentary party groups (indicated as 'Others' in the table). This is due to the fact that these positions are assigned proportionally across parliamentary party groups. In four of the six analysed legislative periods, the

For example, in the Schröder I (14th legislative period) cabinet, Werner Müller was appointed Federal Minister for Economy and Technology without party affiliation. In case a ministerial portfolio changed from one coalition parliamentary party group to another during the legislative period, the overview lists both instances. The exception were very short transfers. As an example, during the Kok II cabinet in the Netherlands, K.G. de Vries (PvdA) was appointed as Minister for Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Fishery for a very brief period (7 June 1999 until 9 June 1999) before another minister from D66 was appointed.

¹⁸⁰ The overview only lists committees which have a direct link to a committee. As an example, the Legal Affairs Committee in Germany does not shadow a particular ministry and was therefore excluded.

¹⁸¹ This overview also includes the Legal Affairs Committee (*Rechtsausschuss* (Legal Affairs and Consumer Protection in the 18th Bundestag). Although it is involved in the consultation regarding all laws, including check on legal technicalities, the overview refers to the party membership of the Federal Minister of Justice (Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection

two larger parliamentary party groups (CDU/CSU and SPD) were able to form a coalition with a smaller parliamentary party group (the liberal FDP, respectively the Green Party). In these instances, the government formed a relatively narrow minimum winning coalition. Due to their strength, opposition parliamentary party groups were entitled to a number of committee chairs and vice chairs. In times of a 'Grand coalition' between CDU/CSU and SPD (2002-2005 and the legislative period starting in 2013), fewer chairs are distributed among opposition parliamentary party groups.

A closer comparison of the number of (vice) chairs belonging to the government parliamentary party groups and the party affiliation of government ministers shows an interesting pattern which supports the prediction of the 'keeping tabs' perspective. In the 12th Bundestag (1990-1994), the FDP, as the smaller coalition parliamentary party group, occupied two chairs of committees which have a direct link to a ministerial portfolio (Health, Finance), both CDU/CSU led ministries. They also had two vice chairs, both connected to ministries of the CDU/CSU. The CDU/CSU parliamentary party group occupied nine committee chairs of which four 'shadow' the five ministers of the FDP.¹⁸² One chair of a committee corresponding to an FDP-led ministry was occupied with a legislator from the SPD. The CDU/CSU parliamentary party group had the vice chair position in this committee. In the 13th Bundestag (1994-1998), the FDP followed the same strategy with the committee chairs it had. Both full chairs, as well as the vice chair, are linked to CDU/CSU-led ministries. CDU/CSU committee chairs shadow all three FDP ministers. As these already exhaust all possible ministries from the coalition partner, no vice chair from the CDU/CSU 'shadows' an FDP-led ministry.

During the Schröder I cabinet (1998-2002) the SPD chaired all three committees corresponding to Federal Ministries initially led by the coalition partner, the Green Party. The only committee chair of the Green Party 'shadowed' an SPD-led ministry. An interesting situation occurred in the course of this legislative period when the SPD and the Green Party 'swapped' two ministerial portfolios in January 2001. The Federal Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry¹⁸³, first belonging to the SPD, and the Federal Minister of Health, formerly held by the Green Party. However, there was no subsequent change in the committee chairs. The committee corresponding to the Federal Minister of Health, now led by the new minister of health, Ulla Schmidt (SPD), remained in the hands of an SPD legislator. The committee corresponding to the second ministry involved in the swap remained to be controlled by a committee chaired by a CDU/CSU legislator. The vice chairs also did not see any changes. Strictly speaking, if parliamentary party groups would value the 'watchdog' chairs highly, a shuffle with regard to chairs would have been expected as well. This did not occur which indicates that there is certainly no 'automatism' in the assignment pattern.

¹⁸² The FDP also led the Federal Ministry of Justice.

¹⁸³ The portfolio was renamed after this to 'Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture'.

Similar patterns can be seen in the 15th Bundestag (2002-2005). SPD legislators shadowed two ministries from the coalition partner, the Greens ‘use’ their only full chair for a committee which shadows an SPD minister. Interestingly, the committee for External Affairs, which was led by Joseph Fischer (Green Party), was not chaired by an SPD legislator, but an MP from the CDU/CSU. The SPD did, however, have the vice chair on this committee. A similar situation occurred in the 17th Bundestag during the cabinet Merkel II (2009-2013): CDU/CSU as well as FDP (vice) chairs shadow all ministries from the coalition partner. The only exception was the Federal Ministry of Health. The corresponding parliamentary committee was chaired by a legislator from the SPD, a legislator from the Left acted as vice chair.

The numbers also point into this direction in times of a ‘Grand Coalition’ between CDU/CSU and SPD (16th Bundestag, 2005-2009, and 18th Bundestag, since 2013). In the 16th Bundestag five out of five chairs from the CDU/CSU shadow a minister from the SPD (five out of six in case of the SPD). At the beginning of the 18th Bundestag, five chairs of the SPD fulfil the role of watchdog to four ministries by the CDU/CSU. However, only three committee chairs of the CDU/CSU ‘shadow’ six SPD ministers (two chairs corresponding to SPD ministries are held by the Greens, one by the SPD).

There is certainly a pattern in the data which provides support for the ‘keeping tab’ logic. However, the data are not unambiguous. During coalitions of a smaller parliamentary party group and a larger parliamentary party group the number of ministerial positions of smaller parliamentary party group is relatively small. This means that only small numbers of ‘shadowed’ ministers indicate a perfect match. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that in many cases, parliamentary party groups place members on chairs of committees which correspond to ministries of the coalition partner.

The patterns in the Dáil are difficult to interpret. The overview indicates that the majority of ministerial offices and chairs were held by one parliamentary party group in the 28th to 30th Dáil. This makes it difficult to falsify the prediction of the ‘keeping tabs’ perspective in these legislative periods. Government parliamentary party groups keep so many committee chairs for their own parliamentary party group as they are sometimes allocated to legislators to soften the disappointment of not becoming a minister (Interview Dáil, 151203D). In the Irish context, S. Martin (2014b) refers to committee (vice) chairs positions as ‘mega-seats’ (this also includes positions as (junior) ministers). His analysis shows that the mechanism for allocating these positions has a significant influence on the behaviour of legislators. Chairs are attractive and sought after because they are an additional source of power and also qualifies TDs for an extra allowance.

The 25th Government during the 28th Dáil (1997 - 2002) comprised only one

¹⁸⁴ The vice chair of the Joint Committee on Communications, Marine and Natural Resources Debate was held by Senator Michael Finucane.

¹⁸⁵ Following a ministerial reshuffling on the on the 20th of January 2011 during the course of the 30th Dáil

Table 5.10: Overview of parliamentary party group membership of committee (vice) chairs in relation to the party membership of government ministers in Ireland (28th - 31st Dáil)

Government (starting in)	Coalition PPG	Number chairs	'Watchdogs' (%)	Number vice chairs	'Watchdogs' (%)
<i>Ireland</i>					
26th Government (2002)	FF	12	17 %	9 ¹⁸⁴	0 %
	PD	0	-	0	-
	Others	2		4	
27th Government (2007)	FF	11	27 %	8	12.5 %
	Independent	1	100 %	0	-
	Green Party	1	100 %	0	-
	Others	1		6	
28th Government (2008)	FF	11	27 %	8	12.5 %
	Independent	1	100 %	0	-
	Green Party	1	100 %	0	-
	Others	1		6	
28th Government (2011 ¹⁸⁵)	FF	11	0 %	7	0 %
	Independent	1	100 %	0	-
	Green Party	1	100 %	0	-
	Others	1		7	
29th Government (2011-)	FG	12	42 %	4	25 %
	Labour	3	100 %	11	63.5 %

TD not from Fianna Fáil: Mary Harney, who was appointed as Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (see Department of the Taoiseach, 1997). The corresponding committee was chaired by a Fianna Fáil legislator. During the 26th government in the course of the 29th Dáil (2002-2007), Fianna Fáil occupied almost all ministries as well as all committee chairs. Of fourteen ministerial offices, only the Minister of Justice, as well as the Minister of Health, remained in the hands of the Progressive Democrats. Both corresponding committees were chaired by Fianna Fáil legislators. Two opposition parliamentary party groups were given one committee chair each. Vice chairs were also mostly held by Fianna Fáil legislators (nine committees), four were held by independent TDs or opposition parliamentary party groups and none by the Progressive Democrats.

