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## **Political parties and the democratic mandate : comparing collective mandate fulfilment in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands**

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## Chapter 5

# The party mandate in majoritarian and consensus democracies

This chapter discusses the main hypothesis of this study, namely that mandate fulfilment will be higher in consensus democracies than in majoritarian democracies. The most similar systems design used in this study allows drawing conclusions from the comparison of two carefully selected cases: the majoritarian system of the United Kingdom and the consensus system of the Netherlands. What parties talk about and what they say during elections is compared to what they talk about and what they say in parliament.

### 5.1 What parties talk about

One aspect of the party mandate is that parties express similar concerns during elections and in parliament, i.e. that parties talk about similar issues in both arenas. If they would switch to a completely different set of issues after the elections, one would not be surprised to find that voters are dissatisfied. Some theories of party competition even go as far as to argue that party competition is essentially about *issue saliency* rather than party positions (Budge, 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006, 1994). Although this ‘saliency-only’ position has been criticized for many reasons, this does not mean that saliency is not an important *aspect* of the party mandate (Benoit and Laver, 2007; Volkens, 2007; Bakker et al., 2008; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Hansen, 2008).

Parties’ issue saliency was estimated by classifying their manifesto and what MPs said in parliament. Each paragraph in the party manifestos and parliamentary debates (in one of the selected cases) was classified into one of twenty *Policy*

*Agendas Project* categories<sup>1</sup>. From this data, I calculated for each manifesto and each parliamentary party how much text it devoted to each issue (as a percentage of the whole text, excluding non-categorized text). A party's issue saliency is thus expressed as the percentage of text it devotes to a particular issue. For example, Labour's issue saliency of 'Health' was 12.3 per cent in their 1992 manifesto and 8.3 per cent in the 1992-1997 parliament.

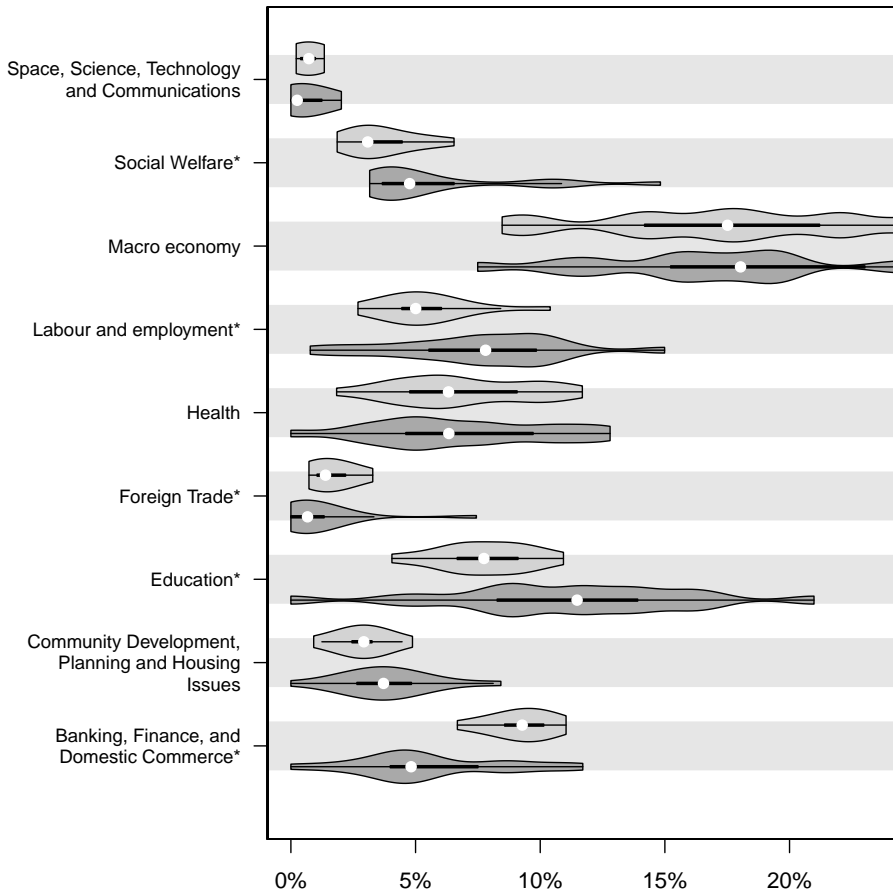
The crucial question in this study is whether issue saliency in a specific election is congruent with issue saliency in the subsequent parliament. Before I turn to this, the aggregated data – the distribution of issue saliency for each category per country per source – will be presented as these suggest that there is an overall difference between issue priorities in manifestos and parliamentary debates (figures 5.1-5.6). The violin plots show how parties' issue saliency of about 20 issue categories is distributed: a box-plot which shows the median, quartiles and ranges of the distributions is combined with a density plot which gives more detailed information on the shape of the distribution (Adler and Francois, 2009). The dark grey violins display the distributions in manifestos, the lighter ones show the distributions in parliament. If the violins are very long, parties' issue saliency differs greatly. For example, one British party did write almost nothing on Education in one of its manifestos, while another party devoted more than 20% of its manifesto to Education. In the median manifesto, approximately 12 per cent of the text is on Education.

In Britain, the category Macro economy is by far the most salient issue for parties, scoring just under 20% on average. Some other social issues, such as Education, Labour and Employment and Health also score above average. These figures confirm the importance of class-based politics in Britain. International affairs and related issues score around 5% and most categories related to Environmental policies have even lower levels of party saliency. The pattern is much alike in the Netherlands, although the Macro-Economy and Taxes category turns out to be not so popular as it is in Britain (see figure 5.4). Instead, Education and Culture, Labour and Enterprises, national trade and commerce enjoy high levels of parties' issue saliency. In addition, the category concerning Religious issues (not included for Britain) is rather important, at least for some parties (see figure 5.6).

The figures show that some issues get more attention in parliament than in manifestos and vice versa. British parties clearly talk less about Social Welfare, Labour and Employment, Education and International Affairs and Foreign Aid in parliament than in their manifesto<sup>2</sup>. Other issues are discussed to a larger ex-

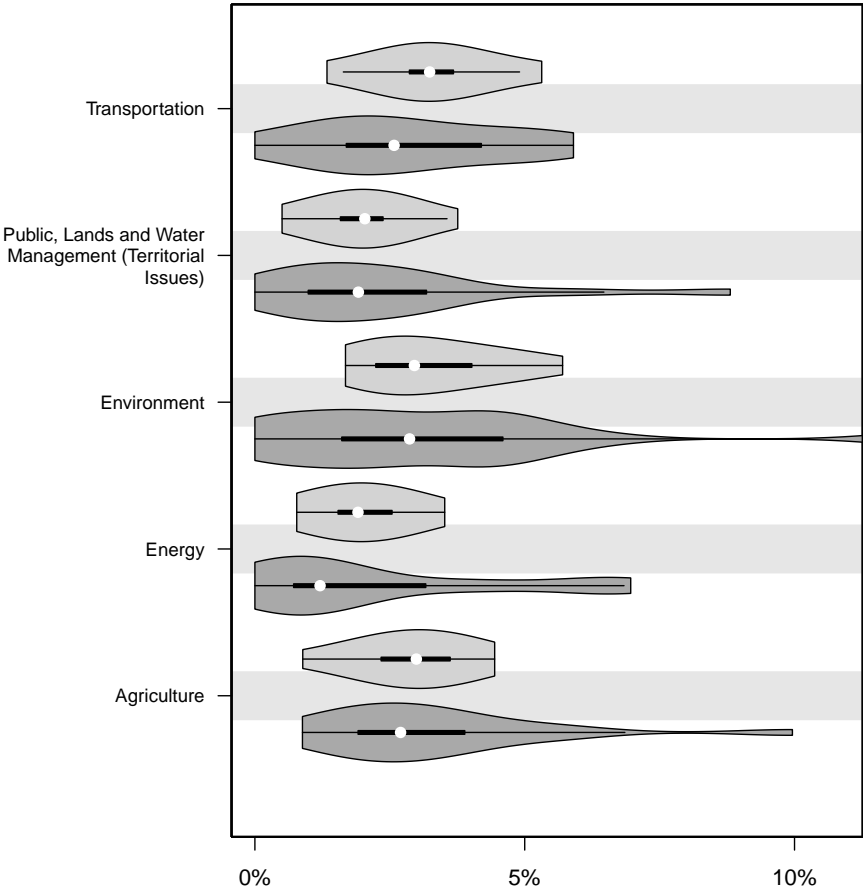
<sup>1</sup> As I outlined in chapter 4 I use more broadly defined categories for the analysis of parties' positions. For the analysis of party issue saliency, however, I use the Policy Agendas categories: there is no need to aggregate it to arrive at more robust estimates and in fact using more categories increases the number of observations. In addition, the Policy Agendas categories are not exactly the same for the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. I have used the categories that are used in the respective national projects (Breeman et al., 2009; UK Policy Agendas Project, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> These differences are statistically significant according to a *t*-test between the manifesto saliency

**Figure 5.1:** *Issue saliency in the UK: Economic issues*

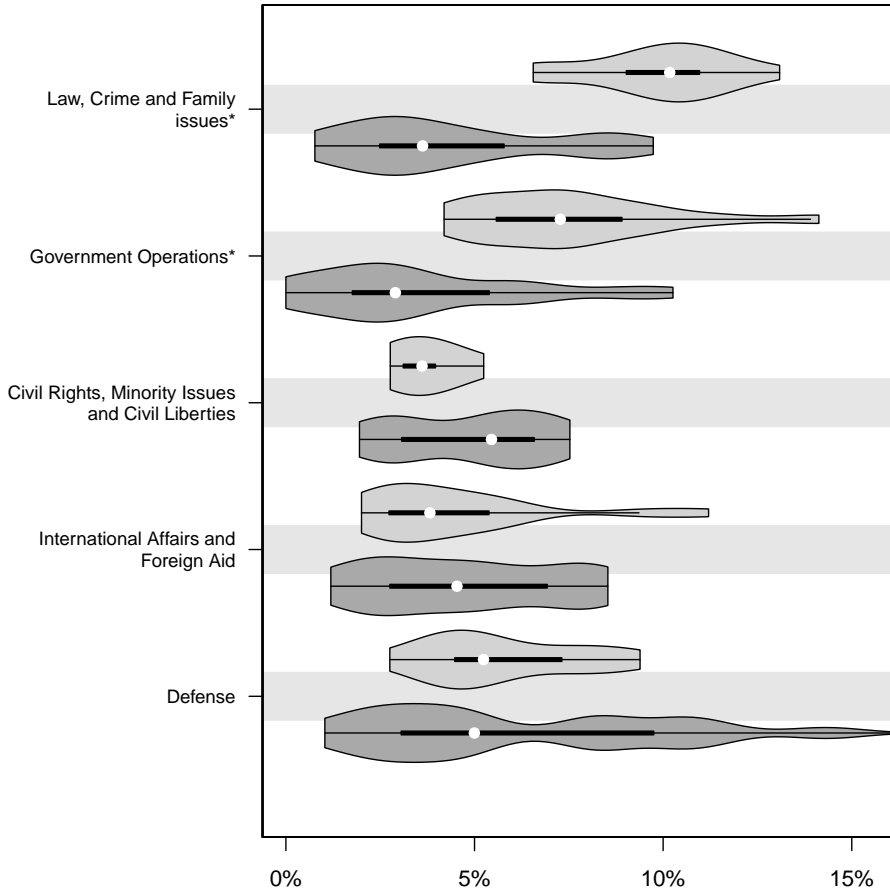
Note: Dark grey violins represent the manifestos, the light grey violins represent the parliamentary debates. \* indicate statistically significant means differences between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency (two-sided t-test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Figure 5.2:** *Issue saliency in the UK: Environmental issues*



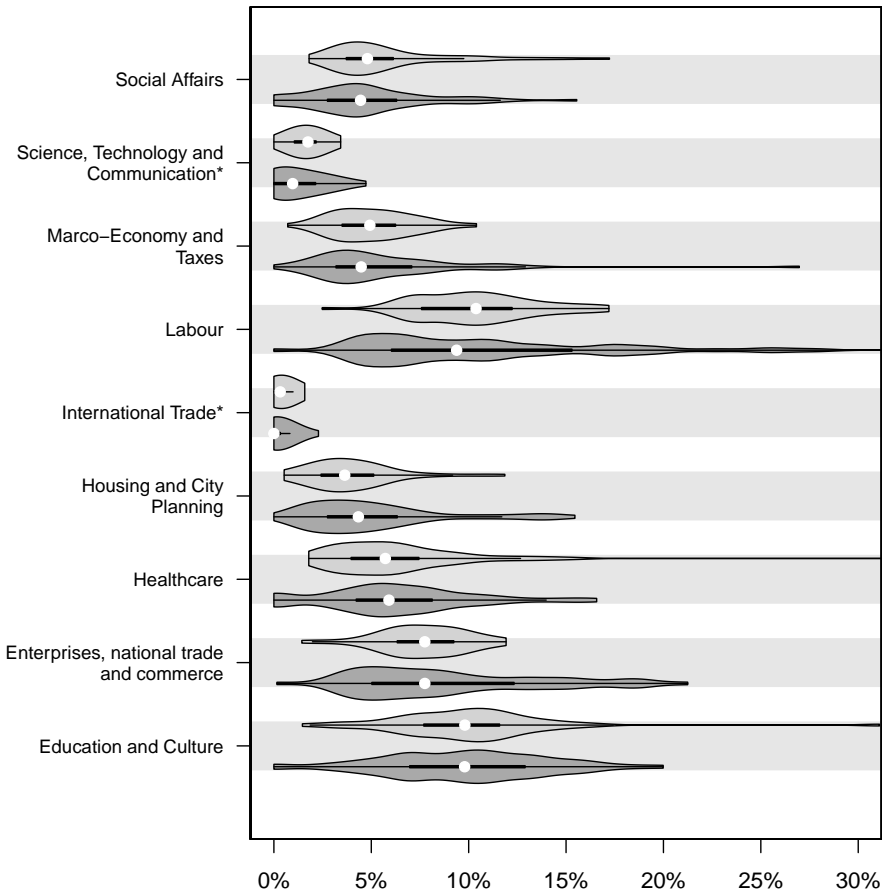
Note: Dark grey violins represent the manifestos, the light grey violins represent the parliamentary debates.

**Figure 5.3:** *Issue saliency in the UK: Other issues*



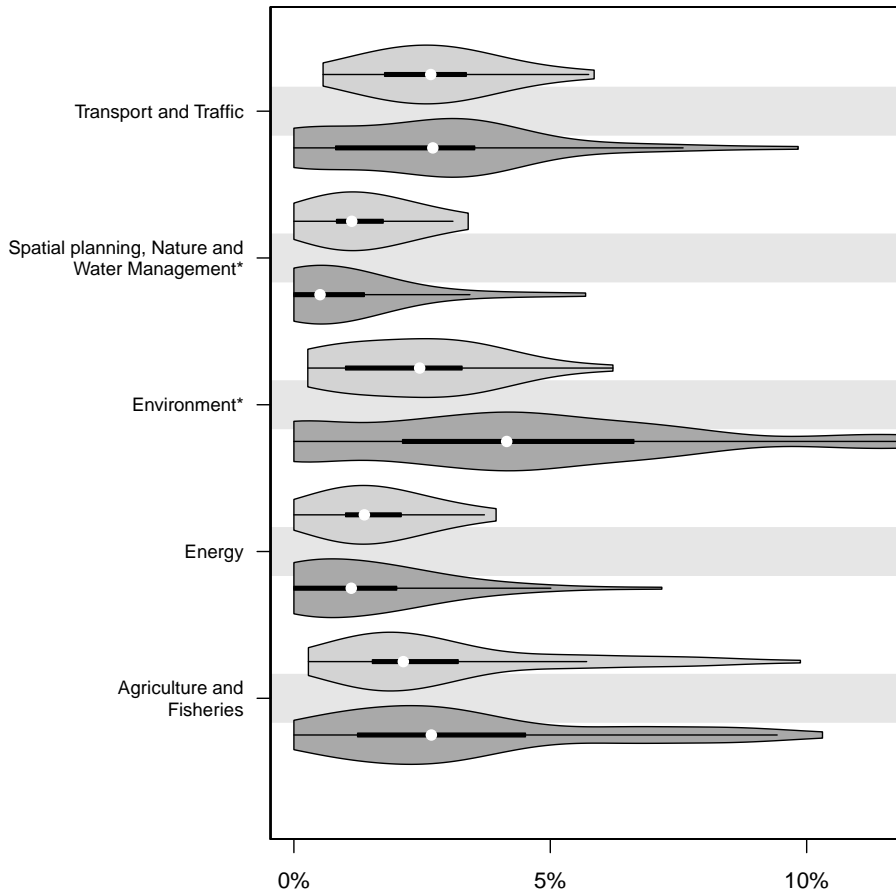
Note: Dark grey violins represent the manifestos, the light grey violins represent the parliamentary debates.\* indicate statistically significant means differences between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency (two-sided t-test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Figure 5.4:** *Issue saliency in the Netherlands: Economic issues*



Note: Dark grey violins represent the manifestos, the light grey violins represent the parliamentary debates. \* indicate statistically significant means differences between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency (two-sided t-test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

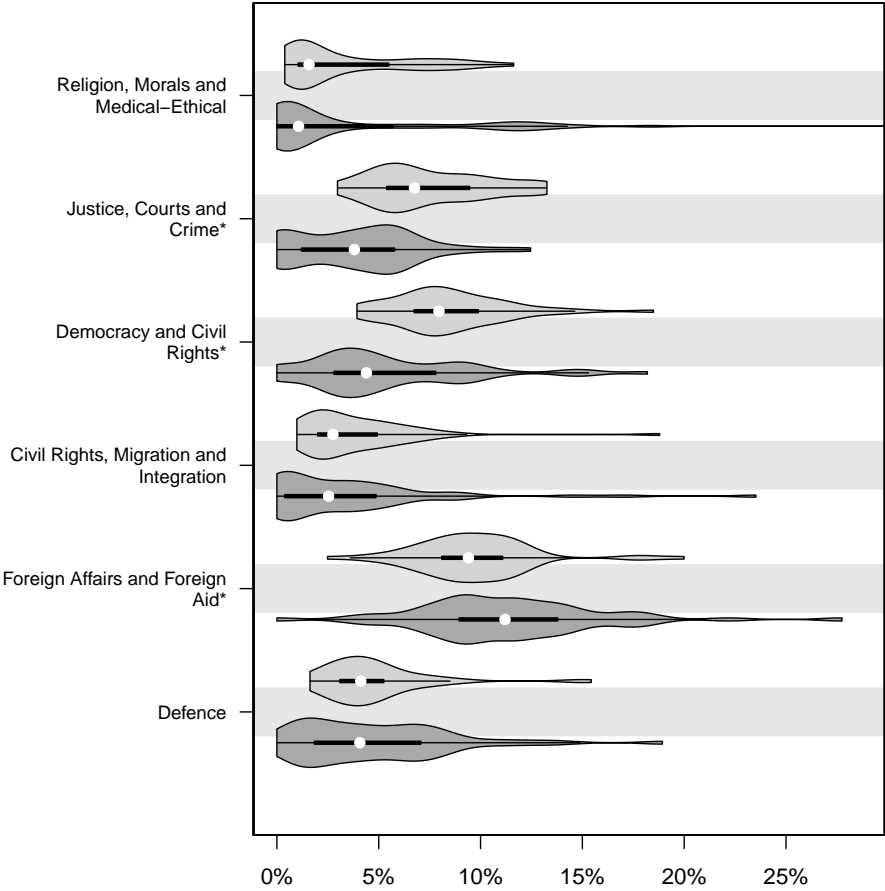
**Figure 5.5:** *Issue saliency in the Netherlands: Environmental issues*



Note: Dark grey violins represent the manifestos, the light grey violins represent the parliamentary debates. \* indicate statistically significant means differences between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency (two-sided t-test,  $p < 0.05$ ).



