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

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Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Different systems, similar levels of congruence

This study's main research question was whether there is a difference in the level of mandate fulfilment between majoritarian and consensus democracies. The difference was studied by comparing a typical example of a majoritarian democracy, the United Kingdom, with a typical consensus democracy, the Netherlands. Other than expected, these two countries do not differ significantly in terms of collective party mandate fulfilment. Where differences do exist, these are small and often not statistically significant. Regarding issue saliency congruence, I found that British parties are somewhat more congruent than their Dutch counterparts. The reason is that British parties are more similar in terms of their attention to issues, both in their election manifestos and in their parliamentary speeches. When looking at *relative issue saliency* (how important an issue is to a party, relative to how important it is to other parties) the Dutch parties outperform the British parties somewhat. Regarding issue position congruence, there are no significant differences between the British and Dutch cases. For both countries there is a fair correspondence between parties' electoral and parliamentary positions in most of the cases, both in terms of the similarity of the spaces and structures of electoral and parliamentary competition as well as in terms of the predictive power of parties' electoral positions on issues for their parliamentary positions. Where positions are not congruent, this relates most strongly to parties' roles: whether they are in government or opposition.

Previous studies did find a difference between majoritarian and consensus democracies (Klingemann et al., 1994). Government parties in majoritarian democracies fulfil more of their electoral pledges than government parties in consensus democracies (Thomson, 1999; Mansergh and Thomson, 2007). The difference between these findings and mine relates to how the party mandate is studied. The 'pledge approach' takes an individual pledge by a specific

party and checks whether the government has taken a decision that qualifies the pledge as fulfilled. The 'spatial approach' used in this study, however, looks at the congruence between the electoral party competition and the parliamentary party competition. These approaches thus differ with regard to their object of comparison (pledges or party positions), the fulfilment test (enactment or congruence), the 'representation-enacting arena' (government output or parliament) and the level of comparison (party level versus party-system level). In terms of the enactment of pledges by government parties, majoritarian democracies tend to fare better, but the broader perspective of the current study shows that mandate fulfilment in terms of the congruence between electoral and parliamentary competition, which includes both government and opposition parties, is similar in both my majoritarian and consensus case. This study has provided a broader picture of mandate fulfilment, including both opposition and government parties and looking at party's issue positions and issue saliency rather than specific pledges. Whereas there is no doubt that the various types of research provide valuable insights, the contribution of this study lies in the fact that it does include both the government parties' as well as the opposition parties' mandates.

This finding has important consequences for democratic theory. Traditionally it has been assumed that majoritarian systems provide a clear line of linkage between citizens and parties. Consensus systems were thought to lead to unclear compromises after the elections (Ranney, 1954; Klingemann et al., 1994). This study shows that the fulfilment of parties' parliamentary mandates does not differ between the two systems. The structure of the electoral space of party competition is not a better predictor of the structure of the parliamentary space of party competition in majoritarian countries than in consensus democracies. In addition, other studies have shown that consensus democracies fare at least as well as majoritarian democracies in terms of policy responsiveness: policy linkage between citizens and parties (Powell, 2000; Blais and Bodet, 2006; Golder and Stramski, 2010).

One must part with the idea that majoritarian democracy is superior to consensus democracy in terms of collective mandate fulfilment. This difference was not found in the current comparison of a typical majoritarian case (the United Kingdom) with a typical consensus democracy (the Netherlands). On the other hand, consensus democracies do not provide a clearer linkage between the electoral party competition and the parliamentary party competition either, as was hypothesized. In reality, political processes are always a bit messy and there are always some deviations from the party mandate: you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. However, on the whole this study shows that in *both* consensus and majoritarian democracies collective mandate fulfilment is quite reasonable and probably higher than many people expect (see page 4). The spaces of electoral and parliamentary competition are congruent and so are the structures: parties' relative positions in the electoral and parliamentary competition are quite similar in most cases.

9.1.1 Government and opposition

Using the spatial approach to the party mandate, this study has been able to look at the difference in mandate fulfilment between government and opposition parties. Concerning issue saliency, this difference is clear-cut. In the majoritarian system of Britain, government parties are in a better position to influence the parliamentary agenda. Their attention for issues in parliament is best explained by looking at the attention they had for issues in the manifesto. For opposition parties, however, their parliamentary attention for particular issues is best explained by the *average* attention for the issue in parties' manifestos. This supports the government agenda control mechanism put forward by Döring (1995). In majoritarian systems governments control the parliamentary agenda.