In the 30th Dáil (2007-2011), the government coalition was composed of Fianna Fáil, the Green Party, the Progressive Democrats, as well as several independent TDs. Following the resignation of Bertie Ahern as Taoiseach on 6 May 2008, the 28th Government consisted of Fianna Fáil, the Green Party, two independent TDs as well as (initially) the Progressive Democrats. After 2009, the Progressive Democrats were disbanded, increasing the number of independent TDs, including Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney.

Similar to earlier legislative periods, Fianna Fáil occupied almost all ministries as well as all chairs of committees. 12 out of 15 ministries were led by

Fianna Fáil. However, with regard to the few chairs/ministries which were not occupied by Fianna Fáil the prediction of the keeping tabs perspective holds true: the committee chairs corresponding to the three ministries not controlled by Fianna Fáil were always held by Fianna Fáil legislators. The only two committee chairs which were assigned to the coalition partners of Fianna Fáil shadowed a Fianna Fáil minister. These are small numbers, but they support the prediction as well. Following a ministerial reshuffle of the 28th government on the 20th of January 2011, Fianna Fáil held all ministerial offices. Two committee chairs remained in the hands of legislators of the Green Party and an independent TD and therefore 'shadowed' the Fianna Fáil ministers. All vice chairs remained in the hands of Fianna Fáil or opposition parliamentary party groups.

In the 31st Dáil numbers are more evenly distributed among coalition partners. Fine Gael and Labour allocated the ministerial portfolios in the 31st Dáil in a 2:1 ratio. In this legislative period, the distribution of watchdog chairs allows for a more thorough test of the prediction of the 'keeping tabs' perspective. The numbers support the prediction of the perspective: All three Labour committee chairs shadow a Fine Gael minister, no Labour minister is shadowed by a Labour committee chair. The corresponding chairs of committees supervising Labour controlled ministries are all held by Fine Gael TDs. This is also true with regard to vice chairs. In the majority of cases, committee vice chairs of the Labour parliamentary party group sit on corresponding committees of Fine Gael ministers, and vice versa.

In the Tweede Kamer, the combination of minister and chairs from the same party varies across legislative periods. In the cabinet Kok I (1994-1998), PvdA legislators acted, without exception, as the chairs of committees corresponding to ministries of the coalition partner. This is also true for the VVD, with one exception, as well as for D66. With regard to vice chair positions, the numbers do not support the prediction of the 'keeping tabs' perspective. The pattern with regard to full chairs is also visible in the cabinet Kok II (1998-2002).¹⁸⁶ PvdA as well as the VVD had most of their chairs on committees which were led by a minister of a coalition partner. D66 only had one full chair on the committee dealing with agriculture, nature conservation and fishery. Contrary to the predictions of the 'keeping tabs' perspective, the corresponding ministry was also in the hands of D66.¹⁸⁷

During the cabinet Balkenende I (2002-2003) two ministers are shadowed by a committee chair from the same parliamentary party group. Regarding full chairs, the VVD uses three of its four chairs on committees corresponding to ministries led by its coalition partners. The CDA pursues the same strategy in half of its

¹⁸⁶ Ten chairs (of twelve committees) shadow a minister from the coalition partner, one is held by an opposition legislator and one chair is held by a legislator who shares the same party as the minister.

¹⁸⁷ First, minister H. H. Apotheker (3 August 1998 - 7 June 1999), later minister L. J. Brinkhorst (8 June 1999 - 22 July 2002). The ministry was, for a brief period, led by minister de Vries (PvdA) (7 June 1999 - 9 June 1999).

full committee chairs, and all of its vice chairs. This cabinet was followed by the cabinet Balkenende II. Interestingly, even fewer committee chairs align with the prediction of the keeping tabs perspective. In the case of the CDA, only two out of six full chairs 'shadow' a ministry belonging to the coalition partner.

The subsequent cabinet Balkenende III was a minority government coalition of CDA and VVD. The distribution of chairs and vice chairs shifted even more towards the combination of chair and minister being from the same party. Of eight committees chairs by the coalition partners, only three 'shadow' a minister from the other parliamentary party group. A similar picture can be seen with regard to vice chairs. A reason for this might be the nature of this cabinet, whose main task was the preparation of the general elections in November 2006 and the planning of the 2007 Budget. This could explain why parliamentary party groups approached the allocation of chair positions with a different logic.

This pattern continued in the cabinet Balkenende IV. Most committee chairs were either filled by legislators from the PvdA as well as the CDA. The CDA only had one 'watchdog' chair, four chairs of this parliamentary party group belonged to committees which correspond to a CDA-led ministry. This is also true for the numbers regarding vice chairs. Interestingly, the numbers of the PvdA align closer with the prediction of the 'keeping tabs' perspective. Three out of four chairs, as well as both vice chairs 'shadow' a ministry led by the coalition partner. The ChristenUnie, the smallest coalition parliamentary party group, did not have a chair of a committee. On February 20, 2010, the cabinet fell. The PvdA left office, while the CDA and the ChristenUnie both took over the ministerial portfolios from the PvdA until a cabinet was installed after the election in June 2010. There were hardly any changes on the level of committee (vice) chairs. The CDA continued the same strategy of chairing committees which mirror its own ministries.

In the most recent Rutte I and Rutte II cabinets this development is continued. There are frequent exceptions to the prediction of the 'keeping tabs' perspective. During the cabinet Rutte I no clear line is visible, also not in the cabinet Rutte II. The numbers in the legislative period starting in 2012 indicate that both parliamentary party groups do not necessarily put much weight on a 'watchdog' assignment logic.

To conclude from this overview, the image provided by the three legislatures is not unambiguous. It is certainly true that it occurs that committee chairs shadow a minister from the coalition partner in most legislative periods. Nevertheless, frequent exceptions are visible.

¹⁸⁸ The general committee for Immigration and Asylum (*algemene commissie voor Immigratie en Asiel*) was initially chaired by a legislator from the PVV (chair) and the PvdA (vice chair). After September 2011, it was chaired by a legislator from the VVD. The vice chair was a legislator from D66. This combination for the remainder of the legislative period was basis for the counting.

¹⁸⁹ Including the PVV which had one full chair and one vice chair.

Table 5.11: Overview of parliamentary party group membership of committee (vice) chairs in relation to the party membership of government ministers in the Netherlands (1998 - 2012)

Government (starting in)	Coalition PPG	Number chairs	'Watchdogs' (%)	Number vice chairs	'Watchdogs' (%)
<i>Netherlands</i>					
Kok I (1994-1998)	PvdA	5	100 %	3	33 %
	VVD	3	66 %	4	0 %
	D66	1	100 %	1	0 %
	Others	3		4	
Kok II (1998-2002)	PvdA	5	80 %	3	33 %
	VVD	3	100 %	3	33 %
	D66	1	0 %	1	100 %
	Others	3		4	
Balkenende I (2002-2003)	VVD	4	75 %	2	50 %
	CDA	4	50 %	2	100 %
	LPF	0	-	5	100 %
	Others	2		2	
Balkenende II (2003-2006)	VVD	3	66 %	2	50 %
	CDA	6	33 %	4	75 %
	D66	0	-	0	-
	Others	4		6	
Balkenende III (2006)	CDA	5	20 %	4	50 %
	VVD	3	66 %	2	50 %
	Others	4		4	
Balkenende IV (2007-2010)	PvdA	4	75 %	2	100 %
	CDA	5	20 %	4	25 %
	ChristenUnie	0	-	0	-
	Others	5	5		
Balkenende IV (02/2010)	CDA	7	28.5 %	3	0 %
	CU	-	0	-	
	Others	7		11	
Rutte I (2010-2012)	VVD ¹⁸⁸	4	75 %	2	50 %
	CDA	1	0 %	1	0 %
	Others ¹⁸⁹	5		5	
Rutte II (since 2012)	PvdA	5	40 %	5	40 %
	VVD	4	50 %	6	60 %
	Others	4		3	

'Beyond the Theoretical Framework': Country-Specific Influences

Apart from cross-checking the results of the statistical analysis and the variables deduced from the theoretical framework, the interviews also aimed to discover new, more country-specific influences and patterns. Although the respondents highlighted the central variables, some other factors were also mentioned.