Figure 5.6: Issue saliency in the Netherlands: Other issues



Note: Dark grey violins represent the manifestos, the light grey violins represent the parliamentary debates. \* indicate statistically significant means differences between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency (two-sided t-test,  $p < 0.05$ ).

tent in parliament: Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce, Law, Crime and Family issues and Government Operations. The fact that parties talk more about Government Operations in parliament than in manifestos will not raise many eyebrows, but the other differences are more difficult to explain. Among the issues that receive relatively little attention in parliament are some of the welfare state categories; these are apparently categories that parties feel more comfortable discussing during the election campaign than in parliament. Talking about these policies might help them win the elections. However, this can also be said about Law and order, where an inverse pattern can be observed. For Environmental issues and Foreign Affairs, Dutch parties' issue salience is relatively high in their manifestos as compared to in parliament. Other issues are discussed to a larger extent in parliament than in the manifestos: Science Technology and Communication, International Trade, Spatial Planning, Nature and Water management, Justice, Courts and Crime and Democracy and government. Except for the Democracy and Civil Rights and Justice, Courts and Crime the pattern is thus different from that in the United Kingdom.

Majoritarian democracies are characterized by a high degree of control of the government over parliament Döring (1995). Government control over the parliamentary agenda is likely to result in less direct linkage between issue saliency in manifestos and issue saliency in parliament. Parties cannot talk about the issues they find salient to the extent they would like, because the agenda is controlled by the government. In systems where the parliamentary agenda is less strictly controlled by governments, opposition parties should have ample opportunity to put forward the issues that they deem important. This is even more strongly so in the Netherlands, because of the institutional rule that bills do not die. Therefore, there is less government pressure to discuss certain bills within a certain parliament. The hypothesis that was formulated in chapter 3 reads:

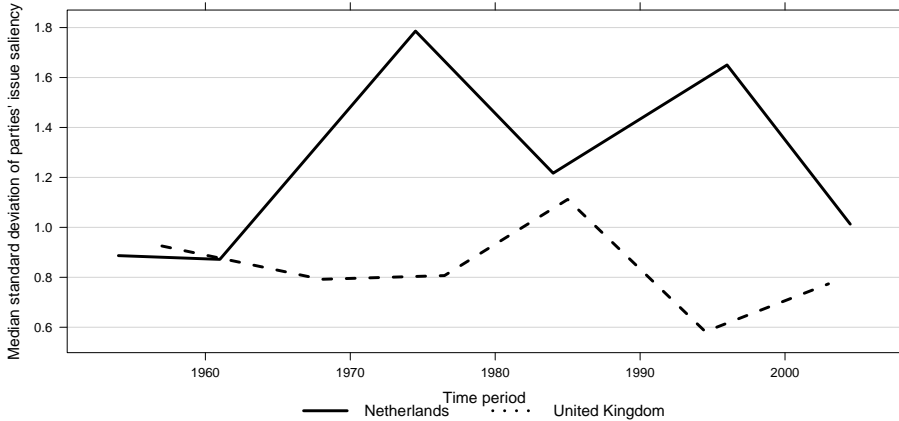
**Hypothesis 1:** A consensus democracy shows higher levels of congruence between the electoral party issue saliency and the parliamentary party issue saliency than a majoritarian democracy.

The dark-grey manifesto violins in figures 5.1-5.6 are generally longer and more oddly-shaped than the light-grey violins that display the distributions of parties' issue salience in parliament, especially in Britain. This is in line with the expectation that British parties' issue salience is more alike in parliament, due to the agenda setting powers of the government. Naturally, there could also be changes in the importance of issues over time, but these should be visible in both manifestos and parliament. The agenda-setting effect is smaller for the Dutch parties: the spread of parties is much more alike between manifestos and parliaments.

The impact of the level of government agenda control can be illustrated by looking at the standard deviations of parties' issue saliency in parliament. If an

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and parliamentary saliency for each of the issues,  $p < 0.05$ .

**Figure 5.7:** *Median standard deviations of issue saliency in parliament*

Note: The figure only includes the selected cases for this study, plotted at the midpoint of the parliamentary period.

issue is equally important to all parties (likely as a result of government control over the agenda), the standard deviation will be low<sup>3</sup>. Figure 5.7 shows the median standard deviation of parties' issue saliency in parliament in the two countries over time. This is a measure of how different parties' issue saliency scores are in parliament. This measure is consistently higher for the Dutch parliament (except for the 1950s). This means that the differences in issue saliency between Dutch political parties are generally larger than those for the British parties. This is likely to be the result of higher levels of agenda control in majoritarian democracies.

The theory of governmental agenda control suggests that (opposition) parties will not be able to put forward their salient issues if the parliamentary agenda is tightly controlled by the government<sup>4</sup>. This expectation was tested by a regression model that seeks to explain parliamentary party issue saliency, i.e. the relative emphasis of parties for certain issues in parliament, by looking at parties' issue saliency in manifestos. This connection should be stronger in parliaments that have larger agenda-setting powers. If, however, the government controls the agenda, the connection between manifesto and parliamentary party issue saliency is expected to be lower. The model used here incorporates a country

<sup>3</sup>Note that the standard deviation is dependent on the measurement scale, but not on the number of observations (as it is equal to the *mean* of squared deviations from the average). The measurement scale is comparable between countries, as the number of issue categories is almost the same in both countries and total issue saliency adds up to 100 per cent.

<sup>4</sup>The difference between opposition parties and government parties in this respect is explored in the next chapter.

dummy variable, which is coded zero for the Dutch parties and one for British parties. The idea of the model is to test whether the explanatory power of manifesto issue saliency is higher or lower for British than for Dutch parties. This effect is captured by the interaction between the UK dummy variable and manifesto issue saliency. Table 5.1 presents the results of the OLS regression<sup>5</sup>.

It turns out that there is a moderately strong connection between a party's issue saliency in the manifesto and a party's issue saliency in parliament: for each additional percentage point of attention in the manifesto, parties tend to spend 0.477 percentage point extra time debating the issue in parliament in the Netherlands. In Britain this effect is, contrary to my expectation, even higher. The interaction between a party's issue saliency in their manifesto and the UK country (dummy) variable is positive, which means that British parties are actually more responsive to their manifesto in terms of issue saliency. For British parties, the marginal effect of manifesto issue saliency on parliamentary issue saliency is 0.572: one percentage point more attention for an issue in the manifesto translates to, on average, 0.572 percentage points more attention for the issue in parliament<sup>6</sup>.

One explanation of this difference is that some issues are more popular than others among *all* parties, both in the manifestos as well as in parliament. For example, parties talk a lot about Macro-economy, both in the manifesto and in parliament. They do not so much talk about Foreign Trade, neither in the manifesto nor in parliament. In this case, parliamentary issue saliency is explained well by manifesto issue saliency, because of the differences between issues. Thus, the part of the variance explained here is the variance in issue saliency between issue categories, rather than the between-party variance in saliency. In this case, the government agenda-effect will not affect the explanatory power of parties' issue saliency in manifestos.

Arguably, the most important aspect of issue saliency for the question of the party mandate is, parties' emphasis on issues, *relative* to one another. For example, the environment is not the most important issue for any party, not even for the Dutch green party (GroenLinks). However, compared to other parties, this party does talk a lot about environmental issues. Parties do generally talk a lot about the economy, but the question is which parties talk about it the most and the least, or in other words, which party 'owns' a particular issue (Stokes, 1966; Budge and Farlie, 1983). In terms of the party mandate, keeping those differences in *relative* issue saliency is as least as important as *absolute* issue saliency. Model 2 in table 5.1 fits this interpretation of issue saliency by introducing a variable 'Mean issue saliency of a category in parliament' into the analysis. If the parties' parliamentary issue saliency is indeed the result of parties having sim-

<sup>5</sup>This and the other models in this book were estimated using the Zelig package for R (Imai et al., 2007)

<sup>6</sup>0.447 (manifesto issue saliency coefficient) + 0.125 (interaction between UK and manifesto issue saliency coefficient). A similar result is found when running two separate regression analyses for the United Kingdom and The Netherlands.

**Table 5.1:** *Explaining parties' issue saliency in parliament*

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	0.026*	-0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Issue saliency manifesto	0.477*	0.121*
	(0.018)	(0.014)
UK	-0.005	0.000
	(0.003)	(0.002)
Issue saliency manifesto * UK	0.125*	-0.110*
	(0.038)	(0.033)
Mean issue saliency Parliament		0.890*
		(0.020)
UK * Mean issue saliency Parliament		0.101*
		(0.042)
<i>N</i>	1502	1502
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.410	0.785
adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.409	0.784
Resid. sd	0.031	0.019

Standard errors in parentheses

\* indicates significance at  $p < 0.05$ 

ilar priorities, their scores would be well-explained by the mean issue saliency of that specific issue in parliament<sup>7</sup>. If, however, parties' issue saliency in parliament is, to a degree, explained by their manifesto issue saliency (in model 2), this shows that parties do not just conform to the mean issue saliency. Instead, parties' parliamentary issue saliency is influenced by their own manifesto's issue priorities.

Model 2 confirms the theoretical expectation: when it comes to parties' relative issue priorities, the predictive power of the manifesto is higher in the Netherlands than in the United Kingdom. The high coefficient on the 'Mean issue saliency in Parliament' variable shows that issue saliency in parliament depends very much on the issue: parties talk more about issues that other parties also talk about a lot. This effect is even stronger in the United Kingdom, which is shown by the significant interaction between the UK dummy and the variable 'Mean issue saliency in parliament'. Hence, the total marginal effect of 'Mean issue saliency in Parliament' is 0.89 in the Netherlands and 0.99 in Britain. The difference between Britain and the Netherlands is statistically significant. Introducing the 'Mean issue saliency in Parliament' variable limits the explanatory power of a party's manifesto issue saliency. Notably, the influence of the manifesto disappears in the United Kingdom: the sum of the coefficients of 'Issue saliency

<sup>7</sup>In an alternative specification, 'Mean issue saliency in Parliament' was replaced by 'Mean issue saliency in the manifestos'. The findings are similar.

manifesto' and 'Issue saliency manifesto \* UK' is not significantly different from zero. In the Netherlands, there is a small influence of a party's manifesto issue saliency on its parliamentary issue saliency in Model 2. *Relative* issue saliency, that is the extent to which parties' saliency of an issue *relative* to other parties' saliency of that issue, is thus higher in the Netherlands than in Britain.

The analysis here suggests that generally parties' parliamentary agenda is better explained by their manifesto priorities in Britain than in the Netherlands. This is caused by the fact that parties have similar levels of issue saliency (as other parties) for many issues. However, *relative* issue saliency can be better explained for the Dutch than for the British parties. This suggests that in Britain, the overall agenda is more stable between elections and parliament and therefore a good predictor for parties' parliamentary issue saliency, while in the Netherlands parties' parliamentary relative issue saliency can be better explained by looking at the issue saliency in the manifesto. All in all, the expectation of a higher government influence on the agenda in Britain than in the Netherlands is partly met. The fact that the prediction of relative issue saliency is rather poor in Britain shows that saliency in a sense of 'issue priorities relative to other parties' is not carried over from the manifestos to the parliament.

## 5.2 What parties say

Talking about similar subjects in the manifesto and in parliament is one thing, saying similar things is another. Comparing what parties say in one document with the messages they put forward in parliament is a rather complex issue if one is interested in more than one issue, one party or one country. Even the most basic approach, reading the various documents and in some way comparing their views, involves distinguishing between issues, interpreting parties' positions on those issues and evaluating how similar their parliamentary issue position is to their manifesto position. This is even more so if one is interested in the properties of the 'space of competition' that parties operate in. As argued above, the main focus of this analysis is not the stability of individual parties' positions, but the congruence of the space and structure of party competition as a whole.

In chapter 3 I hypothesized that consensus democracies show higher levels of mandate fulfilment in terms of issue positions. This expectation runs contrary to the traditional argument that single-party governments are in a better position to enact their pledges than parties in multi-party coalition governments. However, this study looks at the parliamentary mandate rather than the government mandate. It takes into account the mandate of government parties as well as opposition parties. While government parties might have many opportunities to pursue their mandate in majoritarian democracies, opposition parties have little choice but to oppose the governments' policies. In consensus systems, opposition parties have more opportunities to pursue their own policies, because government parties are more open to collaboration with the opposition. In addition,

the coalition agreement binds members of the government coalition: this causes some deviation from their manifesto at first, but also ensures that their parliamentary positions are more similar over time. All in all, I expect that consensus democracies will show higher levels of mandate fulfilment:

**Hypothesis 2:** A consensus democracy shows higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than a majoritarian democracy.

To compare the electoral and parliamentary spaces and structures of competition, I constructed separate spatial representations for each election and each parliament (see chapter 4). Two things are kept constant between election and parliament: the parties included in the analysis and (very broadly defined) the issues they talk about. So, for each election-parliament, the set of parties (e.g. parties that presented a manifesto and won parliamentary representation) as well as the broadly defined issue categories are the same. For the selection of the issue categories, I used the classifications of the saliency method outlined above. This procedure resulted in an estimate of the topic of each paragraph of manifesto text and each paragraph of parliamentary speech. To allow for a more robust analysis I collapsed these categories into a smaller set of issues, depending on the circumstances of the case. Later elections allow for a more detailed analysis as manifestos and parliamentary debates are longer. Generally, I distinguished between Economic issues, Environment, Foreign Affairs and Defence, Law and Order and Migration and, for the Dutch case, Religious-Ethical issues (see section 4.4 on page 83).

The starting point for the analysis was thus a collection of paragraphs of text, grouped by party, source (manifesto or parliament), year and topic. In other words, it is known what each party said on each topic in each of their manifestos and in parliament. Using the computerized content analysis technique Wordfish, parties' issue positions on those topics were estimated. Next, using multi dimensional scaling (MDS), the party positions on issues were reduced to a low-dimensional spatial representation of the competition between parties.

This procedure yields twelve spaces of competition for both countries, namely one 'manifesto space' and one 'parliamentary space' for each of the six elections included in this study. I will discuss the properties of these spaces and the structures of party positions within the spaces, before turning to a statistical analysis of the data.

### 5.2.1 Britain

British politics has been dominated by three political parties since the Second World War: the Conservative party, Labour and, to a lesser degree, the Liberals (later Liberal Democrats). The analysis of six British elections since 1950 (1955, 1966, 1974, 1983, 1992 and 2001) includes only these major parties. Parties from

Northern Ireland are excluded because it is essentially a party system on its own. The Scottish and Welsh nationalists are also excluded, because these are not competing in all parts of the country. As a result, their manifestos are mainly concerned with Scottish or Welsh issues and cannot very well be compared to the manifestos of the national parties.

In the United Kingdom parliamentary spaces, I distinguish between the front bench and back bench of each party<sup>8</sup>. While I first made this distinction because of practical reasons<sup>9</sup>, the difference between front bench and back bench is also of theoretical interest (King, 1976). On the government side, one can distinguish between the government itself and the government party back-benchers. These MPs have a somewhat different position from the government itself: they are members of the government party, but not of the government itself, which means that they will generally support the government, but they also will try to influence government policy, in what King calls the *intra-party mode* of executive-legislative relations (King, 1976). In the United Kingdom, Government back-benchers have increasingly used their opportunities to do so, for example by rebelling against the government in parliamentary votes (Norton and Cowley, 1996; Cowley and Stuart, 2004). This does not mean that the government faces many defeats, but the rebellions are used as a means to signal opposition from within the government party.

The opposition party can also be subdivided into a front bench and back-benchers. The Official Opposition's front bench is the most visible group within the opposition ranks. They are the alternative government in waiting. The Shadow Cabinet is the most important group within the opposition front bench, which decides on the strategy of the opposition party vis-a-vis the government. Although their interests are normally aligned with the interests of their back-benchers, it is to be expected that the government is criticized most heavily from the opposition front benches. They have truly to present themselves as the alternative government. In King's terms, their dominant mode of executive-legislative relations is the *opposition mode*. Opposition back-benchers join with their front bench in the battle with the government. However, these members also behave in a different mode. King (1976) calls this the *non-party or private member's mode*. In this mode, back-benchers from all sides of parliament approach the government with particular concerns. For example, as a 'Constituency MP' who act as an advocate for the interests of his or her constituency or as a 'Parliament Man' who is concerned with the relationship between parliament and government (Searing, 1994)<sup>10</sup>.

The distinction between front bench and back bench adds an extra source of variation in the British case, which reflects how politics in the United Kingdom

<sup>8</sup>Except for the Liberals/Liberal Alliance/Liberal Democrats, because these groups are small and until quite recently did not have a shadow team.

<sup>9</sup>See appendix A.3.3.