In the Netherlands this difference between government and opposition was not found. Dutch opposition parties seem even somewhat better able to follow through on issues that they found important in their manifestos than Dutch government parties. This confirms Döring's (1995) observation that government agenda control is very low in the Dutch parliament. Opposition parties have many opportunities to table those issues that they find important. Apparently they are using their prerogatives to put the spotlight on issues that would otherwise have gotten little attention in parliament. The governing coalition parties also succeed in doing this, but to a lesser extent than the opposition parties.

A visual comparison of the electoral and parliamentary party competition in both countries learns that the main source of *positional* incongruence differs between countries. British parties frame their manifestos very much in favour or against the incumbent government. For example, the Liberal Democrats in 2001 were located far away from Labour on many issue dimensions, because Labour was in government and the Liberal Democrats were in opposition (although many observers would argue that both parties could be characterized as centre-left). Parliamentary debates seem to be less influenced by this 'incumbents vs. opposition' pattern. The parliamentary spaces show a dominant ordering of parties: Government back-benchers - Government - Liberals - Opposition back-benchers - Opposition front bench. While parties' attitudes towards the government do play a role, the polarization between government and opposition is less strong than in the electoral competition. This pattern is visible in all British cases and leads to lower levels of congruence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces.

The main source of lower levels of congruence in the Netherlands is the formation of a coalition government. Government parties collide (to a degree) after the elections, while the differences between governing and opposition parties increase. The most obvious example of this pattern is the 1994-1998 period in which the first government without the Christian Democrats in over 70 years had been formed. The centre-left PvdA and the centre-right VVD had to work together in a coalition government, which resulted in a change of their issue positions towards one another. In other periods the distance between opposition

and coalition parties also increased (except 2003-2006), albeit that the effect was less pronounced.

Dissimilarities between electoral and parliamentary competition are often related to parties' government or opposition roles, but this does not imply that opposition or governing parties show higher levels of positional congruence. The 'incumbency effect' on the British electoral competition influences the relative positions of both the government and opposition parties. The Dutch 'coalition effect' similarly influences both the coalition parties' as well as the opposition's relative issue positions. The distinction between government and opposition influences the whole space of competition, rather than only the individual government or opposition parties.

In addition to the differences between government and opposition, the British case revealed a difference in the positional change of the front benches and the back-benchers. The back-benchers of the two major parties are positioned closer to the party's manifesto position than the front benches. The government's position is usually more moderate than that of its back-benchers, while the opposition front bench takes a rather more extreme position than the opposition back-benchers in the parliamentary space of competition. These roles seem to be related to the constitutional position of both actors. The government has a policy mandate that drives its parliamentary behaviour, but it also has to defend a large amount of business that originates from Whitehall. The opposition front bench, on the other hand, has no such obligations and is rather motivated to criticize and oppose all of the government's policy plans. The effect is that both the governing party's front bench as well as the opposition party's front bench are more incongruent in terms of issue positions than their back bench colleagues are.

British politics is not as adversarial as is sometimes described in the literature (cf. Finer, 1975: 6). My findings suggests that the political position British governments display in parliament is more accommodating than confrontational. Governments usually take a moderate position in the parliamentary policy space compared to their back-benchers. The majority of the bills and regulations they put forward has been planned by the bureaucracy rather than the party headquarters and is often rather technical in nature – a different government would probably have defended a very similar piece of legislation, had it been in power (Rose, 1980). This finding supports the conclusion that mandate fulfilment does not differ between consensus and majoritarian countries. After all, the selling point of majoritarian democracy is exactly that the government parties are able to fulfil their electoral mandate. The finding that governments in the United Kingdom are accommodating rather than adversarial undermines that argument. Although governments in majoritarian democracies fulfil more of their electoral pledges, as was shown by research in the pledge tradition (Mansergh and Thomson, 2007), their political positions are not more congruent between elections and parliament than those of governing parties in consensus democracies.