In all legislatures, respondents pointed towards a "tradition" (Interview Dáil, 141202A; Interview Tweede Kamer, 150208B) that former ministers would not join the corresponding committee after their term is over. In the Bundestag, one

respondent argued that it is seen as 'bad style' and frowned upon to join a committee if one has worked in the ministry as minister or under-secretary of state. This would mean that one would control those with whom one has worked before. Former ministers would usually make a clear cut and continue in a different policy area (Interview Bundestag, 150130G). As mentioned above, legislators self-report that the Foreign Affairs Committee notoriously clusters former ministers which is why it was referred to as a "patent shoe" committee (Interview Bundestag, 150115D). Similarly, legislators in the Tweede Kamer argued that former ministers would then have to correct and control their own successors which is a bad combination (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150429A; see also 150430B). Although this is not an iron rule, it restrains the number of possible assignments and is therefore noteworthy.

In the Dáil the constituency link was also mentioned in a more unexpected way during the interviews. A similar reasoning, but with a different 'target' was mentioned by a respondent who argued that an opposition party might pursue a strategy to "assign an individual with a personality to do most damage to the minister [...] and it is quite effective when the minister and the opposition spokesperson share a constituency" (Interview Dáil, 141205B).

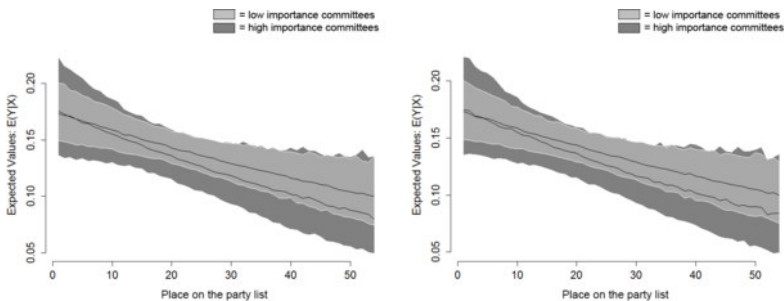
These factors all are applicable to a few cases and do not distort the larger picture. A more general gate-keeping principle for central portfolios in the Tweede Kamer is the position on the candidate list. This was a frequently mentioned issue during the interviews (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150423, 150430B). It was argued that those who are relatively high on the list would more often get bigger dossiers than legislators who are lower on the list (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150430B). The adherence to the list principle is not only applicable in the case of initial assignments, but it is also applied when central portfolios become available in the course of a legislative period. During the interviews one legislator referred to a vacancy in a central portfolio for his parliamentary party group which became available during the legislative period. Several members were considered for this portfolio. However, before an eventual conflict arose in the parliamentary party group, the higher placement of a legislator was decisive and prevented an eventual conflict:

"[Another legislator] was also a logical choice but he was lower on the list[...]. I am not sure whether he wanted it, but if he would have wanted it he would not have gotten it." (Interview Tweede Kamer, 150604A)

From the statements in the interviews it became apparent that the candidate list placement is an important factor to be considered. In order to control for this, a separate analysis was conducted which includes the place on the candidate list as an additional variable. The results are listed in Appendix 22 (p. 316). The effect of the interaction term of the place on the candidate list and the number of legislative periods for the 2010-2012 legislative period is plotted below in Figure

5.7. Plots for the other legislative periods indicate a similar pattern.¹⁹⁰ Based on the analysis and the plots there is no evidence that legislators who are higher on the list have a higher chance to be assigned to a high importance committee compared to low importance committees. Although the plot shows a decreasing likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee the further down on the candidate list we go, the same is true for low importance committees (see plot a) and b) in Figure 5.7). Looking at the model summaries the interaction effect is not significant with the exception of the 2010 legislative period.

Figure 5.7: Visualisation of the interaction effects of the place on the party list with high and low importance committees Tweede Kamer 2010-2012 (Model 1 shown in plot a), Model 2 shown in plot b))



(a) Interaction place on party list * HICs Tweede Kamer 2010
(b) Interaction place on party list * HICs Tweede Kamer 2010

Source: Own depiction. The two plots show the effect of the interaction term for the model excluding committee experience (left column) as well as the model including committee experience (right column). The plots show the likelihood to be assigned to a high importance committee (dark grey confidence interval) and a low importance committee (light grey confidence interval) with varying placements on the candidate list. The Y-axis was cropped in the plots to better visualise the effect.

In the Bundestag, one factor is not yet accounted for which deserves special mentioning: the influence of the regional factions (German: *Landesgruppen*) within a parliamentary party group. Although their role in the distribution of positions within parliamentary party groups is not ‘newly discovered’, but has been acknowledged by other scholars (Petersen, 2000), the interviews gave additional evidence for their influence in the assignment to committees.

The role of the regional factions is especially important in the larger parliamentary party groups of SPD and CDU/CSU (e.g. Interview Bundestag, 150129B; 150127B; 150128D; 152901C). Legislators from the Green Party and The Left indicated that their role is not as prominent in their parliamentary party group (Interview Bundestag, 150120A; 150123B; 150128F). Regional factions exist in the latter two parliamentary party groups, especially with regard to larger *Bundesländer* (e.g. North Rhine-Westphalia), but their role was

¹⁹⁰ All interaction plots can be obtained from the author.

described as being less interested in positions but more to discuss policies (Interview Bundestag, 150123B; 150128A). In the parliamentary party groups of CDU/CSU and SPD and especially with regard to central committees, every regional faction tries to make sure to be represented on all committees. This does not translate into a clear proportional representation, there is "no automatism" (Interview Bundestag, 150127B) in the applicability of the principle. Nevertheless, there is a tendency that larger regional factions have a substantial claim for a minimum representation on a committee. Smaller parliamentary party groups, which are numerically incapable of placing legislators on each committee, try to prevent unnecessary clustering by pre-evaluating the wishes of their members. In case the wishes of legislators of small regional factions for one committee pile up they try to make sure that there is some diversity (Interview Bundestag, 150130A; 150130B).

"For the small regional faction of which I am a member, [...], it is clear that we talk about this so that we will not have four of us on the Defence Committee" (Interview Bundestag, 150119B)

Parliamentary party groups pursue this strategy to ensure communication and information in every policy area (Interview Bundestag, 150129B; 153001C). The regional spread also trumps the other factors and is therefore located at a higher level:

"There is no chance that the Budget Committee is stacked with people from Baden-Wuerttemberg, even if they are the greatest financial experts. The other regional factions will not allow this." (Interview Bundestag, 150130G)

In the CDU/CSU-parliamentary party group the role of the regional factions is highly institutionalised due to negotiations in the so-called 'carpet dealer convention' (German: *Teppichhändlerrunde*). The chairmen of the regional factions have a strong interest to enforce their legislators' list of wishes. Having the mandate of their fellow legislators, they feel obliged and accountable to them (Interview Bundestag, 150129C). In case the wish of a legislator appears to be non-satisfiable, they would report back to the legislators and ask for new input. This was illustrated during the interview with one legislator who also mentioned the satisfaction of being able to 'fulfil' all wishes of the regional faction:

"And last time, because I have been here for a long time and I was well-connected and know the system well, I have fulfilled the wishes of my legislators to 110 per cent. This meant total happiness. Only when there is a problem I would go outside and get on the phone and tell him: 'This and that happens, what should I do'? So in the case of conflict, there would be consultation. In the case of accomplishment, no consultation is necessary." (Interview Bundestag, 150128D)

In the SPD this intermediate step of involving the regional faction in a separate meeting is not present. Here, legislators directly talk to their whip who takes the regional spread into consideration. However, the chairmen of the regional factions also engage in classical lobbying during this process (Interview Bundestag, 150112A).