<sup>10</sup>Searing (1994) distinguishes between different MPs' roles in the United Kingdom parliament. However, many of these roles can also be found in other Westminster-style parliaments.



operates. The discussion of the various British cases will show that there is often quite some difference between a party's front bench and its back-benchers. This will add to the understanding of how the process of mandate fulfilment works in a majoritarian democracy such as Britain. Note that the findings in this chapter (concerning the differences between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) would not be significantly altered if I would not have made the distinction between front bench and back bench in the analysis of the data<sup>11</sup>.

## 1955

The 1955 election was the first one to be fought under the new Conservative leadership of Anthony Eden, who had called for a general election after succeeding Winston Churchill as prime minister. He managed to get a clear election victory both in terms of votes (49.7%) and seats (345 out of 630). Attlee's Labour party lost both votes and seats compared to the last general election, when it had outpolled the Conservatives in terms of votes, but had won fewer seats. The situation was thus quite clear when it came to an electoral mandate and who was to govern. The Liberal party was quite small; it merely won 2.7% of the vote and 6 seats.

The spaces of electoral and parliamentary competition are displayed in figure 5.8. It is important to note that the differences between the two spaces cannot be interpreted in absolute terms. For example, one cannot say that there is a two-point difference between the position of Labour in the electoral space and the Labour front bench in parliament. What is possible is to compare the configuration of the party positions, e.g. to observe that the Liberals were somewhat closer to the Conservatives in parliament than in the electoral competition. As explained in the previous chapter, the spatial figures have been estimated from parties' positions on a number of separate issue dimensions, such as 'Economy' and 'Environment'. These issue dimensions have been plotted in the figure (dotted grey lines) as an aid to interpret the content of the policy position differences between parties. Parties' positions on any of these issue dimensions can be approximated by drawing a perpendicular line through the party position of interest. Furthermore, it is possible to compare how the issue dimensions are related to one another. Figure 5.8 shows, for example, that the ordering of parties' positions on the Environment and Law and Order and Migration dimensions was similar, both in the electoral and the parliamentary competition.

In 1955, the electoral space of competition was dominated by Economic and Foreign Affairs issues, where there was a clear Conservative-Liberal-Labour or-

<sup>11</sup>To estimate the difference between the '5 actor model' presented here and an alternative '3 actor model' that does not distinguish between front bench and back-benchers, I estimated parties' parliamentary issue positions (using the word parameters of the original estimation, see section A.3.3). Neither the visual spatial representations nor the quantitative analyses of the issue positions are significantly altered if the '3 actor model'-positions are used in stead of the '5 actor model'-positions. Most importantly, the difference in the explanatory power of manifesto positions for parties' parliamentary issue positions is still not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ).

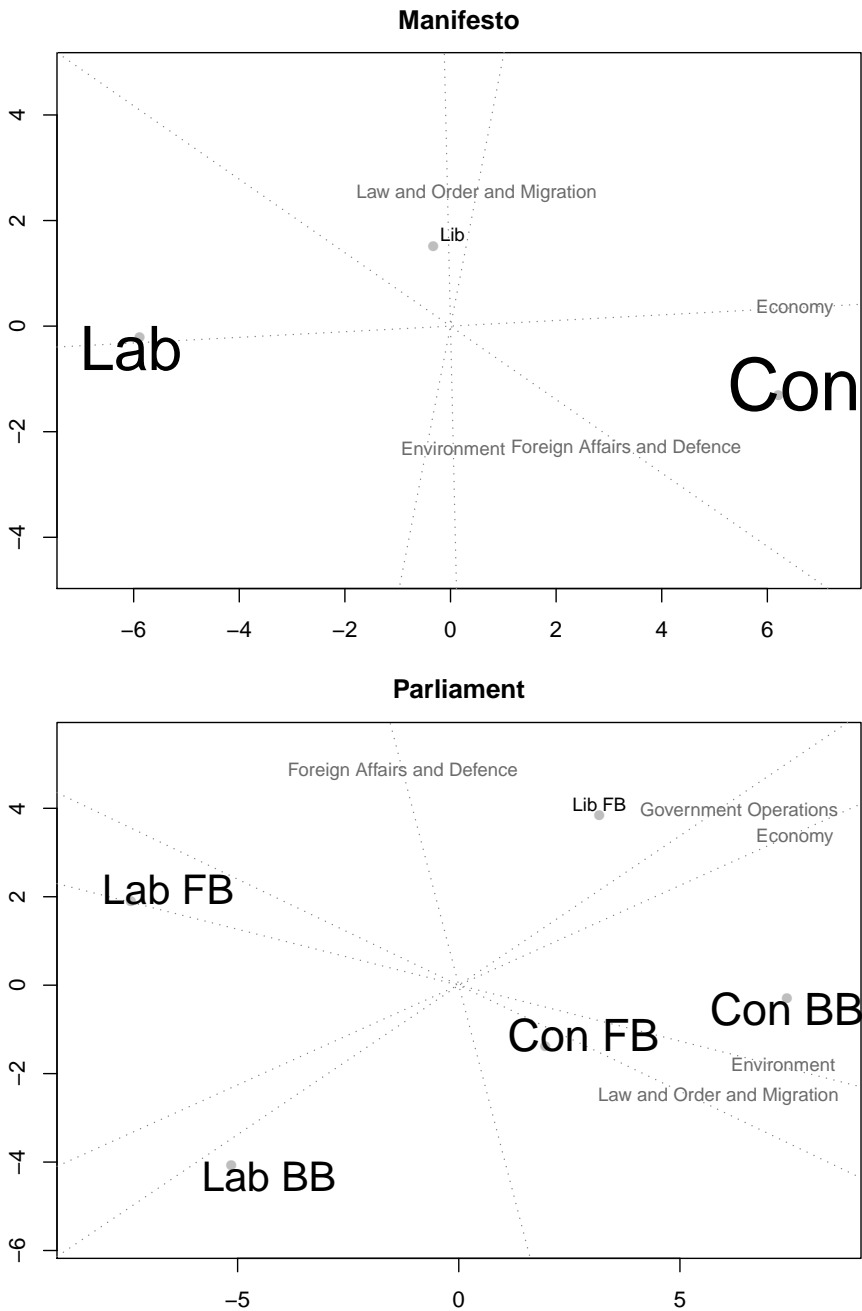
dering (figure 5.8). This is concurrent with an analysis of the content of election speeches by Butler (1955: 31-37). The second (vertical) dimension of the space can be explained by the party's positions on Law and Order (Labour-Conservative-Liberal) and the Environment category, which also includes Agriculture, but is not very salient anyway, that shows a Lib-Lab-Con ordering. Although some observers would certainly position the Liberals more towards the Conservative party, it is not entirely unexpected to find that an analysis of their position based on text of their election manifesto puts them somewhat closer to Labour. After all, the Conservatives formed the incumbent government and where thus the major electoral target.

The British parliamentary space of competition between 1955 and 1959 shows a similar ordering of parties, but the underlying dimensions have sometimes changed. The Conservatives are located on the right and Labour on the left, with the Liberals taking a moderate position on most issues. Interestingly, the Labour front bench (labelled 'Lab FB') takes one of the extreme positions on most issues, although it is very close to the Labour back-benchers on the Economy and Government Operations. The Labour benches are most different on Foreign Affairs, where the back-benchers are estimated to be closer to the conservative back benches than to their own front bench. The Conservative front bench (the government) is positioned more to the centre than its back-benchers, but this is probably partly the result of the method applied here<sup>12</sup>. At least we can conclude that it is closer to its own back benches than to the opposition benches. The Liberals have shifted their position somewhat towards the right of the political spectrum, especially on the Economy, Environment, Law and Order and Migration and Government Operations. On Foreign Affairs and Defence they do, however, remain opposed to the government. The ordering of parties on the Economy and Foreign Affairs seems not to have changed very much, but Environment and Law and Order and Migration have completely different party orderings than in the electoral space of competition. Of course, these were not very important issues in the manifestos. Therefore, the estimates of the party manifesto positions were rather uncertain and changes are not unexpected. However, if issues are not very important and if party positions are not very clear during election-time there is a problem in terms of predictability of the parliamentary space of competition. Ideally, voters should be able to predict what the parliamentary space of competition looks like based on the electoral space of competition. If the electoral space of competition does not provide information on certain issues, voters cannot predict what the parliamentary space looks like.

Despite the changes on the issues of the Environment and Law and Order and Migration, the Parliamentary space of competition did not collapse into a single dimension. On the contrary, the variation on the second (vertical) dimension is

<sup>12</sup>The parliamentary space presented here is based on a Wordfish analysis that corrects for the special (institutional) position of the government in parliament (see appendix A.3.3). The consequence of this procedure is that the government is likely to be positioned somewhat more moderate than it really is. This should be taken into account in the interpretation of the spaces.

Figure 5.8: Spaces of party competition in the United Kingdom, 1955-1959



Note: Lab = Labour, Con = Conservative, Lib = Liberals, FB = front bench, BB = back bench. Labels are relative to party size.

relatively large, compared to the manifesto space.

## 1966

The 1966 elections were called by Labour prime minister Wilson only two years after the previous elections. In the 1964-1966 parliament, Labour could only count on a very small majority of six seats. Many observers had therefore expected a Lab-Lib pact and new elections anyway. Instead, Wilson choose to govern as if he had a clear majority:

Over the whole field of government there will be many changes which we have been given a mandate by you to carry out. We intend to fulfil that mandate.

cited in Butler and King (1966: 2)

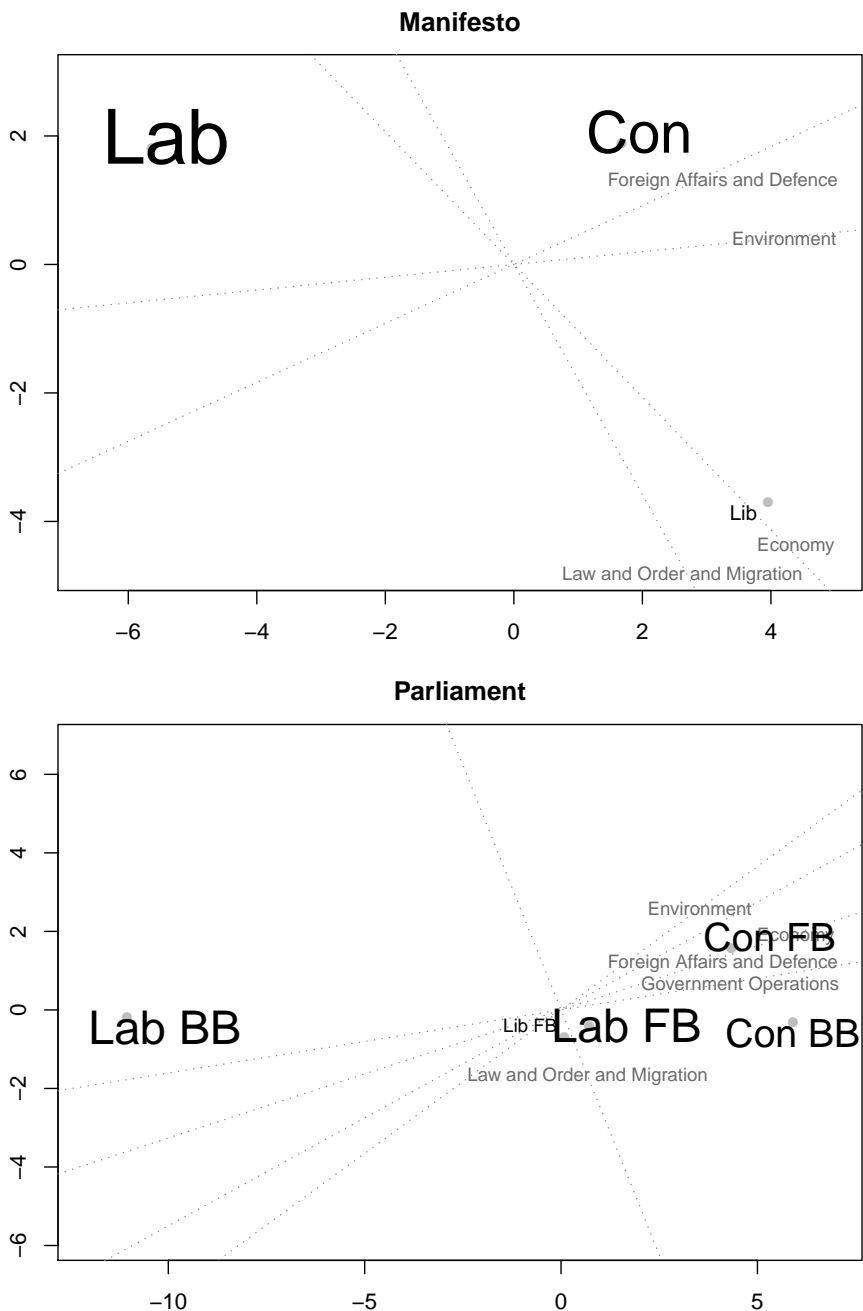
After two years, he choose, however to dissolve Parliament in order to obtain a new mandate and, more importantly, a larger majority. Labour was polling an 8 per cent lead over the Conservatives, so this seemed an opportune moment to do so. In addition, the popularity of the prime minister was at a two-year high. Although Labour had lost the elections in 1951, which had been held under similar circumstances, this time the early elections proved a good choice. Labour increased its majority to 97, which was of course a much more comfortable governing majority than the previous six.

Two things stand out from the electoral space of party competition in 1966. First, the divide on the Economy is not between Labour and Conservatives, but rather between the Liberals and Labour, with the Conservatives somewhere in the middle. The same is true for the parties' estimates on Law and Order and Migration. On the issues of the Environment and Foreign Affairs and Defence Labour is isolated on the left. Labour was the incumbent party in 1966, which can explain its isolated position on some issues: the other parties attack Labour's record. It is however, quite remarkable that the Liberals did not only move towards the Conservatives, but even beyond them. Indeed, the liberal manifesto was quite explicit on stopping nationalization and promoting free trade. Still, this effect is probably also partly due to rhetoric: after all, the Liberals had tried to work out some sort of coalition with Labour in the 1964-1966 parliament, but failed.

The parliamentary space of competition looks quite a bit different from the electoral space, although the basic left-right pattern is still very important. The Labour back-benchers are positioned very far away from all other actors, including the government itself. As I explained above, the government position might be biased towards the centre, but to find it this close to the Conservative benches and so far away from its own back bench is quite remarkable<sup>13</sup>. From this picture

<sup>13</sup>A Wordfish analysis that includes the government in the estimation of the word parameters even opposes the Labour front bench with the Labour back benches on all issues.

Figure 5.9: Spaces of party competition in the United Kingdom, 1966-1970



it is also clear that there is a similar pattern of competition on almost all issues: the Labour back-benchers on the (far) left, the government and the liberals in the centre and the conservative benches on the right. The only exception is Law and Order and Migration, where the Conservative benches seem to be divided. The liberals are positioned quite clearly in the centre, rather than in the manifesto space, where they took positions on the fringes on almost all issues.

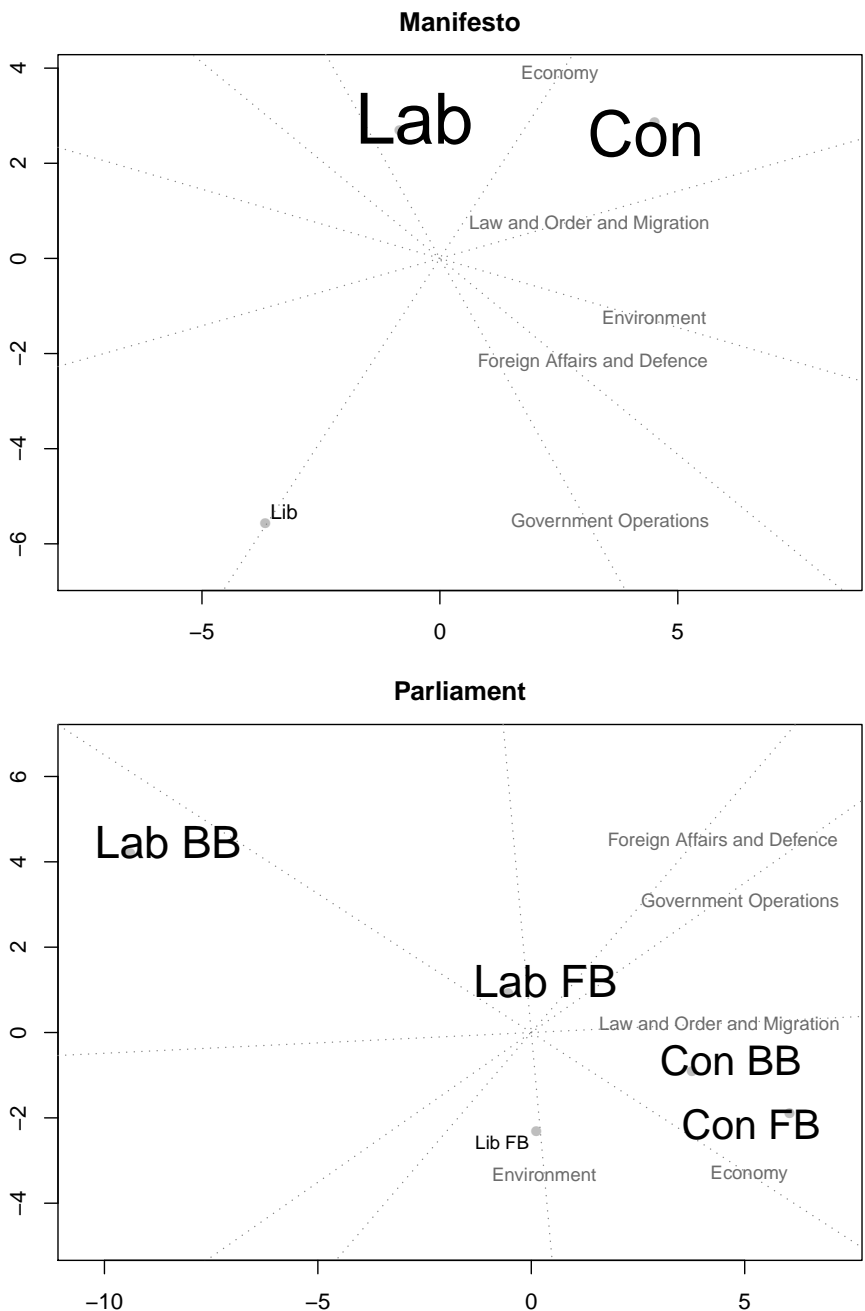
## 1974

The seventies were in many respects a remarkable decade for British politics. Britain witnessed both a short period of minority government in 1974 as well as a Labour government that struggled to keep its parliamentary majority between 1974 and 1979. It is also a period of reform of the Conservative party, exemplified by the change from the moderate policies of Ted Heath towards the neo-liberal politics of Margaret Thatcher. The February 1974 election came in many respects as a surprise; many observers had expected an autumn election – that, ironically, would be called after all, be it by a different government. No party achieved an overall majority in the February 1974 election, but Labour managed to win a plurality of seats. After Heath failed to form a coalition with the Liberals, he made way for former Labour prime minister Wilson, who governed for about half a year without a majority. Of course, Wilson was used to working within the margins of the parliament from the 1964-1966 period. Moreover, most parties did not press for immediate new elections and therefore the government was actually able to govern quite successfully. The fact that nobody believed that the situation would last for very long will also have contributed to the relative success of this short government (Butler and Kavanagh, 1975: 18-53).