9.1.2 Changes over time

I find no evidence for a decline of party mandate fulfilment over time. There is rather an increase of issue saliency congruence in the Netherlands and stability on positional congruence in both countries. This runs contrary to the expectation that party mandate fulfilment will have declined, because of dealignment and party (system) change. Proponents of the cartel party thesis argue that electoral competition is no longer a free market, but a cartel of parties who have divided the spoils of office (Katz and Mair, 1995, 2009). Winning and loosing elections is no longer the most important aspect of the political game. The result is that parties do not really care about mandate fulfilment any more. Elections are merely 'dignified parts of the constitution' (Katz and Mair, 1995: 22). This arguably severely weakens the representative link between citizens and parties. However, in practice I do not observe such a clear deterioration of the representative relationship, neither in terms of issue congruence (Powell, 2009) nor in terms of mandate fulfilment. How can this be explained?

First of all, one should not overestimate the quality of representation in the past. Sometimes the era of the mass party is taken as the ideal-type situation for political representation. However, mass parties were not really parties of the masses; membership was usually not higher than about 10 per cent of the population. This is certainly higher than today, but party membership was far from universal. More importantly, mass parties catered to specific socio-demographic constituencies: Labour parties for working men, Christian democrats for religious people and Liberal as well as Conservative parties for the more affluent part of the population. While parties did thus have specific interests at heart, the fact that most people voted for the party which represented their group, gave these mass parties quite a lot of freedom regarding the exact policies parties put forward in parliament. It would take a lot to convince a manual labourer that the Liberals would represent his interests better than Labour.

The Dutch system of pillarization (or 'consociational democracy') in fact depended on the willingness of (party) elites to cooperate and compromise (Lijphart, 1968). Society was segmented in various social groups ('pillars') which were relatively autonomous. For example, Catholics had their own newspapers, their own schools, their own hospitals and their own football clubs. Lijphart has argued that this societal segmentation has been overcome by elite cooperation. Governments consisted of party representatives of most of these 'pillars'. This cooperation could only work because the elites were prepared to strike compromises. Judging from the data gathered in this study, these compromises seem to have led to a somewhat lower level of mandate fulfilment than in later years. Parties had to deviate from their manifestos to make the system work. Voters were loyal to their party and did not punish parties for this behaviour. The result is that mandate fulfilment was not particularly high during the years of pillarization.

Secondly, the effect of dealignment and cartelization of the party system

turns out to be not as negative as is sometimes argued. Some of the developments are even helpful to mandated representation. The support of voters is no longer taken for granted by parties. Election manifestos have become longer and more detailed, allowing for a better estimation of their issue positions, and they deal with a broader range of topics. This has contributed to higher congruence between parties' electoral and their parliamentary issue saliency. The decline of cleavage-based attachments to parties and the resulting increase of electoral volatility seems to have made parties more aware of their constituents' opinions (Kitschelt, 2000). While their response to voters' opinions may be strategic (in order to win votes or office), this does not so much matter from the perspective of party mandate fulfilment, as long as it brings parties to fulfilling their election mandates. The fear that voters will punish parties that break their electoral mandates helps to ensure that parties take their mandates seriously (Mansbridge, 2003). In addition, Kitschelt argues that if cartelization of party competition leads to alienation between voters and citizens, two mechanisms will reduce cartelization (Kitschelt, 2000). First, members of the cartel may break the cartel if they feel that the cost of leaving it are outweighed by the benefit of reaching out to voters. If the cartel parties have distanced themselves too far from the public, a party that breaks loose from the cartel has a good chance of benefiting in electoral terms. Alternatively, the cartel parties may be challenged by new parties from outside the cartel. The success of right-wing populist parties may partly be attributed to this factor. And these new parties do not necessarily remain outsiders: in some cases they have been part of the governing coalition (Belanger and Aarts, 2006; De Lange, 2008). The results of this study seem to confirm Kitschelt's argument about parties' sensitivity to voters' concerns, rather than the 'alienation' thesis that is implied in the cartel party thesis.

9.1.3 What matters most to parties

The final hypothesis concerning party mandate fulfilment studied here concerns how important issues were to parties and whether they take 'extreme' positions on issues. Issue saliency congruence is higher for issues that matter more to parties. However, parties' issue position congruence is not higher for more salient issues. Thus the influence of the importance of issues is mixed: it matters for issue saliency congruence, but not for issue position congruence.