As has been indicated above, such mechanisms are not prevalent in the assignment process of the two smaller parliamentary party groups (the Greens and The Left). The regional factions do not play a role in the smaller parliamentary party groups. Within these parliamentary party groups, several legislators pointed to the influence of political wings. This was most prominent in the Green Party in which the 'Fundi-Realo' distinction plays a role in the assignment process (Interview Bundestag, 150114I; 150129E; 150227A, for more information on this internal strategic dispute see e.g. Doherty, 1992).

"I do not think that we have a work group exclusively with members of one wing. So this is really taken into consideration to establish a system of mutual control and balance." (Interview Bundestag, 150227A).

This spread of inner-parliamentary party group wings was also mentioned by several legislators from other parliamentary party groups but only as an additional mechanism (Interview Bundestag, 150119C). Similar considerations were not mentioned by Dutch or Irish respondents. Legislators from both smaller parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag also indicated the presence of gender considerations.

"And [the gender quota] is really enforced. If we have four seats in the Defence Committee and the members are all men and if a woman applies, then you do not even need to contest against her, she will go through." (Interview Bundestag, 150116A)

In the case of the Left, interviewed legislators also pointed to the presence of a double-quota, East-West and women-men. However, while the women-men quota is 'set', the East-West quota is merely "striven for" (Interview Bundestag, 150126A; 150129A) as the application of both principles in small committees is numerically impossible.

Table 5.12: Model summaries multiple-membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Dáil (27th - 31st legislative period)

	Dependent variable:											
	Committee membership including transfers (only TDs)											
	27th Dáil		27th Dáil		28th Dáil		29th Dáil		30th Dáil		31st Dáil	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Fixed effects:</i>												
Prior education	0.440* (0.250)	0.430* (0.250)	-0.120 (0.227)	-0.120 (0.270)	0.210 (0.250)	0.120 (0.250)	0.140 (0.240)	0.140 (0.240)	0.120 (0.210)	0.140 (0.210)	0.490* (0.260)	0.490* (0.260)
Prior occupation	0.720** (0.250)	0.660** (0.250)	0.530** (0.250)	0.530** (0.230)	0.530** (0.230)	0.560** (0.230)	0.810*** (0.230)	0.780*** (0.230)	0.840** (0.190)	0.780** (0.190)	0.720** (0.260)	0.650*** (0.260)
External experience					-0.290 (0.540)	-0.240 (0.540)	1.200* (0.630)	1.200* (0.630)	-0.032 (0.770)	-0.032 (0.770)	-0.160 (1.100)	-0.066 (1.100)
Committee experience		1.600*** (0.300)		0.390 (0.470)		1.400*** (0.220)		0.890*** (0.200)		0.890*** (0.200)		1.400*** (0.300)
High imp. coms	0.510 (0.460)	0.530 (0.480)	0.380 (0.300)	0.380 (0.300)	0.460** (0.230)	0.430* (0.230)	0.070 (0.240)	0.030 (0.250)	0.440* (0.230)	0.430* (0.240)	-0.500* (0.300)	-0.560* (0.300)
Ideal distance	0.018 (0.014)	0.019 (0.014)	0.005 (0.012)	0.005 (0.012)	0.009 (0.015)	0.009 (0.015)	-0.007 (0.020)	-0.007 (0.020)	-0.034 (0.030)	-0.045 (0.030)	-0.006 (0.037)	-0.010 (0.038)
Number LPs	0.012 (0.038)	0.011 (0.039)	-0.052 (0.033)	-0.052 (0.033)	-0.012 (0.031)	-0.012 (0.031)	-0.006 (0.034)	-0.006 (0.034)	-0.018 (0.025)	-0.018 (0.025)	-0.034 (0.039)	-0.084 (0.039)
Ideal distance * HICs	-0.041* (0.021)	-0.041* (0.021)	-0.012 (0.019)	-0.012 (0.019)	-0.040 (0.028)	-0.044 (0.028)	-0.016 (0.034)	-0.016 (0.034)	-0.120* (0.070)	-0.120* (0.070)	-0.110 (0.061)	-0.110 (0.061)
Number LPs * HICs	-0.065 (0.056)	-0.073 (0.057)	0.003 (0.050)	0.003 (0.050)	-0.073 (0.051)	-0.075 (0.052)	-0.040 (0.057)	-0.035 (0.059)	-0.011 (0.049)	-0.011 (0.051)	0.024 (0.094)	0.024 (0.094)
Constant	-2.000*** (0.330)	-2.100*** (0.350)	-1.900*** (0.200)	-1.900*** (0.200)	-1.900*** (0.150)	-1.900*** (0.150)	-2.100*** (0.150)	-2.100*** (0.150)	-2.000*** (0.120)	-2.000*** (0.120)	-2.100*** (0.180)	-2.100*** (0.180)
<i>Random effects:</i>												
Individual legislators	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Committees	(0.546)	(0.595)	(0.227)	(0.234)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.052)	(0.066)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	1240	1240	1764	1764	1980	1980	2112	2112	2835	2835	1309	1309
Log Likelihood	-548.000	-536.000	-698.000	-697.000	-804.000	-786.000	-744.000	-736.000	-1,017.000	-994.000	-458.000	-448.000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1116.000	1094.000	1415.000	1417.000	1631.000	1595.000	1511.000	1496.000	2067.000	2013.000	937.000	921.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	1167.000	1150.000	1470.000	1477.000	1692.000	1663.000	1573.000	1564.000	2122.000	2084.000	994.000	983.000

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set. Model 1 excludes the variable 'committee experience'; Model 2 includes the variable 'committee experience'.