Wilson called for new elections in October 1974, in which he hoped to achieve a proper working majority. The space of competition during these elections was clearly two-dimensional: every possible ordering of parties can be found on at least one issue. On the Economy, the Conservatives and Labour are opposed to the Liberals. On the Environment and Law and Order and Migration the ordering is Liberal-Labour-Conservative as well, although the Liberals and Labour are much closer on these issues. Foreign Affairs and Defence is the only issue category where there is a clear Labour versus Liberal and Conservative ordering, while parties are ordered Labour-Conservative-Liberals on Government Operations. Apparently, there is no clear left-right ordering in this electoral space of competition. This lack of a clear divide does reflect the moderation of both large parties at the time and the complicated situation that had arisen from the situation of a hung parliament.

The parliamentary space of competition shows a rather more clear left-right pattern of competition. The Labour back-benchers are on the left, while the Labour front bench (the government) is located somewhere in the centre of the space – much closer, still, to the opposition than to its own back bench. Just as in 1966, despite their position on the fringes of the electoral space, the Lib-

**Figure 5.10:** Spaces of party competition in the United Kingdom, 1974-1979



Note: Lab = Labour, Con = Conservative, Lib = Liberals, FB = front bench, BB = back bench. Labels are relative to party size.

erals moved to the centre of the parliamentary space of competition, although the party was clearly closer to the Conservative benches than to the Labour back bench. The Conservative benches were rather close in terms of policy position, with the front bench being somewhat more on the extreme.

Despite the fact that parties seem to be ordered on a single line, the dotted lines that represent the issue dimensions suggests that the second dimension of this space is not redundant. On some issues, the Government is positioned closer to the Labour back bench, e.g. the Economy, the Environment and Law and Order and Migration, while on other issues its position is almost equal to the Conservatives (Foreign Affairs and Defence and Government Operations). A similar point can be made for the Liberals: they deviate from the general left-right ordering on Environmental issues, and to a lesser extent on Foreign Affairs and Government Operations.

The October 1974 elections and the subsequent Parliament seem to be not very congruent. Not only is the ordering of parties different on many issues, some issues that have similar orderings in the electoral space are very different in those terms in the parliamentary space and vice versa.

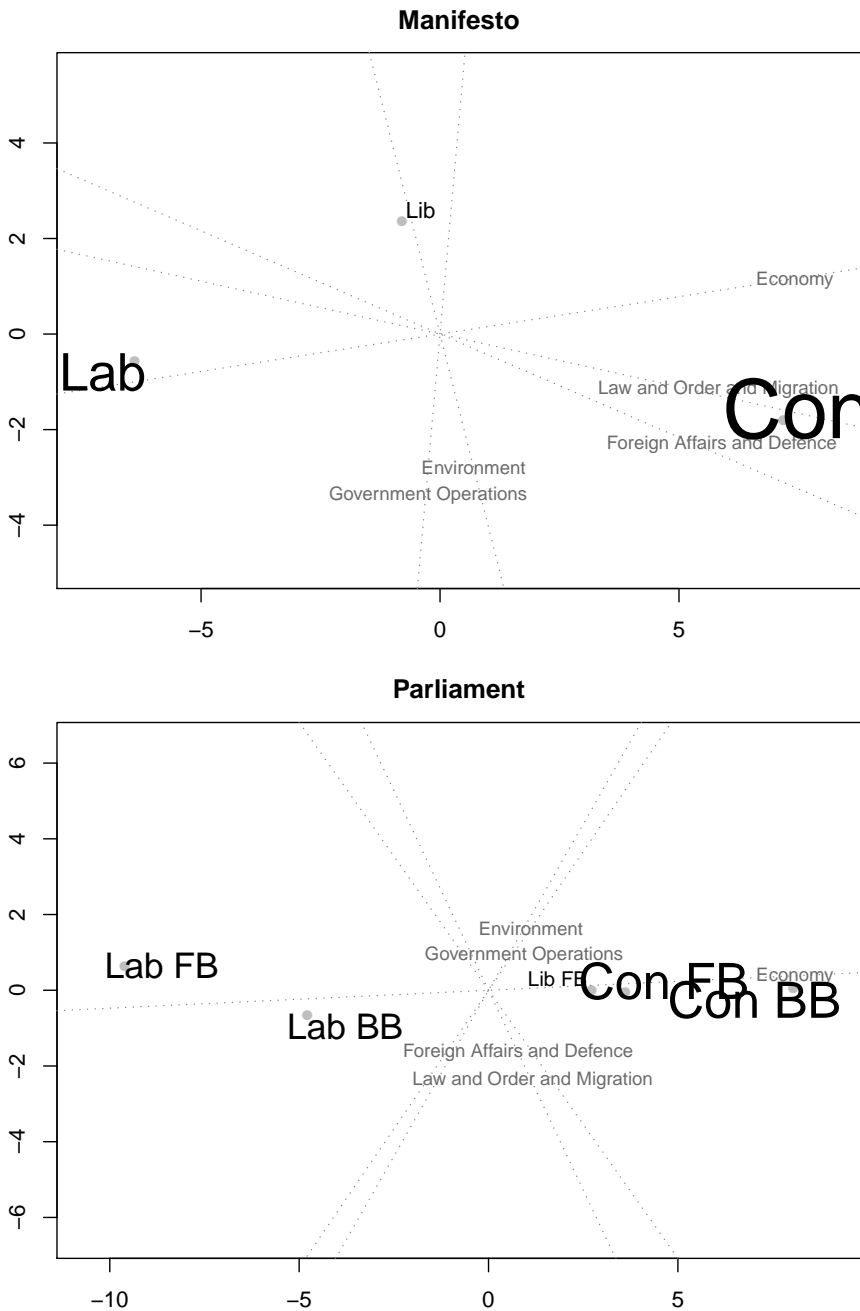
### 1983

Margaret Thatcher, who was elected prime minister in 1979, was up for re-election in 1983. Although her government started off with some difficulty and especially social unrest, the Falklands war brought about a change in the polls. At the same time, Labour leader Michael Foot struggled with his popularity and his leadership within his party. In 1981 a group of twenty Labour MPs broke away from their party and formed the Social Democratic Party. They believed that Labour, that had fought the 1979 election under a moderate manifesto, had strayed too much to the left. The Bennites, the 'hard' left faction within the party, had grown stronger and Tony Benn only narrowly lost the deputy leadership election. The SDP almost immediately formed an alliance with the Liberals. The Liberal/SDP Alliance proved an important factor in the 1983 elections; it came in third, but its share of the vote was almost equal to that of Labour. The first-past-the-post electoral system did, however, favour Labour; it won 209 seats compared to the Alliance's 23.

The Labour manifesto has famously been called 'the longest suicide note in history' by shadow cabinet member Gerald Kaufman (Webster, 1990), because it was heavily influenced by the hard left faction of the party. The electoral space of competition confirms this analysis, putting Labour clearly on the left of the political spectrum opposed to the right-wing Conservatives, with the Liberal/SDP Alliance estimated to be slightly left of centre. However, on the issue of the Environment and Government Operations the Alliance is estimated to be the furthest away from the Conservative position. On the issue of the Economy, the Alliance is positioned towards the centre, while it is closer to Labour on other issues (Foreign Affairs and Defence and Law and Order and Migration).



**Figure 5.11:** Spaces of party competition in the United Kingdom, 1983-1987



The parliamentary space of competition is in many respects similar to the electoral space of competition. The space is dominated by a clear left-right divide on Economic issues. The other issue dimensions are plotted here at an angle to the Economic issues, but similar issues as in the electoral space are grouped in pairs of two (Foreign Affairs and Defence, and Law and Order and Migration are one pair; the other consists of Environment and Government Operations). The position of the Liberal/SDP Alliance seems to have changed the most: where the party tended to lean to Labour in the electoral space, it is clearly closer to the Conservatives in the parliamentary space of competition. The Government (Conservative front bench) is positioned quite far to the right, compared with the relative positions of other governments in the discussions above. This illustrates the clear right-wing position of the Thatcher governments. In general, the comparison of spaces in 1983 shows a rather high degree of correspondence, the parliamentary space witnessing a continuation of the electoral struggles between Labour and the Conservatives.

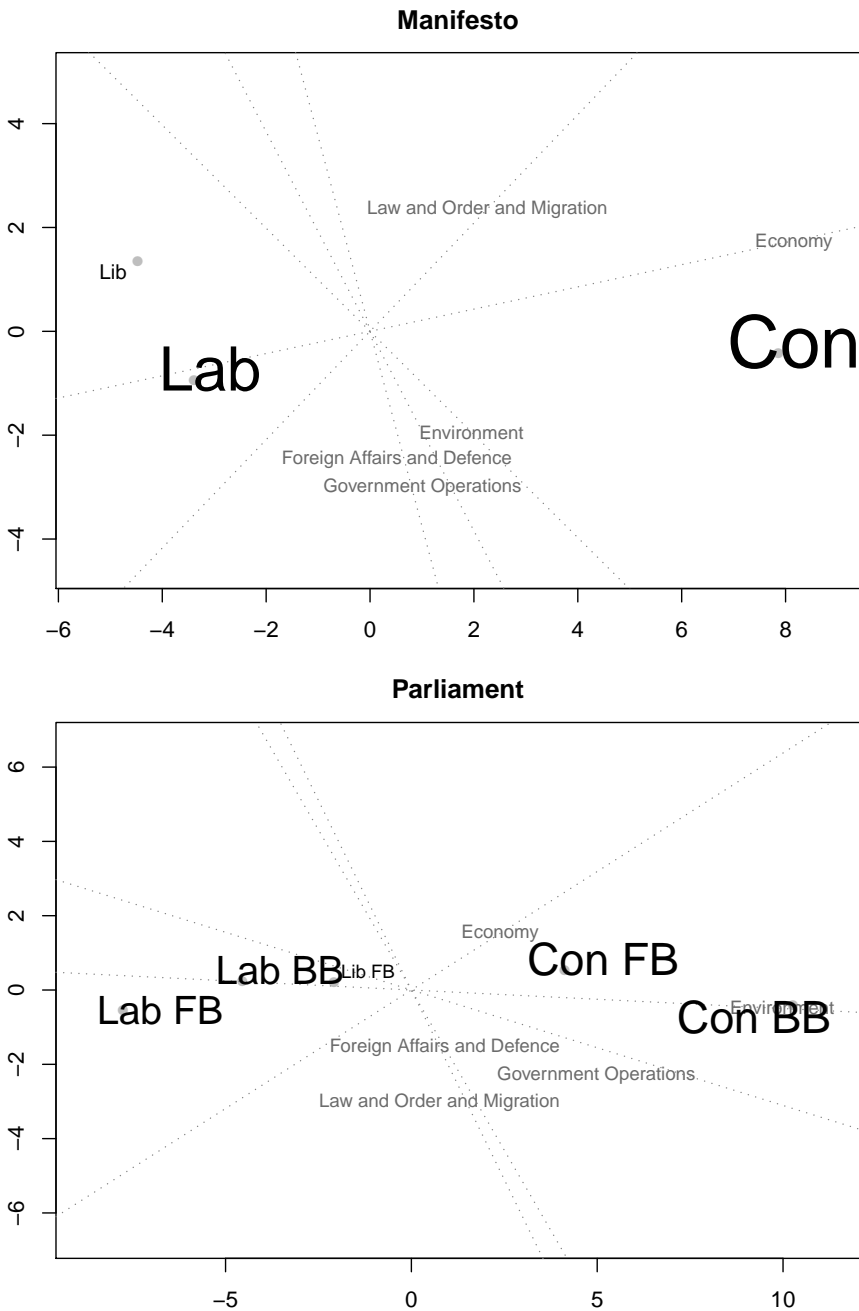
## 1992

The Conservatives fought the 1992 elections under a new leader and prime minister. John Major had succeeded Thatcher, after she had been forced to withdraw from the Conservative leadership contest to prevent Michael Heseltine from defeating her in that contest in 1990. The new Conservative leader had a very different leadership style from his predecessor, stressing moderation, the need for European co-operation and 'One Nation' Toryism. Although these differences may not have translated directly into a substantively different program, the symbolic differences embodied by Major did the Conservatives no harm at the time (Butler and Kavanagh, 1992).

Labour, on the other hand, was still seeking to be an acceptable government party for the centre of the political spectrum. The presence of a stronger competitor in the political centre had made life not easy for party leader Neil Kinnock, who had succeeded Michael Foot after the disastrous elections of 1983. Although the party had already reformed itself to a certain extent in 1987, accepting membership of the European Community, the sale of council town houses to tenants and a lower rate of direct taxation, the central question was how far Kinnock could move his party to the centre without losing the support of his grass roots (Butler and Kavanagh, 1992: 44). Yet, major reforms of party policy had not been pursued – the party needed another lost election to really modernize. The Liberals had merged with the Social Democratic Party in 1988 to form the Liberal Democrats. Their newly elected leader Paddy Ashdown had managed to gain an image of respectability in the Commons.

The electoral space of competition (Figure 5.12) is clearly dominated by the division between the Conservatives on the one side and the Liberal Democrats and Labour on the other side. On many issues (Government Operations, Foreign Affairs and the Environment) the Liberal Democrats are estimated to be more to

Figure 5.12: Spaces of party competition in the United Kingdom, 1992-1997



the left than Labour. On the Economy, their position seems to be similar, while Labour is estimated to be only slightly more leftists on Law and Order and Migration. The pattern is clearly different from the one in 1983, let alone 1974 or 1966, where the Liberals were clearly in a more centrist or even right-wing position. In each of the manifesto spaces the Liberal Democrats are positioned on the opposite side of the incumbent government, which suggests that rhetoric does play a role in the analysis of these manifestos. However, their position was far more moderate in both 1983 and 1955, when the incumbent government was also Conservative. The fact that the Liberal Democrats are positioned so close to Labour also suggests that the position of the Conservative party is not as moderate as one would have expected from a 'One Nation'-prime minister.

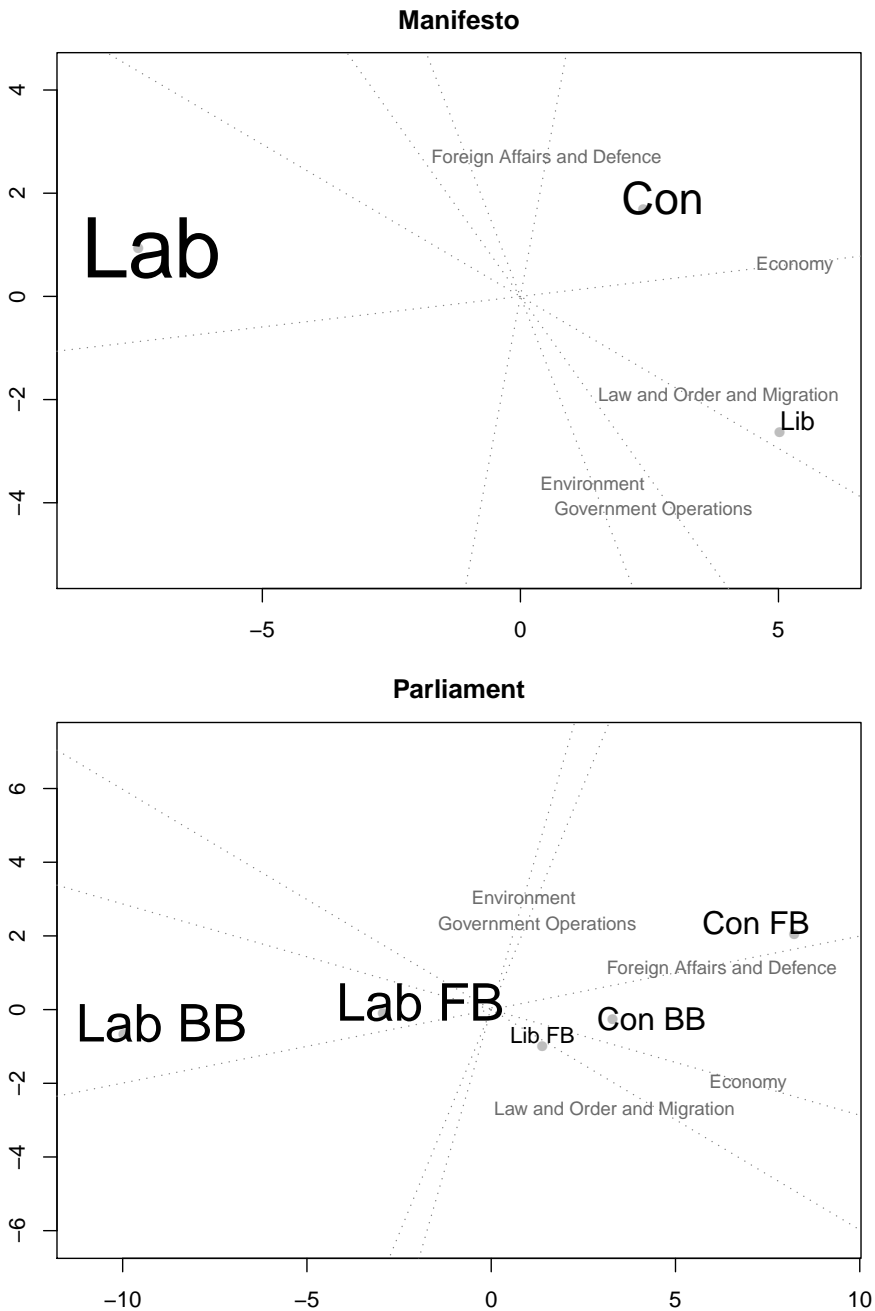
In the parliamentary space of competition, the pattern is far more like previous parliamentary periods, showing the Labour benches on the left, the Liberal Democrats just left-of-centre and the Conservatives on the right of the political spectrum. Comparison of the 1983 parliamentary space and the 1992 parliamentary space reveals that the Major government is positioned quite a bit further from its back-benchers than Thatcher's government was. The 1992-1997 parliament is indeed known for the political problems of the Major governments, especially over Europe. Foreign Affairs is one of the issues where there is a large distance between the government and its back benches. The Liberal Democrats' parliamentary position is to the right of Labour, rather than to its left. This change to the right is similar to the one the Alliance made in the 1983-1987 parliament. The main difference with the 1980s is that in the 1992 parliament the Liberal Democrats were closer to Labour than they were to the Conservatives.