Recently, polarization and issue position extremism have been looked at to explain (a lack of) policy linkage between citizens and parties (Kim et al., 2010). Here it has been used to explain mandate fulfilment by political parties. Whereas polarization has been shown to decrease policy linkage, especially in majoritarian democracies, this study has shown that parties' electoral and parliamentary issue positions are more congruent when their issue position is more extreme. Parties with more outspoken views tend to fulfil their mandate somewhat better, at least on those issues where they have an extreme view. In consensus countries, parties that have more outspoken views on all issues tend to show

even higher levels of mandate fulfilment, although this effect is not significant. Contrarily, in the United Kingdom, parties which hold views that are extreme overall show lower levels of mandate fulfilment. This seems to be the result of the, in some cases, rather outspoken manifesto views of the Liberals, which they do not translate in extreme positions in parliament. On the whole, parties show higher levels of mandate fulfilment on issues where they have more outspoken or extreme positions.

9.2 Implications

How can the conclusions from this study be used to further the day-to-day practice of political representation?

First of all, this study shows that overall there are only small differences between consensus and majoritarian democracies in terms of mandate fulfilment. This finding is similar to the conclusions of studies into policy responsiveness, which show that while in the past consensus democracies have shown higher levels of policy linkage between citizens and politicians (Powell, 2000), although the difference with majoritarian democracies seems to have become smaller over the last decade (Powell, 2009; Golder and Stramski, 2010)[1]. These findings should be taken into account in the debate on political reform in both countries. In the Dutch debate on political reform, the proposals to reform the electoral system or to introduce a directly elected prime minister have sometimes been substantiated by the argument that this would lead to better linkage between citizens and politicians (Van Thijn, 1967). It has been argued that this reform would lead towards a more majoritarian system of government and therefore to clearer lines of responsibility, less voter confusion and more government decisiveness (Andeweg, 1997: 237). However, the results from this study and previous studies show that it is unlikely that institutional reform will increase either policy linkage or collective mandate fulfilment.

Secondly, the level of congruence between the electoral and parliamentary competition is reasonably high both in Britain and in the Netherlands. In addition, there is no decline of mandate fulfilment over time, rather an increase of issue saliency congruence. Why then do so many people believe that parties do not fulfil their electoral promises? And why does trust in public institutions decline in most Western countries (Pharr and Putnam, 2000)?

The finding that the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary competition has not decreased over time does not imply that voters are plainly wrong when they talk about not trusting parties to do what they promise. The congruence between elections and parliament is after all not perfect: parties' priorities and positions are similar between election and parliament, but certainly

[1] Golder and Stramski (2010) do not find a difference between consensus and majoritarian democracy (treated as a dichotomy), but they do find a relation between the electoral system disproportionality (measured at interval-ratio level) and many-to-many congruence.

not in exact correspondence. Even if one argues that the correspondence is at an acceptable level, this does not mean that voter distrust is necessarily misguided. First, parties may say in parliament what they promised during the election, but this does not mean that issue congruence between voters and parties is high. Voters might not like any of the parties' manifestos and are therefore not really given a satisfactory choice. Second, people might have one or two issues that they really care about on which parties do show a poor record (Thomson, 2011). One example is the rise of the pension age from 65 to 67 in the Netherlands, which was supported by a parliamentary majority in 2009. However, in the 2006 elections, only one party had said in its manifesto that it wanted to do this and many parties had explicitly said they would not. The issue has attracted considerable attention in the news media and people might thus feel that parties have broken their promises. Liberal leader Nick Clegg had a similar experience in 2010 when he had to go back on a promise not to increase tuition fees. Even if parties' social or educational policies have been congruent on the whole, incongruence on a specific policy measure might arouse negative feelings about pledge fulfilment.

Party manifestos have become longer over the last fifty years. The paradox of longer manifestos is that they give more information, which does enable citizens to make a better electoral choice, but at the same time makes it less likely that people are actually going to read them. While I do maintain that manifestos are informative of a party's electoral and predictive for a party's parliamentary position, another question is whether they are in practice a source of information that people use extensively. Most voters will only encounter the party manifestos via another medium, for example television debates, media reports, interviews with candidates, party propaganda or vote advice applications. Kriesi et al.'s analysis of party positions reported in newspapers illustrates that these party positions are roughly similar to the parties' manifesto positions, but they are not identical (Kriesi, 2008). The filter via which voters get to know manifestos may influence their expectations about how parties behave in parliament. This is certainly a topic that warrants further research.