Table 5.13: Model summaries multiple-membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Bundestag 12th to 18th legislative period (full members incl. transfers)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>													
	Committee membership (only full members including transfers)													
	12th Bundestag		13th Bundestag		14th Bundestag		15th Bundestag		16th Bundestag		17th Bundestag		18th Bundestag	
	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model	Model
<i>Fixed effects:</i>														
Prior education	0.412*** (0.106)	0.253** (0.117)	0.466*** (0.105)	0.466*** (0.123)	0.331** (0.135)	0.208 (0.151)	0.477*** (0.112)	0.503*** (0.129)	0.591*** (0.119)	0.439*** (0.141)	0.521*** (0.109)	0.491*** (0.126)	0.418*** (0.112)	0.337*** (0.127)
Prior occupation	0.914*** (0.107)	0.942*** (0.119)	0.825*** (0.112)	0.446*** (0.136)	0.802*** (0.150)	0.770*** (0.168)	0.842*** (0.118)	0.742*** (0.137)	0.775*** (0.112)	0.621*** (0.136)	0.921*** (0.111)	0.838*** (0.131)	0.724*** (0.116)	0.455*** (0.135)
External interest	0.966*** (0.111)	0.658*** (0.128)	1.065*** (0.120)	0.866*** (0.148)	1.283*** (0.105)	1.146*** (0.121)	1.145*** (0.110)	0.813*** (0.133)	0.590*** (0.129)	0.332** (0.161)	1.249*** (0.096)	0.879*** (0.116)	1.192*** (0.098)	0.989*** (0.113)
Committee experience		3.347*** (0.109)	3.875*** (0.110)	3.875*** (0.111)	3.359*** (0.105)	3.359*** (0.105)	3.359*** (0.110)	3.601*** (0.114)	3.959*** (0.119)	3.959*** (0.119)	4.133*** (0.127)	4.133*** (0.127)	3.618*** (0.118)	3.618*** (0.118)
High imp. com's	-0.008 (0.158)	0.003 (0.185)	0.047 (0.173)	0.111 (0.196)	0.223 (0.181)	0.190 (0.216)	0.071 (0.168)	-0.078 (0.217)	-0.027 (0.184)	0.042 (0.228)	-0.265 (0.162)	-0.255 (0.180)	-0.077 (0.165)	0.038 (0.182)
Ideol. distance	0.005 (0.010)	0.003 (0.111)	0.012* (0.066)	0.012 (0.097)	0.007 (0.009)	0.004 (0.010)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.001 (0.012)	-0.0002 (0.012)	0.014 (0.012)	-0.028 (0.020)	-0.020 (0.021)	0.004 (0.008)	0.004 (0.009)
Number LPs	-0.136*** (0.024)	-0.261*** (0.029)	-0.107*** (0.027)	-0.278*** (0.037)	-0.099*** (0.024)	-0.179*** (0.032)	-0.127*** (0.031)	-0.289*** (0.039)	-0.095*** (0.028)	-0.207*** (0.036)	-0.119*** (0.028)	-0.290*** (0.037)	-0.135*** (0.041)	-0.318*** (0.038)
Ideol. distance * HICs	-0.062** (0.025)	-0.051* (0.026)	-0.027* (0.014)	-0.028* (0.017)	-0.028 (0.018)	-0.021 (0.021)	-0.012 (0.019)	-0.022 (0.022)	-0.033 (0.025)	-0.038 (0.027)	0.053** (0.027)	0.049* (0.025)	-0.026 (0.017)	-0.038* (0.019)
Number LPs * HICs	0.110*** (0.049)	0.101*** (0.049)	0.048 (0.048)	0.053 (0.060)	0.001 (0.047)	-0.055 (0.059)	0.061 (0.049)	0.055 (0.065)	0.050 (0.047)	0.035 (0.061)	0.107** (0.046)	0.087 (0.060)	0.124** (0.051)	0.061 (0.065)
Constant	-2.740*** (0.083)	-2.749*** (0.097)	-2.877*** (0.099)	-2.365*** (0.112)	-2.912*** (0.103)	-3.053*** (0.120)	-2.822*** (0.102)	-2.930*** (0.125)	-2.397*** (0.107)	-3.068*** (0.130)	-2.881*** (0.097)	-2.885*** (0.107)	-2.914*** (0.095)	-2.844*** (0.105)
<i>Random effects:</i>														
Individual legislators	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Committees	(0.110)	(0.184)	(0.0.192)	(0.193)	(0.208)	(0.268)	(0.082)	(0.193)	(0.155)	(0.228)	(0.136)	(0.081)	(0.091)	(0.000)
Observations	15168	15168	13356	13356	14388	14388	11520	11520	12201	12201	12537	12537	12650	12650
Log Likelihood	-3296.687	-2853.157	-2900.056	-2256.429	-3053.771	-2571.191	-2492.328	-1986.581	-2617.163	-2028.214	-2691.925	-2091.281	-2610.232	-2146.377
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6615.374	5730.314	5822.112	4536.857	6129.541	5166.382	5006.656	3997.163	5256.327	4080.427	5405.850	4206.562	5242.464	4316.754
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	6699.270	5821.837	5904.609	4626.854	6212.857	5257.272	5087.526	4065.385	5337.829	4169.338	5487.650	4295.799	5324.363	4406.099

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set. Model 1 excludes the variable 'committee experience'; Model 2 includes the variable 'committee experience'.

Table 5.14: Model summaries multiple-membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Bundestag 12th to 18th legislative period (substitute members)

	Committee membership (only substitute members including transfers)																	
	12th Bundestag		13th Bundestag		14th Bundestag		15th Bundestag		16th Bundestag		17th Bundestag		18th Bundestag					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2				
<i>Fixed effects:</i>																		
Prior education	0.480*** (0.105)	0.325*** (0.109)	0.328*** (0.105)	0.228** (0.110)	0.334*** (0.124)	0.228* (0.128)	0.545*** (0.109)	0.442*** (0.116)	0.482*** (0.117)	0.351*** (0.124)	0.253** (0.111)	0.141 (0.117)	0.164 (0.123)	0.058 (0.131)				
Prior occupation	0.384*** (0.113)	0.308*** (0.117)	0.479*** (0.112)	0.390*** (0.118)	0.230* (0.149)	0.508*** (0.120)	0.442*** (0.128)	0.365*** (0.116)	0.164 (0.125)	0.164 (0.150)	0.580*** (0.116)	0.378*** (0.123)	0.543*** (0.126)	0.372*** (0.136)				
External interests	0.230** (0.130)	0.032 (0.137)	0.519*** (0.134)	0.395*** (0.141)	0.715** (0.112)	0.541*** (0.118)	0.673** (0.120)	0.393** (0.131)	0.331 (0.134)	0.150 (0.145)	0.627*** (0.104)	0.233 (0.112)	0.500 (0.111)	0.468** (0.119)				
Committee experience	2.057*** (0.088)	2.057*** (0.207)	2.107*** (0.134)	2.107*** (0.141)	1.910*** (0.118)	2.389*** (0.120)	2.389*** (0.131)	2.271** (0.088)	2.271** (0.088)	2.271** (0.088)	2.271** (0.088)	2.271** (0.088)	2.271** (0.088)	2.302*** (0.099)				
High imp. com's	0.159 (0.164)	0.207 (0.175)	0.203 (0.166)	0.214 (0.165)	0.421** (0.173)	0.343* (0.177)	0.325* (0.171)	0.285 (0.205)	0.087 (0.175)	0.075 (0.215)	0.116 (0.163)	0.163 (0.172)	0.080 (0.174)	0.099 (0.186)				
Ideol. distance	0.007 (0.010)	0.010 (0.010)	0.004 (0.007)	0.007 (0.008)	-0.005 (0.009)	-0.008 (0.009)	0.005 (0.010)	0.006 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.012)	0.002 (0.012)	0.011 (0.012)	0.016 (0.012)	0.016 (0.012)	0.004 (0.009)				
Number LPs	0.075** (0.022)	-0.146*** (0.025)	-0.087*** (0.027)	-0.162*** (0.030)	-0.043* (0.025)	-0.076*** (0.027)	-0.050* (0.028)	-0.140*** (0.032)	-0.025 (0.025)	-0.066** (0.028)	-0.066** (0.028)	-0.148*** (0.029)	-0.002 (0.029)	-0.093** (0.033)				
Ideol. distance * HICs	-0.024 (0.020)	-0.020 (0.020)	-0.004 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.016)	-0.001 (0.017)	-0.006 (0.017)	-0.007 (0.018)	-0.009 (0.022)	-0.003 (0.022)	-0.023 (0.024)	-0.034 (0.024)	-0.034 (0.024)	0.004 (0.015)				
Number LPs * HICs	0.059 (0.039)	0.030 (0.043)	0.011 (0.046)	0.027 (0.051)	0.023 (0.042)	0.014 (0.047)	0.014 (0.046)	0.089 (0.055)	0.029 (0.042)	0.012 (0.042)	0.012 (0.043)	0.038 (0.043)	-0.009 (0.049)	-0.067 (0.059)				
Constant	-2.746*** (0.089)	-2.803*** (0.094)	-2.728*** (0.087)	-2.762*** (0.096)	-2.759*** (0.101)	-2.866*** (0.102)	-2.928*** (0.105)	-3.021*** (0.121)	-2.866*** (0.103)	-3.036*** (0.124)	-2.769*** (0.096)	-2.769*** (0.099)	-3.188*** (0.100)	-3.246*** (0.106)				
<i>Random effects:</i>																		
Individual legislators	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)				
Committees	(0.186)	(0.195)	(0.191)	(0.139)	(0.218)	(0.202)	(0.150)	(0.230)	(0.156)	(0.275)	(0.175)	(0.157)	(0.141)	(0.106)				
Observations	15168	15168	13356	13356	14388	14388	11520	11520	12201	12201	12537	12537	12650	12650				
Log Likelihood	-3524.669	-3296.756	-3098.334	-2866.130	-3456.733	-3253.436	-2645.069	-2426.706	-2659.108	-2611.122	-2985.703	-2725.181	-2528.681	-2286.328				
Log Likelihood	7071.338	6617.512	6218.669	5756.260	6935.467	6530.872	5312.137	4751.412	5740.216	5246.244	5993.406	5474.363	5079.362	4596.556				
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	7155.234	6709.035	6301.166	5846.257	7018.783	6621.762	5393.007	4839.634	5821.718	5335.156	6075.207	5563.600	5161.262	4686.001				

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set. Model 1 excludes the variable 'committee experience'; Model 2 includes the variable 'committee experience'.