## 2001

The most recent British case in this analysis consists of the second Labour government under Tony Blair. It is well known that Blair had managed to reform his party in the mid-1990s. He changed the name of the party to New Labour and pursued 'Third Way' policies as an alternative to old socialism and neo-liberal Thatcherism. Labour's landslide victory in 1997 had given him a clear governmental mandate, which was backed up by huge personal popularity. The Labour government was able to quickly implement devolution to Scotland and Wales and Blair's standing was much improved after the Good Friday agreement was signed in Northern Ireland. The financial policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was solid, but the government had difficulty in reaching its targets in Health Care and Education, despite a large increase in spending in these fields. Nevertheless, Labour kept doing very well in the polls and there was little doubt that it would achieve a second election victory in a row.

Labour's main political opponents were not doing very well. The leadership of William Hague had not been entirely convincing and also in terms of policy the Conservative party was looking for new directions. After all, the Conservative party had been voted out of government after 18 years of office. The party

**Figure 5.13:** Spaces of party competition in the United Kingdom, 2001-2005



strayed to the right, rather than reconquering the political centre. Of course, Hague's job was rather difficult, because of the government's and Blair's popularity. The Liberal Democrats had established themselves as left-wing rather than right-wing critics of the Labour party. After Ashdown resigned the leadership, Charles Kennedy had quite successfully maintained the party image as a party of positive opposition to Labour's, that managed to put forward a somewhat different agenda from Labour: in support of proportional representation, strongly pro-European and favouring spending on education.

The electoral space of competition mirrors the previous two cases when there was an incumbent Labour government (1966 and 1974): Labour is positioned on one side of the political spectrum and the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats on the other.

In parliament, the traditional Labour-Liberal Democrat-Conservative pattern is most obvious, although it is clearer on some issues than others. On some issues the Liberal Democrats are closer to Labour, while on other issues their position is closer to that of the Conservative opposition. Most interestingly, the position of the Labour government is hardly as remarkable as it was in the 1966 and 1974 when Labour governments faced rebellious back-benchers. Although the back-benchers are estimated more to the left of the space, the Labour government is clearly positioned in the left part of the space of competition. Because this concerns the relative positions of actors, this does not necessarily mean that the government was more left-wing in 2001-2005. It is more likely that the back-benchers were more moderate, which resulted in a position that was relatively closer to the Labour front bench.

### **Patterns in the British cases**

The qualitative discussion of the six British cases uncovers a number of general patterns in the correspondence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition.

First, the British spaces of competition are dominated by the left-right divide, especially in economic terms. This pattern is the strongest in parliament, where almost each space of competition shows Labour on the left, the Liberals somewhere in the middle and the Conservatives on the right. Nevertheless, the second dimension of the spaces does pick up on some relevant patterns that do not fit this single dimension. There is no clear pattern in these deviations: in some spaces Foreign Affairs does not seem to match the left-right patterns, while in other spaces the Environment or Government Operations deviate from the economic dimension.

The electoral spaces of competition also seem to show a degree of left-right politics. However, on closer inspection I find that the space is mainly the result of a division between the incumbent government and the opposition parties. In the elections when the Conservatives were in government, the Liberals were positioned in the centre of the space (1955, 1983) or even beyond Labour (1992).

In the election-years where Labour was the incumbent, the Liberals were positioned generally further away from Labour than the Conservatives were.

One reason for this probably surprising position of the Liberals, who are generally regarded as a force from the political centre, is the anti-government rhetoric in the manifestos from the 'outgoing' opposition parties. For example, the Liberals write many sentences about the Labour government that 'has failed' to meet their objectives (Liberal Party, 1966), 'Labour's [policy proposals] will do nothing to correct this' (Liberal Party, 1966) and 'misjudged policies from both Conservative and Labour Governments' (Liberal Democrats, 1992). Similar remarks are made by the Conservatives and Labour when they are in opposition. This incumbents versus opposition dynamic in the manifestos might be 'just rhetoric', but it does very much influence the way in which parties present themselves during the elections. This shows that rhetoric matters: opposing and supporting the incumbent governments' policies is an important part of a British manifesto. This is also a clear difference with the Dutch manifestos, where such utterances only form a minor part of manifestos, if present at all.

This study looks at the party mandate in terms of what parties talk about and what they say before and after elections. If the electoral arena is dominated by political struggles and the parliamentary arena by substantive reasoning, this reduces the congruences of the structures of those spaces. This is exactly what I observe in the cases in the United Kingdom. During the elections, the opposition parties oppose the incumbent government. Contrary to what one might expect, in parliament this dynamic is less strong, especially for the Liberals. The Liberals strongly oppose the incumbent party during the election campaign, but their parliamentary position is more moderate. The retrospective nature of the manifestos diminishes the congruence between the structures of the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition.

The distinction made here between the front bench and back-benchers of the main parties leads to a noteworthy observation. In all parliamentary spaces of competition, the dominant ordering of parties is: Government back-benchers – Government – Liberals – Opposition back-benchers – Opposition front bench. The position of the front bench and back-benchers is by no means identical, especially not for the government party. The government back-benchers form a counterweight to the relatively moderate position of the government itself<sup>14</sup>. It is not quite so difficult to imagine that the government has to take a relatively moderate position on issues. After all, the job of the government is not only to fulfil the pledges of their mandate, but also to defend 'business as usual': the large output from the bureaucracy that continues no matter who is in government (Rose, 1980). The opposition front bench, on the other hand, has got every incentive to distance itself from the government in very clear terms. This pattern can also be observed in the House, for example during the Debate on the

<sup>14</sup>The estimates of the governments' positions might be biased towards a moderate position, because of the way these positions were estimated, but this is unlikely to fully explain the moderate positions of the governments (see appendix A.3.3).

Address, the annual general debate on the outline of government policies. The Leader of the Opposition attacks the government in strong terms and the Prime Minister defends his government's policies. After the House empties the Leader of the Liberal Democrats gets to make a few remarks, and he is followed by a long list of back-benchers who sometimes strongly defend or attack the government, but generally limit themselves to mentioning one area that they find particularly interesting or to the mentioning of constituency business. The spaces of competition also show that the Labour back-benchers are generally further away from its government than the Conservative back-benchers. These remarkable differences between front bench and back benches are explored more fully in chapter 6.

### 5.2.2 The Netherlands

The analysis of the Dutch cases incorporates, in principle, all parties that won seats in an election<sup>15</sup>. However, some parties did not produce a manifesto for some elections or it was extremely short – these parties have not been included in the analysis. Parliamentary split-offs were also ignored. Six parliament-elections from six decades have been included: the elections held in and the parliaments starting in 1952, 1959, 1972, 1982, 1994 and 2003.

#### 1952

The 1952 elections in the Netherlands took place in the context of a strongly 'pillarized' society (Lijphart, 1968). Three large Christian democratic parties were dominant players: the large Catholic People's Party (KVP), the somewhat smaller Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) which aimed at protestant 're-reformed'<sup>16</sup> voters and the Christian Historical Union (CHU) which catered to protestant 'Dutch reformed' voters. The small orthodox Calvinist party, the Political Reformed Party (SGP), is not displayed here as it did not present an election manifesto. The two main secular parties were the left-wing social-democratic party (PvdA) and the conservative-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD). The Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) is also excluded because of the lack of a manifesto.

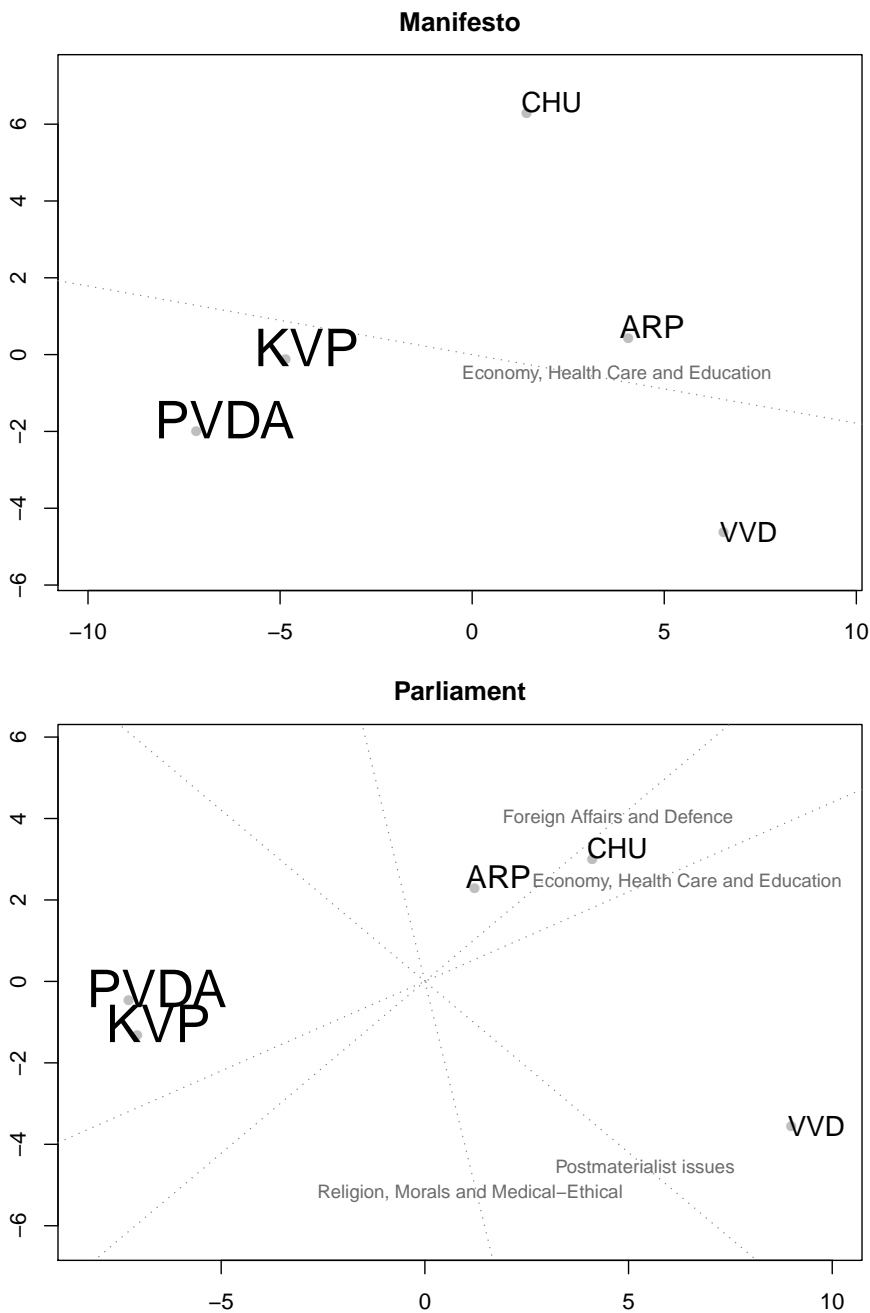
The manifesto space for 1952 shows a first dimension that is dominated by Economy, Health Care and Education. Although there are also differences between parties that add to a second dimension in the solution, none of the issue dimensions can be fitted in this space to explain these differences. The reason is that not all parties can be positioned on all issue dimensions, especially on the

<sup>15</sup>Other than in the British case, the lower house of the Dutch parliament (the *Tweede Kamer*) never included representatives from regional parties. Obviously, there are geographical differences in parties' support, but all parties compete on a national platform.

<sup>16</sup>The 're-reformed' protestants (*gereformeerden*) are members of a protestant church that seceded from the Dutch Reformed church (*hervormden*).



**Figure 5.14:** *Spaces of party competition in the Netherlands, 1952-1956*



Note: Labels are relative to party size. For full party names, see table B.2 on page 234.

Religion, Morals and Medical-Ethical as well as the Post-materialist issues dimension. Only the Christian parties could be scored on the Religious dimension, because the two secular parties (PvdA and VVD) did not address the issue in their manifesto. Of course, the fact that they choose not to address these types of moral and ethical concerns indicates a difference in opinion between the secular and Christian parties. The CHU could not be scored on the Post-materialism issue dimension. The Foreign Affairs dimension can also not be reliably represented in this space, although it contributed to the distance matrix used to calculate the picture. The Foreign Affairs dimension ranges from PvdA to ARP, with the KVP and VVD in the centre, excluding the CHU which did not address these issues sufficiently to reliably estimate its position. All in all, the space of competition is dominated by Economic issues, with other dimensions contributing to the estimates on the second dimension.

The 1952 elections resulted in minor shifts in the composition of parliament, as was common during these years of pillarization (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). The social-democratic PvdA increased its number of seats by three, at the expense of the catholic KVP and the communist CPN. Both the KVP and the PvdA won thirty (out of a hundred) seats. It was clear during the elections that the outgoing Drees-II government of PvdA, KVP, CHU and VVD would not continue in office, as the liberal VVD believed that the government had been influenced too much by the unions (Bosmans, 1999: 56). The clear economic left-right division in the electoral space of competition can be well understood from that perspective. In the new government the VVD was replaced by the protestant ARP. The ARP had not been in government for several years because of its staunch opposition to decolonization of the Dutch East Indies (Koole, 1995: 107-108).

The parliamentary space of competition between 1952 and 1956 looks rather similar to the electoral competition, although there are some underlying differences. The most striking difference is the position of the CHU, which is more to the right in parliament than in the electoral competition<sup>17</sup>. The ARP, however, seems to have shifted somewhat to the left, moving closer to the other governing parties. Still, the government seems to be divided between KVP and PvdA on the one side and the protestant parties (ARP and CHU) on the other. The main difference lies, however, between the government parties and the liberals, who were in opposition.

When looking at the issue dimensions that constitute the space, some remarkable differences come to light. On the post-materialist issue, the PvdA-KVP-VVD versus ARP ordering is replaced by an KVP-PvdA versus ARP-CHU-VVD ordering. It thus seems that the VVD has moved away from the position of the

<sup>17</sup>It should be stressed that the phrase 'to the right' strictly speaking does not have the political meaning that the reader might be used to, but rather means that it is literally more to the right in the figure. In addition, all of these figures display parties' relative positions. Whenever the shorthand 'party A moved to the right' is used, the correct interpretation is that party A's position was positioned relatively closer to the other parties positioned on the right of the parliamentary space than was the case in the electoral space.

Catholics and social-democrats towards the probably more government-critical ARP side of the dimension. A similar change can be observed on the Foreign Affairs and Defence issue, where the VVD has moved away from the PvdA and KVP, while the ARP has moved towards their position. It is also remarkable that the PvdA is positioned on the Christian side of the Religious dimension, despite the call of Catholic Bishops in 1954 on Catholics not to be a member of the PvdA. Government-opposition dynamics seems to dominate this dimension, the PvdA choosing the government side. On the whole the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition are quite similar; the differences that are visible seem to be the result of opposition-coalition dynamics.

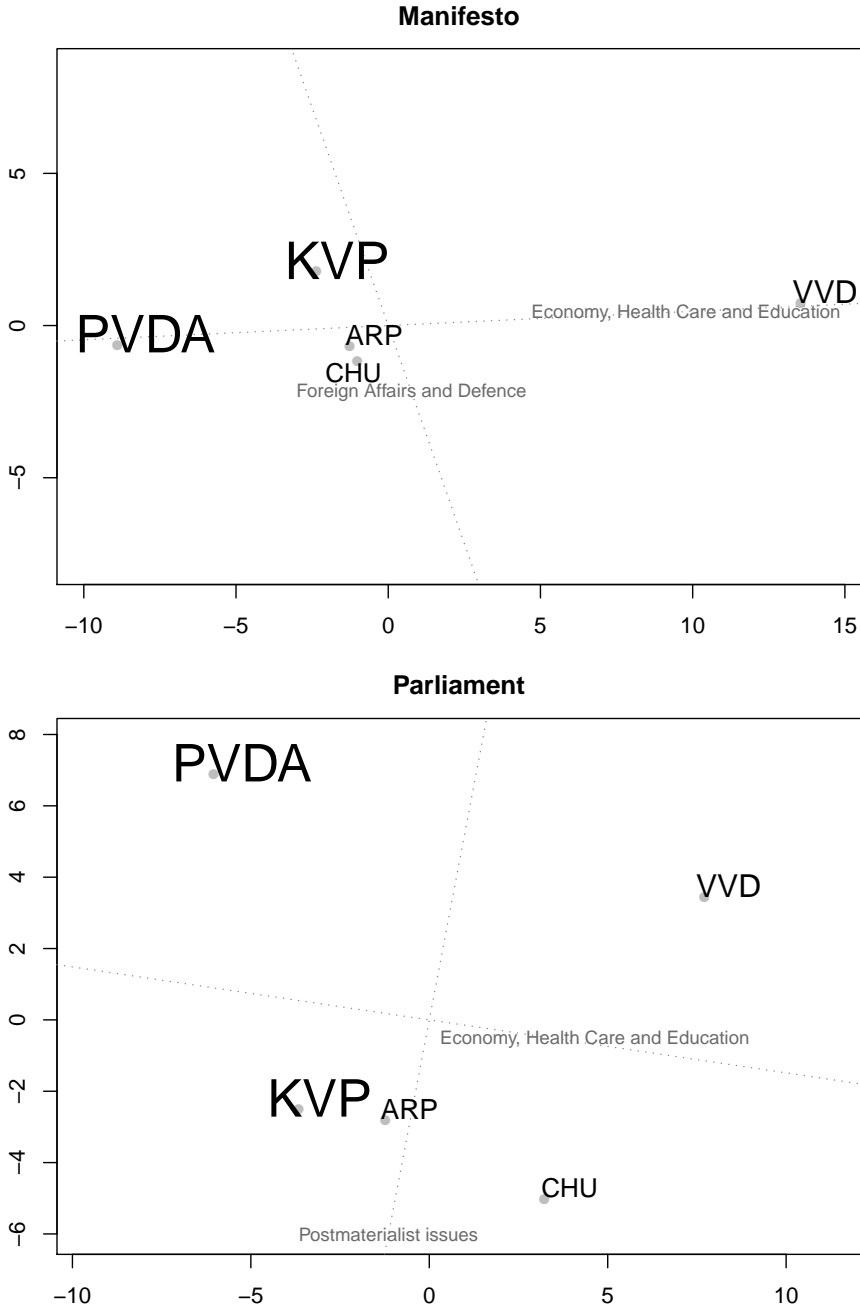
### 1959

In 1959 the same five parties are included in the analysis. The new Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) only presented a very short general program, while the SGP and CPN still did not table a real election manifesto. The early elections of 1959 were necessary because the coalition of all five parties collapsed as a result of ever-increasing political tension between the PvdA and the Christian democratic parties. A caretaker government of the Christian democratic parties had dissolved parliament and called for early elections.