Thirdly, the analysis shows that party position congruence between elections and parliament is higher for issues on which parties have a more extreme or outspoken positions. Voters can take this into account when casting their ballot. Although an extreme issue position is no guarantee of it being kept, there is a small positive effect. In addition, parties show higher issue saliency congruence for issues that they talked more about in their manifesto (both in absolute as well as in relative terms). If voters thus want to put one issue or another more firmly on the parliamentary agenda, a vote for a party that finds this issue more important than other parties may help. Voters should, however, be aware that the government formation process will probably have a greater influence on party mandate fulfilment than manifesto issue saliency or manifesto issue position extremism.

9.3 Approach and method

The spatial approach used here proved to be able to uncover a number of phenomena that have previously remained hidden. The current study is the first to examine the party mandate both in terms of issue saliency as well as issue positions. Equally important is that it manages to mitigate some of the adverse effects that the pledge approach is susceptible to: agenda effects, specificity effects and strategic effects: the pledge approach cannot take agenda changes into account, it suffers from differences in the degree of specificity of manifestos and government policy (or parliamentary debate) and it is prone to strategic choices in pledge-making by parties. The saliency approach used by Klingemann et al. (1994) mitigates these problems, but has the disadvantage of looking only at issue saliency (how much parties talk about issues), not at parties' positions on those issues. The spatial approach used in this study offers a way to reduce the problems of the pledge approach, while allowing to study both issue saliency as well as party issue positions. With regard to the latter it shows that the patterns concerning issue saliency congruence are not always similar to those of issue position congruence. For example, I observe a statistically significant increase over time of issue saliency congruence in the Netherlands, while issue position congruence is more or less stable.

This book provides a broad comparison of the party mandate: it covers the similarity of parties' issue saliency and position on basically all policy issues, rather than only specific pledges or specific topics. There is a trade-off between having a broad comparison and one that is aimed at identifying incongruence on specific issues. Whereas the spatial approach is well suited to do the former, it is not very good at identifying a lack of mandate fulfilment on specific issues. This study provides an estimate of the overall congruence of the electoral and parliamentary competition, but does not tell whether the Conservative party kept its 1983 promise to 'update the Cruelty to animals act 1876' (Conservative Party, 1983). This is in particular due to way the spatial approach was implemented here, using word-count-based algorithms (Wordfish) to estimate parties' policy positions. Still, the aim of this study was to look at the party mandate from an party-system level perspective, which arguably translates better into a 'broader' measure of party policy than a more particularized one. Whereas previous studies, especially those in the pledge tradition, have already provided important insights in the fulfilment of specific pledges, the broader party system-level perspective had remained largely unexplored.

This study is one of the first to study opposition parties' mandates. Previous studies were not very informative about opposition parties' mandate fulfilment, because they looked at government policy output - over which opposition parties obviously have very limited control. This study has shown that when using a better test of opposition parties' mandate fulfilment, namely what they say in parliament, there is little difference with governing parties. Their positions are equally congruent between elections and parliament as those of the government

parties. As I outlined above, I do find that the dynamics of government and opposition influences the overall congruence of the policy spaces. Incongruence of parties' relative positions in the spaces of electoral and parliamentary competition is related to these dynamics.

Studying parties' parliamentary mandate rather than their government mandate has provided new insights into the process of party representation. Instead of looking at the mandate in terms of the fulfilment of specific pledges this study looks at the similarity of party competition during elections and in parliament. This led to a similar conclusion regarding the overall level of mandate fulfilment as in previous studies: in most cases the electoral and parliamentary competition are fairly congruent. However, contrary to previous studies I did not find a difference between my majoritarian case, the United Kingdom, and my consensus democracy, the Netherlands (cf Thomson, 1999). Thus, my different approach leads to different conclusions.