Table 5.15: Model summaries multiple-membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Tweede Kamer 1994 - 2012 (full members including transfers)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>											
	Committee membership (only full members including transfers)						Tweede Kamer					
	'94 - '98		'02 - '03		'03 - '06		'06 - '10		'10 - '12		'12 - '20	
Tweede Kamer Model 1	Tweede Kamer Model 2	Tweede Kamer Model 1	Tweede Kamer Model 2	Tweede Kamer Model 1	Tweede Kamer Model 2	Tweede Kamer Model 1	Tweede Kamer Model 2	Tweede Kamer Model 1	Tweede Kamer Model 2	Tweede Kamer Model 1	Tweede Kamer Model 2	
<i>Fixed effects:</i>												
Prior education	0.405* (0.211)	0.379*** (0.143)	0.437*** (0.154)	0.371** (0.161)	0.555*** (0.128)	0.479*** (0.139)	0.987*** (0.130)	0.897*** (0.141)	0.725*** (0.131)	0.575*** (0.142)	0.531*** (0.145)	0.436*** (0.148)
Prior occupation	0.623*** (0.194)	0.898*** (0.122)	0.607*** (0.135)	0.458*** (0.141)	0.575*** (0.118)	0.496*** (0.127)	0.513*** (0.124)	0.456*** (0.134)	0.312*** (0.123)	0.312*** (0.133)	0.563*** (0.132)	0.485*** (0.138)
External interest	0.161 (0.308)	0.444** (0.198)	0.364** (0.248)	0.339 (0.264)	0.528** (0.224)	0.320 (0.249)	0.451* (0.244)	0.300 (0.272)	0.373* (0.213)	0.391* (0.232)	0.707** (0.339)	0.511 (1.904***)
Committee experience		1.573*** (0.131)		1.587*** (0.168)		2.168*** (0.135)		2.200*** (0.156)		2.523*** (0.148)		1.904*** (0.155)
High imp. com's	1.166*** (0.409)	-0.029 (0.217)	0.163 (0.366)	0.285 (0.387)	0.624** (0.245)	0.738*** (0.268)	0.009 (0.240)	0.025 (0.252)	-0.101 (0.251)	-0.220 (0.281)	0.084 (0.318)	0.212 (0.316)
Ideol. distance	0.007 (0.026)	-0.068*** (0.024)	-0.053** (0.015)	0.003 (0.011)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.007 (0.012)	0.017 (0.013)	0.019 (0.015)	-0.057** (0.025)	-0.054** (0.025)	-0.062* (0.036)	-0.059 (0.039)
NumberLPs	0.049 (0.058)	0.005 (0.045)	0.081** (0.037)	0.038 (0.040)	0.050 (0.038)	-0.066 (0.045)	0.009 (0.041)	-0.149*** (0.049)	0.003 (0.052)	0.209*** (0.052)	0.071 (0.049)	-0.028 (0.056)
Ideol. distance * HICs	-0.031 (0.047)	0.062* (0.036)	-0.038 (0.038)	-0.037 (0.037)	-0.025 (0.024)	-0.028 (0.025)	-0.027 (0.028)	-0.030 (0.029)	-0.058 (0.053)	-0.070 (0.057)	0.106* (0.062)	0.124** (0.063)
Number LPs * HICs	-0.162 (0.104)	-0.021 (0.084)	-0.003 (0.087)	-0.112 (0.093)	-0.151* (0.079)	-0.198** (0.091)	0.021 (0.078)	0.021 (0.086)	0.009 (0.082)	0.062 (0.095)	-0.133 (0.106)	-0.169 (0.118)
Constant	-3.425*** (0.266)	-1.858*** (0.123)	-1.922*** (0.179)	-1.936*** (0.194)	-1.982*** (0.130)	-2.035*** (0.141)	-1.984*** (0.131)	-1.936*** (0.145)	-1.783*** (0.144)	-1.693*** (0.153)	-2.102*** (0.174)	-2.175*** (0.176)
<i>Random effects:</i>												
Individual legislators	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.295)	(0.336)
Committees	(0.710)	(0.000)	(0.451)	(0.505)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.172)	(0.217)	(0.228)	(0.001)
Observations	2535	2670	2400	2400	2928	2928	2916	2916	3116	3116	2533	2533
Log Likelihood	-580.383	-1129.882	-1058.848	-1094.338	-1286.080	-1157.958	-1278.729	-1173.818	-1346.472	-1186.217	-1035.292	-961.669
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1182.767	2281.763	2141.696	2210.677	2126.787	2339.917	2579.458	2371.637	2712.944	2396.434	2092.583	1947.338
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	1246.984	2346.551	2212.374	2274.292	2196.186	2659.964	2411.702	2645.215	2443.372	2468.966	2156.792	2017.383

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set. Model 1 excludes the variable 'committee experience'; Model 2 includes the variable 'committee experience'.

Table 5.16: Model summaries multiple-membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Tweede Kamer (substitute members including transfers)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>											
	Committee membership (only substitute members including transfers)						Tweede Kamer					
	Tweede Kamer		Tweede Kamer		Tweede Kamer		Tweede Kamer		Tweede Kamer		Tweede Kamer	
	'94 - '98	'98 - '02	'02 - '03	'03 - '06	'06 - '10	'10 - '12	'12 -	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	
<i>Fixed effects:</i>												
Prior education	0.436 (0.288) 0.979**	0.159 (0.136) 0.389**	0.120 (0.139) 0.281**	0.101 (0.173) 0.290**	0.051 (0.176) 0.193	-0.064 (0.132) 0.090	-0.135 (0.135) 0.022	0.115 (0.137) 0.115	0.035 (0.140) 0.093	0.226* (0.134) 0.258**	0.075 (0.138) 0.191	-0.099 (0.160) 0.361**
Prior occupation	(0.251) 0.146 (0.395)	(0.119) -0.450** (0.224)	(0.122) -0.578** (0.230)	(0.150) 0.020 (0.284)	(0.153) -0.063 (0.289)	(0.117) 0.149 (0.229)	(0.119) -0.018 (0.237)	(0.124) 0.234 (0.238)	(0.125) 0.135 (0.242)	(0.123) 0.135 (0.224)	(0.126) 0.081 (0.230)	(0.138) -0.317 (0.452)
External interest												
Committee experience												
High imp. coms	-0.062 (0.373) -0.013	0.189 (0.196) -0.057**	0.189 (0.212) -0.047**	0.082 (0.326) 0.031**	0.059 (0.332) 0.037**	-0.393* (0.218) -0.025*	-0.433* (0.226) -0.022*	-0.237 (0.221) -0.001	-0.223 (0.226) -0.003	-0.036 (0.275) -0.015	-0.097 (0.284) -0.021	0.108 (0.343) -0.054
Ideal distance												
NumberLPs	(0.045) -0.139 (0.064)	(0.020) -0.053 (0.055*)	(0.020) -0.149** (0.047)	(0.014) -0.067 (0.049)	(0.015) -0.127** (0.055)	(0.012) 0.002 (0.039)	(0.012) -0.076* (0.016)	(0.014) 0.066* (0.038)	(0.014) -0.025 (0.042)	(0.021) 0.072* (0.048)	(0.020) -0.116** (0.048)	(0.035) 0.010 (0.051)
Ideal distance * HICs	(0.101) (0.067) -0.251	(0.040) 0.055* (0.031)	(0.040) 0.050 (0.032)	(0.049) -0.039 (0.027)	(0.049) -0.040 (0.027)	(0.039) 0.016 (0.020)	(0.041) 0.016 (0.020)	(0.039) 0.019 (0.024)	(0.039) 0.016 (0.024)	(0.042) 0.048 (0.034)	(0.048) -0.002 (0.054)	(0.051) 0.010 (0.065)
NumberLPs * HICs	(0.212) -3.862** (0.287)	(0.080) -1.96** (0.106)	(0.088) -1.211** (0.114)	(0.076) -1.860** (0.200)	(0.080) -1.925** (0.207)	(0.065) -1.086** (0.127)	(0.069) -1.152** (0.130)	(0.068) -1.494** (0.127)	(0.070) -1.476** (0.129)	(0.071) -1.826** (0.176)	(0.078) -1.769** (0.176)	(0.098) -1.829** (0.220)
Constant												
<i>Random effects:</i>												
Individual Legislators	(0.963) (0.001)	(0.000) (0.000)	(0.000) (0.000)	(0.281) (0.524)	(0.576) (0.521)	(0.363) (0.000)	(0.362) (0.000)	(0.347) (0.106)	(0.334) (0.131)	(0.412) (0.473)	(0.353) (0.467)	(0.326) (0.575)
Committees												
Observations	2535	2670	2670	2400	2400	2928	2928	2916	2916	3116	3116	2533
Log Likelihood	-364.651	-1374.477	-1329.090	-1033.414	-1018.698	-1579.015	-1530.540	-1533.157	-1506.595	-1449.741	-1378.468	-1057.380
Akaike Inf. Crit.	751.303	2770.954	2682.180	2088.829	2061.397	3180.030	3088.080	3088.313	3087.191	2921.483	2780.935	2136.760
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	815.520	2835.742	2752.858	2152.444	2130.795	3245.832	3156.865	3154.071	3108.927	2987.970	2853.467	2200.969