The electoral space of competition is clearly dominated by a left-right dynamic. The VVD is positioned on the right-hand side, clearly opposite to the position of the PvdA. The Christian democratic parties are positioned somewhat to the left of centre, contrary to what we might expect given the circumstances of these elections. Closer inspection of the data by means of a Correspondence Analysis learns that there is indeed a second dimension to the competition on economic issues, that distinguishes between the Christian democratic and secular parties. Thus, the first dimension found by the Wordfish analysis seems to underestimate the differences between the PvdA and the Christian democratic parties. This phenomenon, where a one-dimensional solution as offered by Wordfish does not always capture all relevant differences between parties, was also observed in a number of other cases<sup>18</sup>. Foreign Affairs and Defence seems to distinguish most clearly between KVP on the one side and the other parties on the other side, however the PvdA could not be positioned on this dimension. The problem of missing scores was also apparent with the issues of Post-materialism and Religion; only two parties could be scored on each of these dimensions, which makes them not very useful for the purposes here.

<sup>18</sup>Correspondence Analysis (CA) is a technique that is comparable to Wordscores, and to a lesser degree to Wordfish (Lowe, 2008). One difference is that CA can find a two- or more-dimensional solution. In case Wordfish provides a solution that seems at odds with other accounts of the party competition on an issue, CA can be used as a tool to further investigate the difference. The technique of correspondence analysis itself is under some circumstances very sensitive to outliers (see also Lowe, 2008). Therefore, I am using it merely as a tool for further investigation of the Wordfish solutions if these run contrary to expectation, rather than as the main method of analysis.

**Figure 5.15:** *Spaces of party competition in the Netherlands, 1959-1963*



Note: Labels are relative to party size. For full party names, see table B.2 on page 234.

The 1959 elections resulted in the formation of a coalition cabinet containing the liberal VVD and the Christian democratic parties. This was to be expected given the cabinet crisis in 1958, which was caused by conflict between PvdA and KVP about taxes. The option of a centre-right coalition was rather interesting for the KVP as it strengthened its (numerical) position within the government. The ordering of parties on the horizontal dimension of the parliamentary space of competition is very similar to the ordering in the elections. The PvdA is located on the left, the VVD on the right and the Christian parties somewhere in the centre. Bearing in mind the fact that there was now a centre-right coalition, it is in fact remarkable that KVP and ARP have barely changed their position on this dimension: only the ARP seems to have drifted somewhat to the right. The vertical dimension of the parliamentary space of competition seems to be more important than the vertical dimension in the electoral space (see section 5.2.3). The ordering of parties coincides with the Post-materialism dimension, which shows a clear distinction between the secular and Christian parties. Interestingly, the one issue dimension that one would have expected to show such a pattern, Religion, did not do so. Instead, on the Religious dimension the VVD was opposed to the other parties, although the PvdA was somewhere in the centre of this dimension. Foreign Affairs could also not be drawn into the space as a dimension, but the pattern of the PvdA opposing the governmental parties does add to the distances between the parties in the space of competition. The Christian democratic parties were much closer to the VVD on this issue in parliament than they were in the manifesto.

The parliamentary space of competition is thus quite similar to the manifesto space of competition when it comes to the horizontal axis: Economy, Health Care and Education. On other issues, the pattern is much more diverse. The Christian democratic parties group together in parliament and move somewhat closer to their governing partner, the VVD. The opposition party PvdA removed itself from the other parties; somewhat similar to the VVD's movement when it was in opposition in 1952. Economic issues were dominant in the manifesto competition. Furthermore, many party positions on Post-materialism and Religion could not be estimated for the manifesto competition, which obviously limits the variation between the parties. The fact that party positions on these dimensions cannot be estimated is, however, informative because it signifies the importance of Economic and, to a lesser extent, Foreign Affairs issues in the manifestos. While the issues did play a role in parliamentary politics, the voters were poorly informed about party preferences on these issues, which did make it more difficult for voters to take these issues into account for their vote. The parliamentary space of competition, on the other hand, does show differences between parties on the second (vertical) dimension. In this sense, there seems to be a lack of congruence between the structure of the electoral and parliamentary competition.

## 1972

The case of 1972 is in many respects the most remarkable case. The 1970s are known as a period of polarization in Dutch politics, with the social-democrats fiercely fighting the liberals and vice versa. It is a period of de-pillarization: the old system of pillarization had been in decline (at least) since the end of the 1960s which led to higher levels of volatility. New parties had been founded, such as the Farmers' Party (BP), a right-wing competitor which had been founded in the 1950s, but gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, Democrats '66 (D66), a force in the political centre, mainly focussing on democratic reform, and Democratisch-Socialisten '70 (DS'70) a right wing split-off from the PvdA.

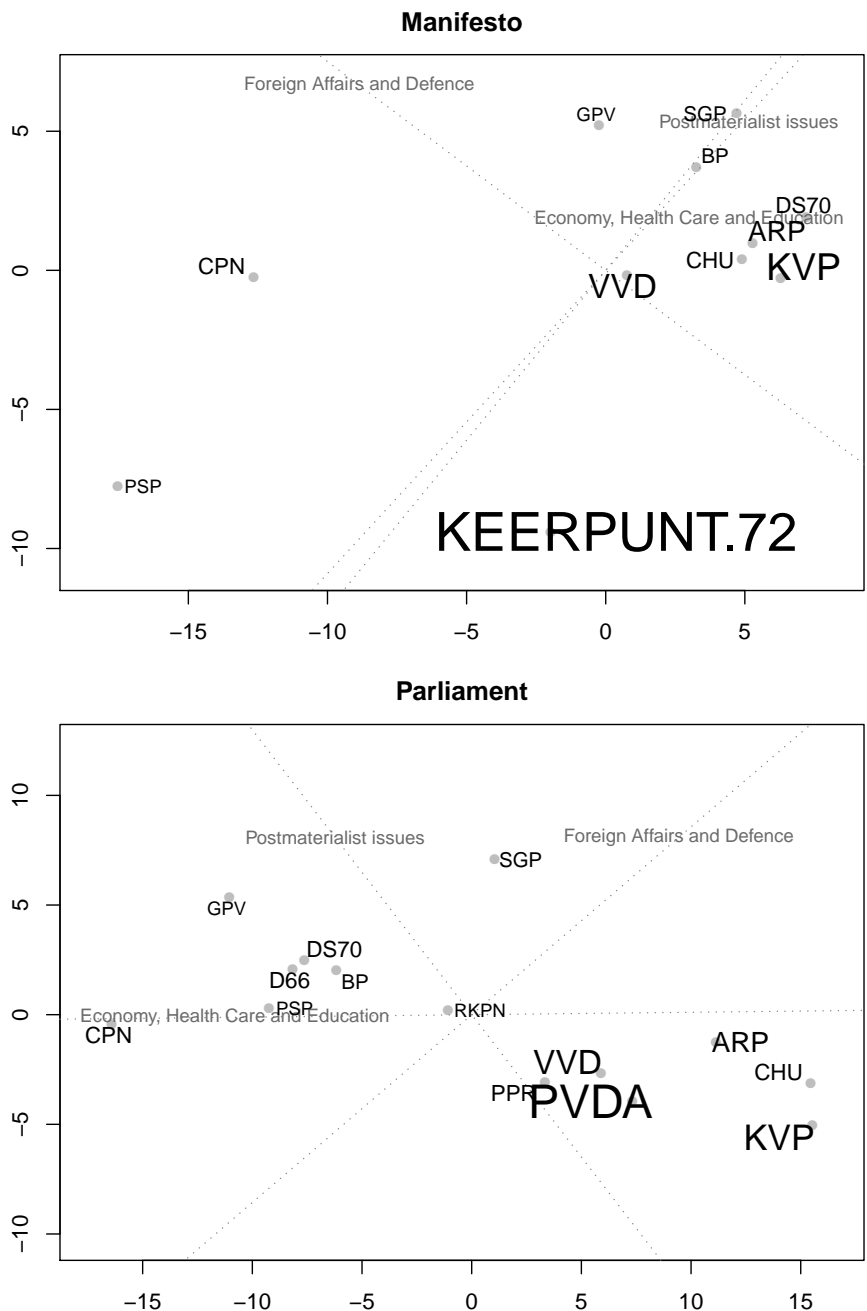
Departing from this background, many observers of Dutch politics will be somewhat puzzled by the party positions in figure 5.16. PvdA, D66 and the small left-wing Politieke Partij Radicalen (PPR) had formed a pre-electoral coalition called 'Keerpunt 72' and competed under the same program. On some issues, this manifesto is estimated to be close to the other small left-wing parties (CPN and PSP), while on other issues it is deemed to be closer to the right-wing parties. The space is not dominated by a clear left-right competition between CPN, PSP and Keerpunt on the one side and the VVD and BP on the other side. There is rather a competition between the Christian democratic and right-wing parties on one side, the smaller left-wing parties on the other side and Keerpunt located somewhat in the centre. The solution displayed here is also not very stable: inclusion or exclusion of documents can lead to rather large shifts of the position of Keerpunt, DS70, the BP and the GPV. One reason for this is the very different nature of the election manifestos included in this analysis: the program of the CPN and Boerenpartij is merely a short list of priorities, Keerpunt is essentially a pre-election coalition agreement, while the program of the PSP almost reads like a catalogue of their issue positions, especially concerning foreign policy. Slapin and Proksch have argued that such differences might lead to problems with the estimation of positions (2009). The case of the Dutch manifestos of 1972 illustrates that argument<sup>19</sup>.

In the electoral space of competition of 1972 Economic and Post-materialist issues are almost analogous: parties' position on one dimension can be predicted very well by means of the position on the other dimension. As we will see, this pattern continues to be apparent in the next decades. It shows that post-materialism has quickly been adapted to fit the left-right division in politics. The only exception is the issue of Government and democracy, which is included as a separate issue from 1982 onwards. Party preferences on this issue do not always run parallel to their preferences on economic policy.

Foreign Affairs has a different ordering from the other two issue dimensions that are plotted into the electoral space of competition. This seems to be the result of the rather extreme position of the PSP on this issues, which pushes the position of Keerpunt, the left-wing pre-electoral coalition, towards the centre.

<sup>19</sup>See Appendix A.3.5

**Figure 5.16:** *Spaces of party competition in the Netherlands, 1972-1977*



Note: Labels are relative to party size. For full party names, see table B.2 on page 234.

The religious dimension cannot be plotted into the space, but its influence seems to be apparent in the position of the smaller Christian parties, which are positioned a small distance away from the larger Christian and right-wing parties. Similar to the issues that are grouped in the Post-materialist issue dimension, this pattern has been visible since: the main division on the Religious dimension is between the small protestant parties and all other parties. The extent to which this dimension is visible in the space of competition, however does vary.

The parliamentary space of competition in the 1972-1977 parliament is probably even more puzzling from the perspective of polarization. One pattern that is clear and can easily be explained is the grouping of the governing parties, KVP, ARP, PvdA and PPR (but not D66). What is, however, less obvious is the position of the main right-wing opposition CHU and VVD. These parties are located very close to the governing parties.

The parties on the opposite end of the political spectrum are all small right-wing and left-wing opposition parties, with the notable exception of D66. The parliamentary discourse of this period seems very much influenced by an establishment versus anti-establishment rhetoric, which can also be induced from the words parties on opposite sides of this spectrum use. On the 'establishment' side, many technical words are used, while on the other side many very clear words with distinct political meaning are used. The fact that Wordfish fails to pick up on the politicized left versus right vocabulary however does pose a warning for the interpretation of the results. It should be noted that other methods of the analysis of word usage, such as correspondence analysis and Wordscores, produce similar findings. The analysis of word usage by parties does not always produce findings similar to what an observer or reader of the debates would likely have found. In the case of 1972 it is particularly clear that the finding of the analysis does relate rather poorly to any political intuition. In later years, the correspondence between expectation, the Wordfish results and other estimates of parties' positions is much closer.

For 1972, I must conclude that there seems to be little relation between the parliamentary and electoral spaces of competition, although a clear distinction between the main right-wing parties and the small left-wing opposition is apparent in both spaces. The analysis of the parliamentary debates does however result in a structure of competition that bears little relation to observers' accounts of the competition during that period. Therefore, the lack of correspondence between the manifesto and parliamentary spaces cannot simply be attributed to a lack of mandate fulfilment during this period. Although it is apparent that the Keerpunt parties are much closer to the other governing parties in parliament, their proximity to their main political rival suggests that the analysis picks up on many other things than substantive differences over policy.



**1982**

In 1977 the three large Christian democratic parties merged into the Christian-Democratic Appeal (CDA). The elections of 1982 followed after the early resignation of a CDA/PvdA/D66 cabinet. This cabinet held office for only half a year, struggling with the economic crisis at hand, fighting over the course of policy: a classical left-right divide with the PvdA on the left and the CDA on the (centre)right. The PvdA managed to win the election, but especially the VVD had a good result, increasing its number of seats from 26 to 36. This growth allowed to formation of a centre-right CDA/VVD cabinet, which was the preferred coalition of both partners.

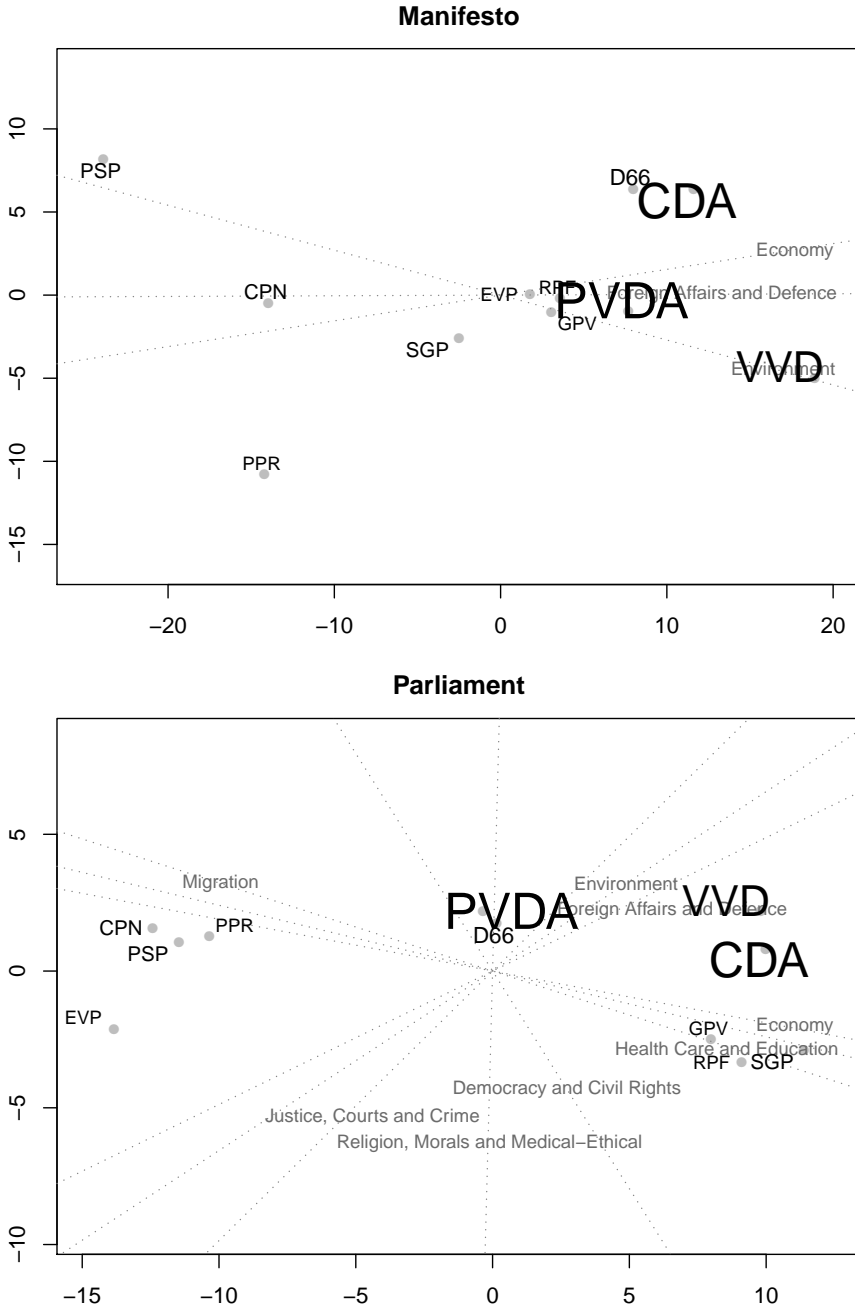
The electoral space of competition is once again dominated by Economic issues. Environmental issues and Foreign Affairs and Defence are also very much tied to the horizontal axis of this space. On the left of the spectrum the small left-wing parties PSP, CPN and PPR can be found. The PvdA is positioned right of centre, perhaps a result of the rather extreme position of the smaller left-wing parties. D66 is also positioned somewhat right to centre, as are the smaller Calvinist parties. Apparently, the Religious dimension is not very much defining the space. On the right we find the CDA and the VVD. The three large parties are thus located very close to one another, even though there was a cabinet crisis concerning policy just before. It should be noted that the analysis here is based on a combination of manifestos from 1981 and 1982, because some parties did not write (an entirely) new manifesto. Many parties said that their 1981 manifesto was still valid, with a new pamphlet covering issues that had come up in the year before.