One of the drawbacks of looking at parties' parliamentary behaviour rather than governments' policy output is that it would be relatively easy to say similar things before and after elections, whereas translating pledges into actual policies is a more genuine test of parties' willingness to stick to their mandate. Similarity of speech before and after elections is only a part of the 'representative chain' (Müller, 2000). While I do not necessarily disagree with that statement, one should not underestimate the cost of speech, certainly not in a parliamentary setting. Saying something in parliament does have consequences for a party. Parliamentary debate is not just a philosophical discussion devoid of any implications, but it deals with very specific proposals to create or change actual legislation. When a party says something different in parliament than it did in its manifesto, this will give rise to remarks about its mandate fulfilment. And so will a party that says one thing, but does another, for example by voting. It is hard to conceive that a party will very often argue against a particular proposal at length in the debate on a bill and then continue to vote in favour of it. In many ways a parliamentary debate is more of an opportunity to motivate how an MP or a party voted rather than to convince other parties of their position. In addition, the findings on the level of mandate fulfilment in this study do not suggest that saying things in parliament is so much easier than implementing specific pledges. As far as the two are comparable, the levels of fulfilment found in this study seem similar to the ones found in previous studies (Royed, 1996; Thomson, 1999, 2001).

The spatial approach adopted here allowed for the study of the difference between front bench and back-benchers in the United Kingdom. Although the relevance of the distinction between front bench and back bench has been known for a considerable period of time, it had been thus far largely neglected in the study of the party mandate (King, 1976). Admittedly, the current study had not originally planned to study front bench and back bench separately, but the combination of the way British parliament works and the methodological approach of this study necessitated making the distinction. The finding that United King-

dom governments are accommodating rather than adversarial sheds new light on issues that have until now only been described qualitatively. While it would be necessary to confirm these patterns using other ways to estimate parties' and governments' positions, this does show that spatial analysis provides a degree of flexibility that goes beyond the methods previously employed. In future work, this type of analysis can be extended to factions within parliamentary groups or individual members (cf. Gianetti and Laver, 2005; Bernauer and Bräuninger, 2009).

To properly judge the spatial approach to the party mandate as a useful perspective in the study of the party mandate, a clear distinction should be made between the approach itself and the way it has been operationalized in this particular study. The spatial approach entails comparing parties' positions before and after elections and comparing the structure of the party competition before and after voting day. In this particular study, I have used the latter party-system level approach. Because of methodological constraints, only parties' *relative* issue positions could be compared. While this fits well with an institutional or party-level approach of the question of the mandate, there are (party level) explanations that would require the comparison of parties' absolute policy positions. These types of questions could be studied very well using the spatial approach, just not with the exact same tools that have been used here.

This study is one of the first that uses computerized content analysis to compare parties' manifesto positions with parties' parliamentary positions. The application of computerized content analysis techniques has enabled many types of document analysis that were not feasible by means of manual content analysis. The comparison of parties' manifestos with a huge body of parliamentary speech is a good example of a situation where this advantage pays off. My comparison of two different types of documents (manifestos and speeches) does, however, present a problem. The reason for this problem is that existing techniques rely on word usage, more specifically word counts, and this is different in manifestos and parliamentary speeches. In this study this problem has been circumvented by comparing the manifestos and parliamentary debates not directly, but indirectly. Using Wordfish, I estimated the manifesto positions on a number of issues. The parliamentary positions were estimated in a separate analysis. This results in two scales with party position estimates for each issue: one manifesto scale and one parliamentary debates-scale. As I have stressed before, the positions on these scales cannot be compared in absolute terms, but parties' relative positions on those scales can be compared. From the perspective of spatial approach this is a very informative comparison. The advantage is that party positions in the two arenas have been estimated separately and thus no similarity has been 'forced' upon the two scales.

There are two drawbacks to this method. First, the lack of data on absolute issue positions makes if difficult to say anything about individual parties changing their positions on specific issues. After all, because of the relative nature of the positional data, the fact that a party is positioned differently (vis-a-vis other

parties) in parliament than in the electoral competition might be the result of a change of its own position, but also of other parties changing their positions. The second drawback is that the inductive nature of the Wordfish estimation might pick up on other things than policy related differences between parties. For example, the analysis of the 1972-1977 Dutch parliament produced patterns that did not fit very well with conventional wisdom: the two main parties of the left (PvdA) and right (VVD) were positioned very close to one another in parliament, while one (PvdA) was in government and the other was in opposition.