Note * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set. Model 1 excludes the variable 'committee experience'; Model 2 includes the variable 'committee experience'.

Table 5.17: Model summaries multiple-membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Dáil (27th - 31st legislative period - only large PPGs)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Committee membership including transfers (only TDs from large PPGs)					
	27th Dáil (1994)	27th Dáil (1995-)	28th Dáil	29th Dáil	30th Dáil	31st Dáil
<i>Fixed effects</i>						
Prior education	0.470* (0.270)	-0.180 (0.280)	0.094 (0.260)	0.230 (0.250)	0.170 (0.210)	0.500* (0.280)
Prior occupation	0.580** (0.270)	0.650** (0.260)	0.580** (0.230)	0.730*** (0.240)	0.820*** (0.190)	0.820*** (0.280)
External interest			-0.250 (0.540)	0.980 (0.750)	-0.190 (0.790)	0.280 (1.100)
Committee experience	1.600*** (0.320)	0.400 (0.470)	1.500*** (0.220)	0.860*** (0.210)	1.300*** (0.190)	1.200*** (0.340)
High imp. com's	0.740 (0.540)	0.300 (0.320)	0.370 (0.240)	0.059 (0.290)	0.410 (0.250)	-0.300 (0.350)
Ideol. distance	0.022 (0.015)	0.005 (0.012)	0.007 (0.015)	-0.004 (0.022)	-0.048 (0.031)	0.008 (0.045)
Number LPs	0.028 (0.043)	-0.069* (0.036)	-0.042 (0.034)	-0.032 (0.037)	-0.012 (0.026)	-0.045 (0.068)
Ideol. distance * HICs	-0.045** (0.023)	-0.007 (0.019)	-0.054* (0.030)	-0.006 (0.036)	-0.110 (0.075)	0.053 (0.074)
Number LPs * HICs	-0.120* (0.064)	-0.0002 (0.055)	-0.035 (0.055)	-0.033 (0.062)	-0.024 (0.052)	-0.028 (0.110)
Constant	-2.300*** (0.390)	-1.800*** (0.210)	-1.800*** (0.160)	-2.100*** (0.180)	-2.100*** (0.130)	-2.300*** (0.220)
<i>Random effects:</i>						
Individual legislators	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Committees	(0.662)	(0.230)	(0.000)	(0.064)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	1060	1554	1815	1664	2604	990
Log Likelihood	-447.000	-611.000	-730.000	-599.000	-912.000	-336.000
Akaike Inf. Crit.	916.000	1245.000	1484.000	1222.000	1848.000	697.000
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	971.000	1303.000	1550.000	1287.000	1918.000	756.000

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set. Model 1 excludes the variable 'committee experience'; Model 2 includes the variable 'committee experience'.

Table 5.18: Model summaries multiple membership multilevel model of committee assignments in the Tweede Kamer 1994 - 2012, including only large PPGs (Full (Model 1) and substitute members (Model 2) including transfers)

	Committee membership for large PPGs full members (Model 1) and substitute members (Model 2) including transfers													
	Dependent variable:						Dependent variable:							
	Tweede Kamer '94 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '94 Model 2	Tweede Kamer '98 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '98 Model 2	Tweede Kamer '02 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '02 Model 2	Tweede Kamer '03 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '03 Model 2	Tweede Kamer '06 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '06 Model 2	Tweede Kamer '10 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '10 Model 2	Tweede Kamer '12 Model 1	Tweede Kamer '12 Model 2
<i>Fixed effects</i>														
Prior education	0.211 (0.235)	0.394 (0.300)	0.358** (0.160)	0.068 (0.148)	0.475*** (0.176)	0.132 (0.191)	0.617*** (0.139)	-0.216 (0.155)	0.957*** (0.151)	-0.026 (0.152)	0.411** (0.175)	0.084 (0.165)	0.083 (0.215)	-0.105 (0.215)
Prior occupation	0.678*** (0.207)	1.040** (0.261)	0.883*** (0.136)	0.334*** (0.127)	0.381** (0.156)	0.231 (0.167)	0.480*** (0.148)	0.046 (0.134)	0.462*** (0.148)	0.172 (0.137)	0.267 (0.165)	0.132 (0.153)	0.500*** (0.180)	0.494*** (0.172)
External interest	0.269 (0.311)	0.199 (0.394)	0.446** (0.221)	-0.575** (0.241)	0.156 (0.293)	-0.038 (0.318)	0.468** (0.278)	0.048 (0.256)	0.215 (0.286)	0.260 (0.245)	0.497* (0.263)	-0.160 (0.266)	0.249 (0.532)	0.244 (0.510)
Committee experience ^a			1.460*** (0.143)	-0.241 (0.241)	1.588*** (0.191)		2.232*** (0.157)		2.231*** (0.165)		2.549*** (0.172)		1.653*** (0.234)	
Committee experience ^b				1.052*** (0.127)		0.646*** (0.166)		1.089*** (0.124)		0.987*** (0.123)		1.391*** (0.144)		0.319 (0.220)
High imp. coms	1.043** (0.409)	0.078 (0.398)	-0.055 (0.261)	0.265 (0.225)	0.239 (0.384)	0.207 (0.341)	0.840*** (0.300)	-0.462* (0.251)	0.157 (0.290)	-0.228 (0.258)	-0.675* (0.366)	0.176 (0.317)	-0.144 (0.411)	0.308 (0.393)
Ideol. distance	0.005 (0.027)	-0.024 (0.044)	-0.047* (0.025)	-0.053** (0.021)	0.005 (0.015)	0.035** (0.014)	-0.004 (0.014)	-0.024* (0.012)	-0.011 (0.019)	-0.008 (0.017)	-0.052* (0.028)	-0.008 (0.021)	-0.030 (0.051)	0.019 (0.048)
Number MPs	0.067 (0.060)	-0.113 (0.097)	-0.154*** (0.059)	-0.138*** (0.050)	0.054 (0.042)	-0.113* (0.058)	-0.064 (0.052)	-0.098** (0.044)	-0.157*** (0.055)	-0.095* (0.049)	-0.192*** (0.060)	-0.100* (0.056)	-0.086 (0.106)	-0.110 (0.102)
Ideol. distance * HICs	-0.021 (0.048)	0.054 (0.069)	0.060 (0.038)	0.033 (0.033)	-0.041 (0.032)	0.036 (0.027)	-0.019 (0.021)	0.014 (0.023)	-0.007 (0.038)	-0.011 (0.032)	-0.077 (0.075)	0.005 (0.037)	0.132 (0.088)	-0.025 (0.088)
Number MPs * HICs	-0.217* (0.113)	-0.258 (0.214)	-0.024 (0.105)	-0.142 (0.095)	-0.154 (0.098)	0.113 (0.087)	-0.221** (0.103)	0.131* (0.076)	-0.061 (0.106)	0.085 (0.085)	0.240** (0.118)	-0.034 (0.096)	0.008 (0.179)	0.008 (0.176)
Constant	-3.364*** (0.265)	-3.707*** (0.292)	-1.922*** (0.149)	-1.169*** (0.123)	-1.989*** (0.187)	-1.930*** (0.208)	-2.220*** (0.166)	-1.129*** (0.135)	-1.887*** (0.150)	-1.359*** (0.136)	-1.783*** (0.172)	-1.921*** (0.186)	-2.075*** (0.238)	-1.747*** (0.225)
<i>Random effects</i>														
Individual legislators	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.129)	(0.000)	(0.269)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.333)
Committees	(0.647)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.409)	(0.473)	(0.000)	(0.077)	(0.000)	(0.077)	(0.153)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Observations	2130	2130	2280	2280	1890	1890	2240	2240	2448	2448	2033	2033	1326	1326
Log Likelihood	-493.660	-317.658	-895.157	-1149.091	-834.957	-804.476	-842.534	-1137.055	-928.453	-1239.141	-711.813	-868.854	-489.684	-547.393
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1009.321	657.315	1814.313	2322.182	1693.913	1632.953	1709.068	2298.110	1880.906	2502.281	1447.625	1761.709	1003.368	1118.786
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	1071.623	719.618	1883.097	2390.966	1760.445	1699.485	1777.639	2366.680	1950.542	2571.917	1515.032	1829.116	1065.647	1181.066