The parliamentary space of competition reflects the composition of the government coalition. CDA and VVD had moved closer to each other. PvdA and D66, on the other hand, had moved to the left – although they were still positioned closer to the government than to the small left-wing parties. The small Christian parties were positioned in a small group on the bottom-right side of the space: they share a right-wing position of the government on Economy, Health Care and Education, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Environment, but are positioned clearly on the opposite side of the government when it comes to Religion, Morals and Medical-Ethical issues. One small party, the left-wing Christian party EVP, seems to fit its label perfectly: it is positioned on the left, but also on the Christian side of the Religious dimension.

**1994**

The year 1994 marks the end of the continuous government participation of Christian democratic parties since 1918. The outgoing CDA/PvdA cabinet was very unpopular for its attempt to freeze state pensions. Both parties lost dramatically in the election, but the PvdA nevertheless became the largest party. There were major gains for the liberal VVD and especially the social-liberal D66. On

**Figure 5.17:** *Spaces of party competition in the Netherlands, 1982-1986*



the left, a new small Socialist Party (SP) gained a foothold of two seats in parliament. The merger party GreenLeft (GL) that included PPR, PSP, CPN and EVP did not do as well as expected and only managed to win five seats. The extreme right Centre Democrats (CD) won three seats.

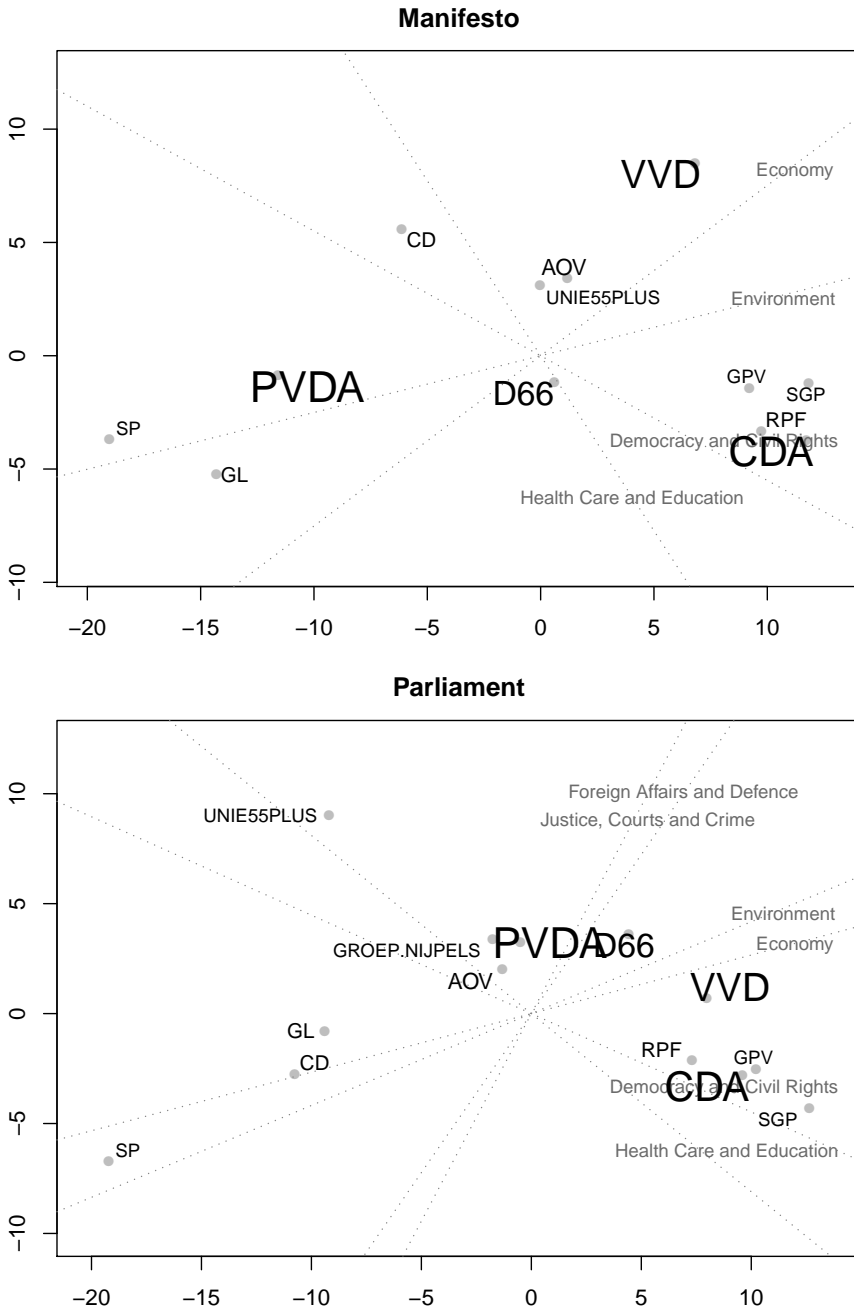
In general, the 1994 space of competition is dominated by a clear left-right pattern, as well as a religious-secular pattern. The space shows roughly three groups of parties: the left-wing parties, the Christian democratic parties and the liberal parties. The VVD is positioned to the left of the CDA, a pattern that pops up rather consistently in these analyses and runs contrary to the general expectation. In this case this seems mainly to be related to the Health Care and Education dimension, which shows a clear secular-religious pattern. As the main objective here is to compare the space and structure of the electoral competition with the space and structure of the parliamentary competition, such a deviation from the expectation is not too problematic. After all, a similar pattern is also visible in parliament, which results in the conclusion that the spaces of competition are similar, despite the fact that the configuration is different from what one would have expected.

The PvdA's position in the electoral space was very close to the smaller left-wing parties, which is remarkable compared to the 1982 situation. One explanation might be that the merger of four smaller left-wing parties into GL gives them less influence in the analysis. However, the PvdA was much farther away from GL in the parliamentary competition, which suggests that its electoral position is not merely the result of methodological complexities. One party that was located in a counter-intuitive position is the Centre Democrats (CD), an extreme-right anti-immigrant party that is nevertheless located left of centre. The reason that the CD was called extreme-right is mainly because of its anti-immigrant stance, which is reflected in the most extreme position on the migration issue dimension (not plotted in figure 5.18 as it did not fit well enough in the overall model). However, as migration is only one of many issues that form the space of competition, their extreme position on one issue dimension was compensated by far more moderate positions on other issues. Therefore, the party ends up to the left of centre. As a similar position is found in parliament, this counter-intuitive result does not greatly affect the usability of these data for my purpose<sup>20</sup>.

The major shift between the electoral and parliamentary space of competition is the clustering of governmental parties. D66 and the VVD were already positioned rather close in the electoral space of competition. They were joined by the PvdA after these three parties formed a coalition-cabinet. Remarkably, the CDA did not distance itself from the government, but was positioned even closer to the government than in the election. This does indeed reflect the trouble this party had in formulating credible opposition. At the time, many argued that

<sup>20</sup> Another problem of the estimation of the CD's position is its rather unusual choice of words, which makes the estimation not very robust. Additionally, the CD was critical of the main parties and the government, just as the two small left-wing parties were.

**Figure 5.18:** *Spaces of party competition in the Netherlands, 1994-1998*



Note: Labels are relative to party size. For full party names, see table B.2 on page 234.

the 'real' opposition was not formed by the CDA, but by the small left-wing parties, especially GL. The small protestant parties (RPF, GPV and SGP) remained in their cluster on the right-wing and Christian side of the political spectrum. The distances on the left seem to have become bigger: not only has the PvdA moved away from the small leftwing parties, the distance between GL and the SP is also larger. In addition, the CD is positioned further away from the left-wing parties.

The importance of the vertical dimension of the electoral and parliamentary spaces is similar. The Religion, Morals and Medical-ethical dimension explains the position of the small Christian democratic parties, while most of the other dimensions seem to be related with economic issues, with Justice, Courts and Crime being the most notable exception, which displays rather an opposition-coalition dynamics. The political problems of Justice Minister Sorgdrager (D66) throughout the parliamentary period partly explain these dynamics. This minister had to deal with multiple crises in her own department, which lead to strong critique from parliament on multiple occasions. She could however not be forced to step down, because this would trigger a cabinet crises (Bosmans, 1999: 171-174). Therefore, government-opposition dynamics are very pronounced on the Justice, Courts and Crime dimension: D66, VVD and PvdA are positioned on one side of the dimension and most opposition parties on the other side.

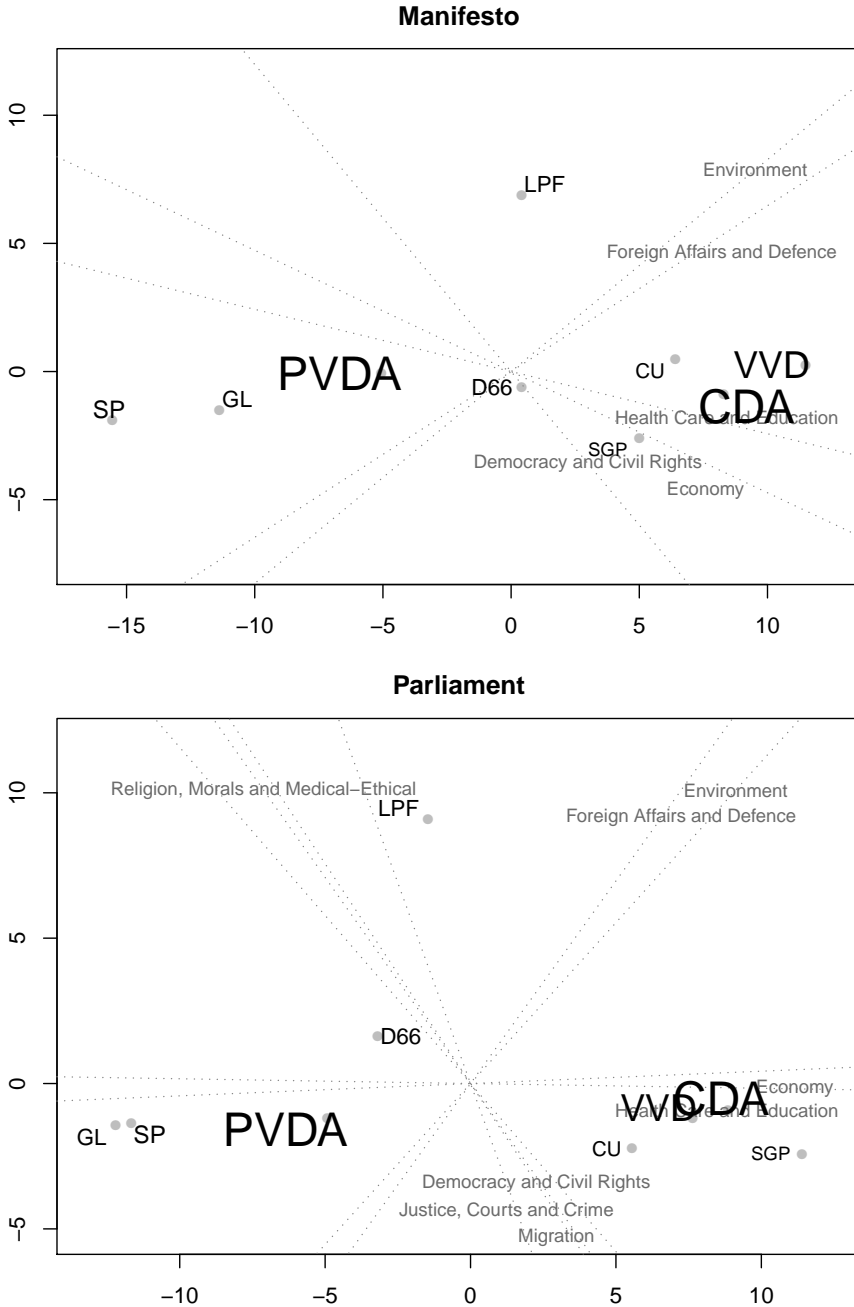
## 2003

Only 87 days after the first Balkenende government took office, it offered its resignation. The cabinet of CDA, LPF and VVD had been formed after the landslide victory of the right-wing populist List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the 2002 election. The LPF's party leader, Pim Fortuyn, had been murdered only nine days before that election, leaving his newly formed party in disarray. Although they did agree to participate in the coalition, their choice of ministers turned out to be unhappy, to say the least. Apart from continuous struggles within the parliamentary group, two of the party's ministers had weekly fights over issues and style. After three months the other coalition parties were so fed up with the situation that they "pulled the plug" in the words of VVD leader Zalm.

The following elections, held in January 2003, were to a certain degree a restoration of mainstream politics. The LPF lost sharply (from 26 to 8 seats), while the PvdA recovered most of its losses of the 2002 elections. Still, the Christian-democratic prime minister Balkenende managed to lead his party to victory for the second time, polling 43 seats. D66 and GL suffered minor losses, while the SP, despite polling around twenty seats at one time during the campaign, remained stable at nine seats. The Christian Union (CU), a merger party of RPF and GPV, was also disappointed with the three seats it won in the election – the pre-merger parties had polled a combined total of five in 1998.

The electoral space of competition of these elections was dominated by issues relating to the economy, all of which correlate very strongly with the horizontal dimension of the space of competition. The ordering of parties on this dimension

**Figure 5.19:** *Spaces of party competition in the Netherlands, 2003-2006*



is quite similar to the one in 1994: SP, GL, PvdA, LPF, D66, SGP, CU, CDA, VVD. The main 'outlier' is the LPF, which apart from its clearly right-wing position on Migration (not plotted), is more to the left on some issues (Democracy and Government, Economy, Health Care and Education) and more to the right on other issues (Environment, Foreign Affairs and Defence). The Religious dimension does not carry much weight in this space: although CU and SGP clearly take the most pro-Christian position on this dimension, it is of relative minor importance.

After coalition negotiations between PvdA and CDA failed because of policy differences on many issues and a general lack of trust, CDA, VVD and D66 formed a coalition cabinet that had a small majority in parliament. D66's participation in the government was criticized by its membership, because the party had lost seats in the last three elections. However, party leader Thom de Graaf argued that the party could achieve more in government than in opposition. Eventually, the party congress agreed to the government participation.

The parliamentary space of competition shows a number of small differences compared to the electoral space of competition. The coalition party D66 had in fact moved to the left, away from the other government parties. Although this might seem strange, observers have noted a continuous pattern of discontent between D66 and the other coalition parties, culminating in the temporary cabinet crisis of 2004 and eventually in the fall of the government in 2006. With the benefit of hindsight CDA and VVD might have preferred to opt for a coalition with the small Christian democratic parties CU and SGP, as these parties were much closer to the government parties. On the left, GL and SP had also moved closer to each other, while the PvdA remained virtually on the same spot. The same can be said for the LPF. This party has sometimes been called a 'spare member of the coalition': in case D66 would oppose the government, the government could secure parliamentary support for its proposals by turning to the LPF for support, for example on issues like the Environment and Foreign Affairs and Defence. However, the LPF's parliamentary position was rather far away from all other parties. The party had a left-wing position on some issues, while it was right-wing on others. The issue dimensions that are plotted in the parliamentary space of competition as an aid for interpretation of the space are located at virtually the same positions as those in the electoral competition<sup>21</sup>.

### Patterns in the Dutch cases

In comparison to the British cases, discussed above, the Dutch spaces of competition are rather complex. This is of course to be expected with a number of

<sup>21</sup>One exception is the migration dimension, where the LPF's positions has moved from the far right to the far left. This awkward change can be explained by two factors. First, the party's use of language is very different from all the other parties, which makes it very difficult to position it on a single dimension: in these kinds of situations Wordfish might flip the party to either side of the dimension. Secondly, the LPF shares some of the critical language of the left-wing opposition on the government's policy.

parties that is far larger than in Britain. Nevertheless, Economic issues are very important both in terms of how much parties talk about these issues, as well as the degree to which parties' positions on other issues can be explained by their position on economic issues. The issue of the environment is a prime example of this: although it is an issue that is conceptually rather clearly distinguishable from economic affairs, parties' positions on the environment depend on their economic views: leftist parties are generally also more 'green'.

Religious issues do not seem to be very important in the spaces of competition of the 1950s and 1960s. One reason for this is that especially the PvdA did not talk about these issues at all, which makes it an implicit rather than an explicit issue. Everyone knew what parties' beliefs on religious issues were, so there was little need to explain them. The Christian parties did outline their beliefs, but the secular parties choose largely to ignore the issue. In a sense these were clearly saliency issues: either you talked about them as a Christian, or you kept silent on these issues as a secular politician. In parliament, these issues did, however come up from time to time. Here, no clear religious-secular divide is found either, rather a government versus opposition dynamic.

The main disturbing factor of correspondence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition in the Netherlands is the government coalition. In virtually all years, parties that form a coalition agreement are closer to one another in parliament than they were during the elections. Exceptions to this rule do exist, but are not very common (D66 in 1972-1977 and 2003-2006). From the 1970s onwards, the government parties were also located to the right of the political spectrum. Clearly even when the social-democrats are in government, the opposition from the left is more pronounced and has a large influence on the structure of the space of competition.

In general the Dutch case shows relative stability of the spaces of competition. The left-right pattern is apparent in both the electoral and parliamentary spaces. Sometimes, however, the centre parties are estimated to be more right-wing than others may expect. This is the result of inductive textual analysis, where the differences in word usage are assumed to be based on differences in political orientation. There is even more variation in the extent to which secondary dimensions are preserved. This is sometimes the result of uncertainty in the estimates for the electoral space, while at other times there seems to be a genuine shift of parties' preferences, especially in the light of government formation.

### 5.2.3 The dimensionality of the spaces of competition

The dimensionality of the spaces can be captured by looking at the extent to which the second dimensions of the spaces contribute to the explanations of differences between parties (see table 5.2). The spaces depict the results of a (classical) multidimensional scaling procedure, that reduce the differences between parties on multiple issue dimensions to a, in this case, two-dimensional representation. In these types of analysis the first dimension captures the largest part



**Table 5.2:** *The importance of the second dimension of the spaces of competition<sup>a</sup>*

	Period	Manifesto	Parliament
<b>The United Kingdom</b>	1955-1959	4.26	18.79
	1966-1970	12.86	1.67
	1974-1979	10.95	3.33
	1983-1987	7.50	0.40
	1992-1997	2.58	0.41
	2001-2005	7.57	1.64
<b>The Netherlands</b>	1952-1956	32.15	12.41
	1959-1963	1.90	40.13
	1972-1977	15.60	6.29
	1982-1986	15.63	3.97
	1994-1998	13.27	15.38
	2003-2006	8.17	14.01

<sup>a</sup> The figure indicates the eigenvalue of the second dimension in the solution, as a percentage of the sum of the eigenvalues of the first and second dimension. It thus indicates how much of the distances between parties on the (weighted) issue dimensions is captured by the second dimension of the solution. The theoretical range of values is between 0% (second dimension is not important) and 50% (second dimension explains as much as the first).

of the distance between parties; the second dimension captures a smaller part. In some cases, the first dimension of the space accounts for 99% of the distance between parties and the second dimension only for 1%<sup>22</sup>. In those cases, the second dimension is in fact redundant. In other cases, the second dimension accounts for more than 10% of the differences in distances between parties.