9.4 Avenues for further research

Scientific research usually results in some (tentative) answers and many new questions. Progress is achieved by refuting incorrect ideas and being able to pose better questions. This study is no exception to that rule. Here, I present three avenues for further research into mandate fulfilment.

First, government versus opposition dynamics lead to deviations from perfect mandate fulfilment both in majoritarian and consensus democracies. In majoritarian democracies, incumbency is a major element in the political campaigns, even in the manifestos, while the process of government formation changes the way parties behave in consensus democracies. One particular type of consensus democracy has, however, not been studied here: countries with minority governments (Lijphart, 1999). Minority governments are a rather frequent phenomenon in the Scandinavian countries (Strøm, 1984). One or two parties work together in government, but they do not command a parliamentary majority. For each of their policy proposals they need to find a parliamentary majority. In terms of mandate fulfilment, this seems to be a good solution for the consensus and majoritarian systems' troubles with the party mandate. On the one hand, there is a multi-party setting, which makes sure that the electoral competition does not solely focus on the record of the incumbent party. On the other hand, parties will have to compromise less, because they do not necessarily need a parliamentary majority to govern. On some issues opposition parties might want to strike a deal, but presumably only if they can enact some of their own policies. Do systems of minority government present something like the 'best of both worlds'? This is an empirical question that warrants further research. At the same time, it should be noted that most 'minority governments' are in fact watered down coalitions rather than pure-form minorities, think of the Lib-Lab *pact* in Britain, the agreements between the government and the Danish Folkeparti and the Dutch *gedoogdakkoord* between the government parties and the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV). It is to be expected that the stronger the link between the supporting party and the government parties, the more it will behave like a normal coalition. Another type of democracy that has not been studied is coalition government in a majoritarian democracy. The Conservative-Liberal coalition formed after the 2010 elections presents a crucial case that allows the

researcher to disentangle the effect of the 'majoritarian style' of politics and the effect of coalition formation on mandate fulfilment. Similarly, the Dutch minority government that was formed in 2010 presents an interesting new case of mandate fulfilment in the Dutch case[2].

The second research topic that would benefit greatly from further research is people's perspective of party mandate fulfilment. When we know that party mandate fulfilment is generally quite reasonable, why do people tend to think that parties do not fulfil their mandates? Parties commit themselves to certain policies and as my analysis shows, they generally stick to these policy commitments in parliament. However, there seems to be a difference between the actual promises made and the expectations of many voters (Naurin, 2007). Perhaps parties do sometimes paint to rosy a picture of what their policy plans can achieve. Whereas their issue position may be clear, their advertisements and party leader speeches do sometimes suggests that these policies lead to a 'better Britain' or 'a fairer Netherlands'. Voters may thus judge them on these very general outcome policies rather than the specific measures and targets in the manifesto (Naurin, 2007). In addition, news media perhaps play a role by putting more emphasis on some pledges than on others or by paying more attention to the pledges that parties failed to fulfil than on those that did get enacted. This research question thus moves the perspective from actual mandate fulfilment to perceived mandate fulfilment. From the viewpoint of political legitimacy this is equally important. One task of researchers may be to inform people about actual mandate fulfilment, another is to understand why people do not believe in party mandate fulfilment. Eventually, a major aspect of political legitimacy is whether people regard institutions as legitimate.

Thirdly, the comparison of parties' relative issue positions is an insightful exercise for the analysis of the party mandate on the system level. Comparing the structures of party competition fits well with an institutional perspective and an institutional explanation of the party mandate. However, the chapters on government and opposition and particularly on issue saliency and issue position extremism uncovered the limits of the comparison of relative positions: it is difficult to draw strong conclusions on party position change of individual parties. Therefore, these types of research question would benefit from a way to compare the positions of parties in an absolute manner. Fortunately, development of party position estimation techniques is moving forward rapidly (Lowe, 2008; Benoit and Lowe, 2010). The developments of new techniques and the application of those to the analysis of issue-level and party-level predictors of mandate fulfilment will further enhance our understanding about when parties fulfil their electoral mandates.

[2]The government itself consists of ministers of only two parties, but it is supported by a parliamentary majority of three parties.