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in parentheses.

Source: Own data set.

- ^a As full member
- ^b As full or substitute member

Conclusion: Specialisation and Committee Experience Paired with Country-Specific Patterns

The assignment of legislators is a crucial stage in the workings of committees. Processes of legislative organisation take place in an extremely complex environment in which many factors are considered. The theoretical framework which lays the foundation of this study led to the formulation of hypotheses which were tested on the committee assignments of the Dáil, the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer across multiple legislative periods. One of the fundamental conclusions of this chapter is that there is no general guideline for the allocation of committee seats in the three analysed legislatures. A simple aggregation of characteristics and circumstances does not lead to the certain assignment of a legislator to a particular committee in a 'deterministic' fashion. The goal of this analysis was to cut through the noise and determine regularities and patterns.

The analysis relied on evidence from a statistical analysis and from interviews. This was a fruitful combination. The initial results obtained from the statistical analysis laid the foundation for the interviews conducted in the course of this study. A statistical model can, at best, be an approximation of reality. This is why the analysis did not rely solely on the results of the model but cross-checked them with interviews in each chamber. A restriction to the statistical analysis would have run the risk of a biased interpretation of the patterns. Several outliers were identified which were addressed during the course of the interviews. Solely relying on interviews would have risked to only partially understand the statements of legislators. Especially in the Dáil, the evidence of the statistical analysis was of great help and served as an orientation point. Given that the leadership makes the assignments with relatively high autonomy in some parliamentary party groups, some legislators were also unsure about the factors that play a role.

Author: "What kind of criteria are used in the assignment process of legislators to committees?"

TD: "It is very difficult to know because [the parliamentary party group leader] does not tell us." (Interview Dáil, 20141202A)

Although the concepts were not equally applicable in all countries, the results from the statistical analysis in the Bundestag, the Tweede Kamer and the Dáil, uncovered certain patterns. This was generally backed up during the interviews. When asked about the rationales and the corresponding factors there was not a single respondent who did not support at least one of them. In general, the assignment patterns are recurring. This is evident from the statistical analysis, but also in the interviews. No legislator indicated that allocation patterns are random or change after every election.

Trying to summarise the performance of congressional theories in the parliamentary party group-centred context of the three analysed legislatures it

is clear that parliamentary party groups *are* central actors in the process. In the Bundestag and the Tweede Kamer, wishes and preferences are evaluated at the level of the parliamentary party group leadership. In the Dáil, the decision is mostly taken directly by the leadership. With regard to the predictions of the theories, there is strong evidence that informational rationales prevail across all legislatures. Especially committee experience weighs heavily into the assignment process. Once a legislator has been a member of a committee, he or she has a relatively strong claim to stay in the same committee in the next legislative period. As has been argued in the section which introduced the hypothesis (see p. 51), solely drawing conclusions based on this variable would not be enough to conclude the informational mechanism of specialisation. It is important to view the results together with other variables in the model and with the additional evidence from the interviews, in particular the effect of the more personal characteristics of legislators. If the model and the interviewees rather highlighted distributive factors then a continuation of membership cannot have specialisation incentives. Additionally, for providing support for the informational rationale the interviews needed to indicate that the assignment process at the beginning of a legislative period indeed offers a chance to remove a sitting legislator from a committee. Both of these conditions are fulfilled. The interviews indicated that the continuation is possible under the prerequisite of him or her having done a good job (even in Germany where incumbents have a very strong claim on a committee). Interviewees explicitly highlighted the expertise that is built up by staying on a committee for consecutive legislative periods. With regard to the more personal characteristics of legislators, advantages in knowledge greatly increase the likelihood of a legislator to be assigned to a corresponding committee. Interestingly, parliamentary party groups in the Tweede Kamer seem to value prior education higher than the immediate knowledge obtained from a legislator's prior occupation. The interviews showed that parliamentary party groups in this legislature are highly vigilant about not giving the wrong impression that their legislators might work for the industry in which they were previously employed.

With regard to external interests, the Bundestag is by far the least restrictive and the Tweede Kamer the most restrictive. In the Dáil the non-finding is due to the very limited amount of reported directorships in organisations and foundations. This is, however, an interesting finding in itself. If there are no data to support this claim, then external interests cannot be an important factor for parliamentary party groups to consider. Especially the practice in the Bundestag raises the question about the further implications of such a system. This will be discussed in the next section of the dissertation. Constituency characteristics can be linked to large portions of the assignment process in the Dáil and to a certain extent in the Bundestag. These are the two legislatures in which this factor was expected to play a role. They were largely absent in the Tweede Kamer, but some Dutch legislators still mentioned the influence of regional considerations. The evidence for this part solely relies on the self-report of legislators. The interviews pointed towards the existence of a

principle with regard to constituency characteristics in the assignment process. This provides support for the distributive rationale. However, the rationale has its limitations in terms of whether it actually matters in terms of electoral benefits. The connection to the districts is a *central* part of the theory but it is explained as serving a re-election purpose for legislators. Although the assignment is driven by constituency considerations, there is very limited evidence from the interviews that legislators experience a 'boost' in terms of added value for the next election from their committee membership. Voters perceive committee work not with the same importance and centrality that it has for the content-related work of legislators. In this sense, there is a clear limit to the predictions of the distributive theory.

Partisan considerations were hardly visible in the statistical model. One possibility for this non-finding could be that the effect of the variables is tested in the 'wrong' place. The models tested whether there is a structural difference between committees which deal with topics which are electorally more or less salient. This is linked to the re-election goal of parties. However, committees can also be distinguished in terms of other logics. It might be that other committees or portfolios which have a higher internal *prestige* (i.e. the Foreign Affairs Committee) indicate such an effect. Another explanation is that the amount of partisan 'stacking' is indeed limited in the analysed legislatures. The interviews provided evidence that, in some cases, more experienced legislators have higher chances to be assigned to more 'central' committees. No legislator argued that such considerations are valued higher than advantages in knowledge. This is an important finding. When transferring the congressional theories to countries with strong parliamentary party groups, the absence of a 'tight' grip of the parliamentary party group leadership is unexpected.

The interviews discovered some important additional informal rules which are more or less severe and restrict the number of possible assignments. The influence of the regional factions of the larger parliamentary party groups in the Bundestag is by far the most severe. Their influence has long been acknowledged in the inner workings of the Bundestag and it is not surprising that they weigh heavily in the assignment process. For smaller factions, self-imposed quotas, either with regard to men and women or with regard to regional considerations at times limit the number of possible options. Following the analysis of 'who gets what' the question arises how independent the committee members are vis á vis their parliamentary party groups once they are assigned. Committees are privileged institutions which, at least theoretically, offer "property rights" in a given policy area. To what extent committee members are autonomous or tightly monitored and have to report back to the parliamentary party group is hitherto not widely studied. The following chapter gives more insight into the relationship of committee members with other actors in the policy process.