In the case of Britain between 1955 and 1959, for example, the second dimension of the electoral space accounts for just over 4% of the distance. This seems very low, but it should be kept in mind that for the estimation of the models, the party scores were weighted by issue saliency. This means that the most important issue contributes a lot to the distance matrix. In other words, the 'distance' between parties is more influenced by more important issues. The first dimension in the MDS solution will therefore largely correspond to the most important issue dimension(s). This does not mean that second dimension is unimportant: parties are ordered differently on some of the less salient issue dimensions. The relative eigenvalues are especially instructive in a comparative fashion: between manifesto and parliament and over time. In the 1955-1959 British parliament-

<sup>22</sup>The classical multidimensional scaling technique used here is very similar to Principal Components Analysis (PCA). It applies a matrix decomposition to the matrix of distances between parties. Therefore, one can talk about eigenvalues and the contribution of dimensions to the explanation of the variance in the original data.

ary space the second dimension accounts for over 18%. This confirms my above analysis of the spatial figures which showed a more different orderings of parties in the parliamentary than in the electoral competition. The table shows that the case of 1955-1959 is markedly different from the other British cases in one respect: in 1955, the second dimension of the space is more important in parliament than in the manifesto, while in all other cases the opposite holds true. The normal pattern in Britain is that the second (vertical) dimension is more important in the electoral spaces than in the parliamentary spaces. Observing that the horizontal dimension represents the Economy issue dimension in each of the cases, this runs contrary to the conventional belief that left-right structures the electoral competition, but not so much the parliamentary competition between parties (McDonald and Budge, 2005).

In the Dutch cases, the second dimensions of the spaces of competition are generally more important. Typically, the second dimension explains about 10 to 15 per cent of the total variation captured by the spatial representation (see table 5.2). In the 1959-1963 parliamentary space the second dimension even explains about as much variation in (weighted) party positions as the first dimension. One explanation of the importance of the secondary dimension in the Dutch case is the number of parties. If there are more parties, it becomes more unlikely that a one-dimensional solution captures all variation in party policy preferences<sup>23</sup>. However, the Dutch cases in the 1950s and 1960s, which only include five parties, also show importance of the second dimension in the spatial model. This supports the idea that Dutch politics has always been characterized by the presence of multiple issue dimensions (Lijphart, 1999; Koole, 1995).

With regard to the congruence of the Dutch pre- and post-electoral spaces, there seems to be no clear pattern. In some cases, the second dimension plays a more important role during the elections (1952, 1972 and 1982), while in other cases the parliamentary space is 'more' two-dimensional (1959, 1994 and 2003). The incongruencies between electoral and parliamentary spaces seem to be the result of factors specific to a particular case, rather than to represent a generalized pattern, as is the case in the United Kingdom. While some of the differences in table 5.2 are quite substantial, these differences do not necessarily imply that mandate fulfilment is hugely problematic in a particular case. In the 2003-2006 case, for example, the second dimension plays a more prominent role in parliament (14.01% ) than during the election campaign (8.17% ). However, figure 5.19 suggest that this has mainly to do with the position of the LPF; the overall congruence is not particularly poor in this case.

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<sup>23</sup>This argument can also be reversed: if there is only one relevant policy dimension, it is unlikely that one will find many political parties. The number of parties will increase with the number of issue dimensions (Lijphart, 1999).

### 5.2.4 Party position congruence

The spatial representations of party competition during elections and in parliament is useful in identifying a number of broad patterns, while keeping in mind the particularities of the selected cases. An alternative way to assess the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary competition is by means of a statistical model. The model presented here aims to explain the positions parties take in parliament on issue dimensions by the positions they have on these issues during the elections. The units of analysis here are parties' positions on the separate issue dimensions, rather than their positions in the spaces, because the positions on single dimensions are more easily compared between the electoral and parliamentary arena<sup>24</sup>.

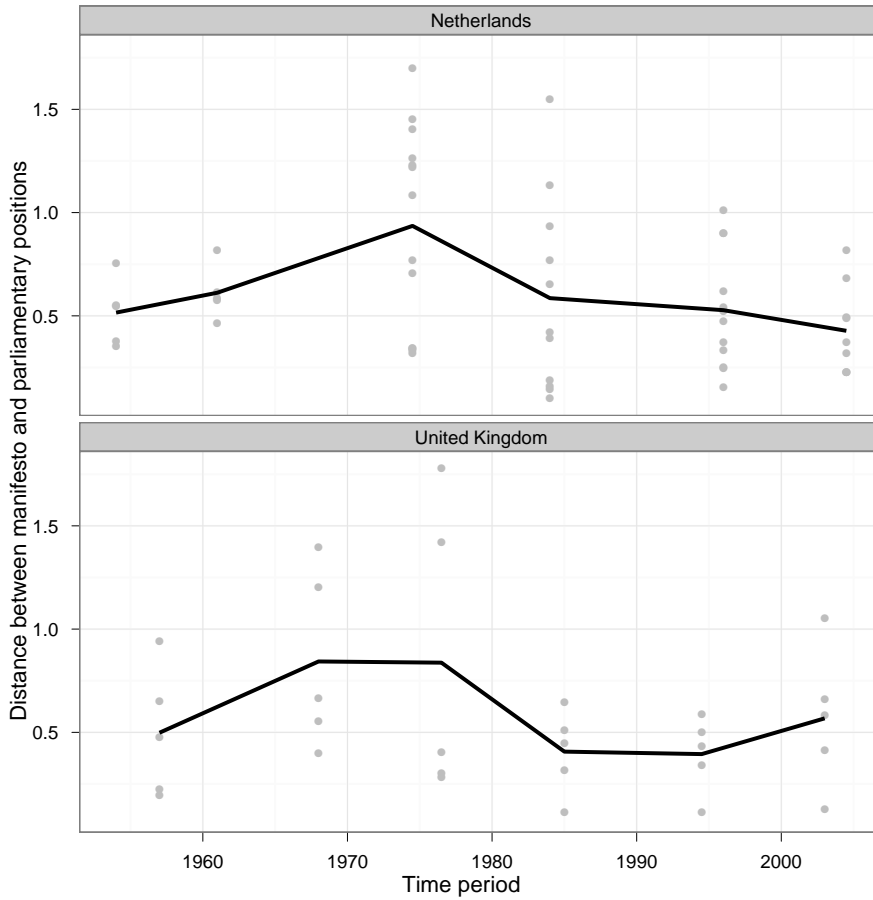
The position measurements used in the analysis are *relative* party positions. Wordfish produces standardized estimates of the party positions, which cannot be compared in absolute terms between the election and parliament. This means that a comparison of parties' *absolute* positions is impossible, but their relative positions on the dimensions can be compared<sup>25</sup>.

An intuitive way of measuring the differences between parties' positions on issue dimensions is by calculating the 'distance' (the absolute difference) between those two relative positions (Achen, 1978). To calculate a party's overall congruence on all issue dimensions, I took the mean of these distances, weighted by the saliency of each issue. After all, distances on more salient dimensions are more important in terms of the party mandate<sup>26</sup>. Figure 5.20 displays these mean party position distances in both countries over time (grey dots) and the mean value per county per year (black line). In both countries, the median value ranges between 0.4 and 0.9. In the Netherlands, the largest outlier is the 1972-1977 case, which confirms the qualitative analysis above. Although it was certainly not as bad as the Dutch 1972-1997 case, the 1966-1970 elections and parliament in Britain show the largest median distance between parties' electoral and parliamentary positions. In Britain, the range of party values is particularly large for the 1966-1970 and 1974-1979 case. In those cases there is a large difference between the relatively congruent Conservative opposition on the one hand and the large distances for the Liberals and Labour. In all other years, the range is relatively small in Britain. In the Netherlands, the range of values is larger in most cases, which is to be expected because of the larger number of parties. Overall, the mean party distance scores are slightly lower in Britain than in the

<sup>24</sup>It should be noted that this still concerns parties' relative positions. The analysis is thus not strictly on the party level.

<sup>25</sup>Because Wordfish does not ensure that right wing parties are always on the right and vice versa (dimensions may be flipped without any substantive implication), I reversed the dimensions were necessary to achieve a positive correlation between the electoral and parliamentary dimensions.

<sup>26</sup>An alternative advantage is that this ensures that the choice of issue dimensions does not greatly affect the results. If one would, for example, split the Health Care and Education dimension in to separate 'Health Care' and 'Education' dimensions, the weighted mean distance of that party would not change.

**Figure 5.20:** *Distances between electoral and parliamentary positions*

Note: The figure displays the mean distance between a party's electoral and its parliamentary positions on each of the issue dimension, weighted by the saliency of those dimensions (grey dots). The black line indicates the average of those values per country per period. The figure only includes the selected cases for this study, plotted at the midpoint of the parliamentary period.

**Table 5.3:** *Explaining parties' issue positions in parliament*

	Model 1	Model 2 (Front bench)
(Intercept)	0.030 (0.042)	-0.003 (0.042)
Manifesto position	0.614* (0.041)	0.625* (0.044)
Country: UK	-0.042 (0.064)	0.063 (0.086)
Manifesto position * Country: UK	0.077 (0.065)	-0.288* (0.092)
<i>N</i>	440	382
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.489	0.365
adj. <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.486	0.360
Resid. sd	21.103	0.712

Standard errors in parentheses

\* indicates significance at  $p < 0.05$ 

Netherlands, but the difference is small.

An alternative way to analyse the mandate fulfilment in terms of party positions is by using a regression model (Achen, 1978). The model predicts a parties' (relative) *parliamentary* issue position on a certain dimension by its *electoral* issue position. The underlying idea is that parties' relative issue positions in both arenas should be similar or congruent. If this is the case, we expect that the predictive power of manifesto positions are high. In this case, voters will be able to tell how parties position themselves (vis-a-vis each other) by looking at the differences between the parties' election manifestos. From the perspective of mandate fulfilment, a high degree of predictive power of the manifesto for parliamentary debate is thus desirable. If parties' parliamentary and electoral (relative) positions are, on average, identical, then the *b*-coefficient in the analysis will be equal to one. In order to estimate the influence of the political system, I also included two other variables in the model: country as a dummy variable and the interaction between country and the electoral position of a party on an issue. This makes it possible to check whether there is a significant difference in the predictive power of the electoral position between the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The total dataset consists of 440 observations. One problem in conducting the analysis is the fact that we know that the estimates of party positions are not equally certain. To take into account the certainty of the estimates, I weighted the cases by the manifesto word count of a party on an issue. This means that party-issue estimates that were based on more words are weighted more heavily in the analysis than observations that were based on only a few words.

The first model specified in table 5.3 shows that there is a moderately strong

connection between a party's position in parliament and its electoral position. The regression coefficient of 'Manifesto position' equals 0.614, which indicates that Dutch parties with a standardized electoral position of one are estimated to have a parliamentary position of 0.614. This is not perfect, but quite reasonable. For the British parties, we have to add to this the coefficient of the interaction effect 'Manifesto position \* Country UK', which captures how the British parties differ from their Dutch counterparts. Thus, for the British parties, the model estimates that parties with a standardized position of 1 have an parliamentary position of  $0.614 + 0.077 = 0.691$ . The difference between the Dutch and UK cases is, however, not statistically significant<sup>27</sup>. The main hypothesis of this study is that mandate fulfilment is higher in countries with a consensus political system than in countries with a majoritarian political system. The analysis displayed in model 1 does not support this expectation.

The first model includes both the front bench and the back bench positions in the United Kingdom. However, one can argue that in the United Kingdom the 'party line' is first and foremost represented by the front bench, not by the back-benchers. After all, back-benchers are free to express their own concerns and they do in different ways, i.e. some Labour MPs are well-known leftists, while others present themselves as more moderate than the front bench. The front bench, on the other hand, must present a coherent and consistent policy programme. The second model in table 5.3 fits this interpretation by excluding the back-benchers in Britain. In this model the interaction between UK and Manifesto policy position becomes significantly *negative*. This means that mandate fulfilment of front-benchers in the UK is significantly lower (0.337) than for parties in the Netherlands (0.625). Thus, the front benches seem to fare a lot worse in terms of mandate fulfilment than their colleagues on the back bench. In addition, the explained variance of the model drops from .49 to .37.

This effect can partly be explained by the method of estimating the government's position in Britain which results in an extreme position for the government party back bench and a more moderate position for the government party front bench (see appendix A.3.3). As the positions are standardized, this will almost automatically mean that the positions of the back bench are closer to the manifesto positions of the parties. Take, for example, the 2001 election and subsequent parliament. In the manifesto space, Labour occupied a position in the left of the figure, far removed from its competitors. In parliament, the most extreme position was occupied by the Labour back-benchers, while the Labour front bench took a more moderate position. This explains why, if we try to predict the position of the two Labour actors in parliament, the coefficient of the back-benchers is higher than that of the front-benchers. Another reason for the discrepancy is the fact that all Liberals are included as front-benchers; if one would treat them as back-benchers, the effect disappears. Although these kind of choices do affect the results, the case-by-case analysis of the data above shows

<sup>27</sup>If the observations are not weighted, the coefficient is even negative, but also not significant.

that the results of model 1 are not simply the result of methodological choices, but rather substantive. After all, even in the case where both the front bench and back bench have been included for Britain, there is no difference between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands in terms of mandate fulfilment.

### 5.3 Discussion and conclusion

The analysis of what parties talk about and what parties say during elections and in parliament reveals that there are no large differences between the consensus system of the Netherlands and the majoritarian system of Britain. Looking at the topics that parties discuss in their manifesto and in parliamentary debates, the results are mixed. Parties in Britain show a higher degree of correspondence in terms of absolute issue saliency: a model explaining the percentage of parliamentary speech devoted to an issue predicted by the percentage of manifesto text that is devoted to the issue works better for Britain than for the Netherlands. I have shown that this is, however, the result of large between-issue variance. That means, the model works well because all parties talk a lot about Macro-economy during elections and in parliament. When looking at the *relative* correspondence of issue saliency, whether parties' prioritize similar issues in both arena's, I find that the model works better for the Dutch political parties.

What parties say in their election manifesto and in parliament has been studied by comparing the spaces and structures of party competition before elections and in parliament. If the properties of these spaces are similar, e.g. if the dimensionality of the space is the same and similar issues are important before and after elections, and if the structure of party competition is similar before and after elections, one can conclude that the mandate model of party representation functions well from an institutional perspective. Qualitative analysis of the twelve election-parliaments selected for this study learns that there are differences between the two countries in terms of the correspondence of the spaces. Both countries show a reasonable degree of correspondence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces, especially concerning economic issues. Deviations from the ideal situation in Britain are caused by the retrospective nature of election manifestos. Most manifestos discuss the performance of the incumbent government extensively, which yields a clear government-opposition pattern in the manifesto spaces. These patterns are much weaker in parliament. In the Dutch case, a lack of correspondence seems often the result of coalition formation: parties that enter a governing coalition tend to clamp together in parliament. The dynamics are thus different between the countries.

A quantitative analysis of the issue positions of parties in election shows that overall, the correspondence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition does not vary significantly between the Netherlands and Britain. The British parties seem to profit from the parsimony of political competition: there are two large and one small contender which makes the choice relatively

straightforward. Furthermore, it does not take much to recreate these patterns in parliament – in terms of pure chance recreating similar patterns of competition in parliament is quite feasible with only three parties. On the other hand, the battle between government and opposition makes manifestos less informative of the substantive issues at hand, which distorts the correspondence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition. The Dutch political spaces are generally more complex, as more parties compete for seats. This makes it less likely that parties remain stable on all issues. However, as a result of the party system and the lack of clear government-opposition dynamics, manifestos are generally informative of the substantive policy positions of parties. The main disturbing factor in the Dutch case is coalition formation.

Both systems of governments have properties that are positive as well as properties that are negative for mandate fulfilment. In this way, my conclusions fit well with the analysis of Blais and Bodet (2006) and Budge and McDonald (2007), who argue that there are trade-offs in the choice of electoral system for the level of median voter representation. It is also consistent with earlier work of Klingemann et al. (1994) who find that the mandate model of political competition does not work better in Westminster-style countries. However, the outcomes of the pledge approach studies have shown that pledge fulfilment is consistently higher in majoritarian countries (Mansergh and Thomson, 2007). This can be explained by pointing out two essential differences between their approach and mine. First, where I have looked at the similarity of spaces of competition, the pledge approach looks at specific pledges. As I have argued above, there are many reasons to assume that the advantage of majoritarian systems in terms of pledge fulfilment do not hold when looking at the similarity of the spaces of competition. Secondly, the pledge approach compares manifesto pledges with government actions, whereas I have compared party positions in manifestos with their positions in parliament, which does more fully include the mandate fulfilment of opposition parties.

The finding that there is no discernible difference between majoritarian and consensus democracies in terms of mandate fulfilment, leaves the question what does explain mandate fulfilment. One explanation might be that there are different mechanisms at play, which cancel each other out: majoritarian democracies do better in one respect and consensus democracy in another (cf Blais and Bodet, 2006). Another argument is that there may be variation within countries.

Three sets of alternative explanations will be explored in the next chapters. First, the difference between opposition and governing parties is studied. It is expected that the model of democracy in a country has an important influence on mandate fulfilment by opposition and governing parties. In consensus democracies, opposition parties are expected to do better than governing parties, while in majoritarian democracies the governing party is expected to fare better. The type of democracy might thus indirectly explain variation in mandate fulfilment. The second explanation that will be further explored is the variation of mandate fulfilment over time. The description of spaces of competition from various decades



in this chapter has already produced some evidence of variance over time. How large is this variation exactly? Can we observe a decline of the party mandate, as is sometimes argued? The third explanation looks at party-level explanations of mandate fulfilment: how important issues are in terms of issue saliency or policy position extremism, is expected to explain the degree to which parties fulfil their mandates.