

Chapter 6

Government and opposition

In the previous chapter I examined the relationship between the type of democracy of a country and mandate fulfilment. The main finding is that the difference between these systems are small and in most cases statistically insignificant. However, this does not shed much light on the underlying mechanisms. The fact that the resulting levels of mandate fulfilment is similar in both systems does not imply that the process of representation is the same in both countries. In this chapter I examine one particular difference between consensus and majoritarian democracy, namely the way in which governments are formed, that can contribute to the explanation of the process of mandate fulfilment.

Government participation changes the political game after elections considerably. One or more parties take up office, thereby taking the policy initiative, but also obliging themselves to defend the conduct of the governmental institutions. The other parties are in opposition and will, to a varying degree, oppose the government's policies.

The extent to which government and opposition parties fulfil their electoral mandates is expected to be dependent on the type of democracy of a country. As I have argued in chapter 3, the large agenda-setting powers of the government as well as the practice of single-party government should allow governing parties in majoritarian systems to follow their manifesto more closely than the opposition, which is forced to adopt the government agenda and to oppose the government in basically every aspect of government policy (Döring, 1995, 2001). In a consensus system one would expect opposition parties to obey their mandate more closely than the governing parties, which are bound to the coalition agreement and also have limited agenda-setting powers compared to their majoritarian counterparts (Timmermans and Moury, 2006).

6.1 What parties talk about: setting the parliamentary agenda

The effect of government participation on issue saliency congruence (between elections and parliament) is explained by the government's power over parliament, specifically its agenda-setting powers (Döring, 1995; Lijphart, 1999). In majoritarian countries, governments have a lot of control over the parliamentary agenda. This means that government parties can talk about the issues they find important, while opposition parties are forced to discuss the government's salient issues. Therefore, I expect that the congruence between parties' electoral and parliamentary issue saliency is higher for government than for opposition parties in majoritarian democracies. In consensus democracies, the degree of government agenda control is much lower. Opposition parties have more opportunities to demand attention for issues they find important. For example, the Party for the Animals (PvdD), a Dutch one-issue-party, has managed to gain considerable attention for animal rights by asking many parliamentary questions and tabling a large number of parliamentary motions on the issue. At the same time, government parties in consensus democracies are often bound to a coalition agreement, which limits their ability to talk about all the issues they like. The expectation for consensus democracies is that opposition parties will have higher levels of issue saliency congruence (between electoral and parliament) than government parties¹:

Hypothesis 3: Government parties show higher levels of congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency than opposition parties, in a majoritarian democracy.

Hypothesis 5: Opposition parties show higher levels of congruence between electoral party issue saliency and parliamentary party issue saliency than government parties, in a consensus democracy.

These expectations were tested by a regression model of parties' issue priorities. The model explains parliamentary issue saliency by manifesto issue saliency. From the analysis in the previous chapter, it is known that issue saliency in parliament is to a large degree explained by the average issue saliency in manifestos. In other words, all parties talk a lot about some issues (e.g. macro-economy), both in their manifesto as well as in parliament, while paying little attention to other issues (such as foreign trade). For example, if all parties devote 60 per cent of their manifesto and their parliamentary speech to macro-economic issues and 40 per cent to the environment, congruence between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency is very high, but it does offer little choice between parties in terms of issue saliency. The party mandate requires congruence between manifesto and parliamentary issue saliency, but also that there is a choice

¹See also section 3.2.

between parties. What matters from the perspective of the party mandate is the variation between *parties* (not issues). To look at between-parties rather than between-issues variation, the average manifesto saliency of an issue is included in the model as an explanatory variable (see section 5.1). If parties are simply talking as much about certain issues as everybody else does, the coefficient of 'average manifesto saliency' will be high. If however parties do talk a lot in parliament about issues that they *themselves* talked about a lot in their manifesto, the coefficient of 'party manifesto issue saliency' will be high. The model thus distinguishes between the extent to which parties' issue saliency is influenced by the average saliency of an issue on the one hand, and a parties' manifesto issue saliency on the other hand.

The third explanatory variable in the regression model is government participation, which equals one for parties that are in government and zero for parties that are not. Because the expected effect is different in consensus and majoritarian systems, I ran a separate model for my majoritarian and consensus cases, e.g. a separate model for the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

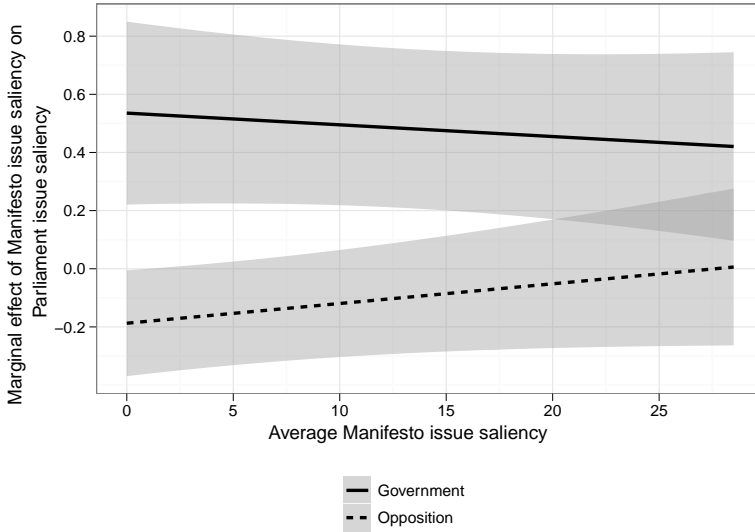
The regression model explains a party's parliamentary issue saliency by the interaction of the three variables described above and all of their constitutive terms: a party's manifesto issue saliency, the average manifesto saliency of an issue and a dummy for being in government. This yields a model with three variables, three two-way interactions and one three-way interaction². As the effect of each of the variables depends on four coefficients, it is very hard to interpret the results in a traditional regression table³. Instead, a graphical representation of the *marginal effect* of a party's manifesto issue saliency and the average manifesto issue saliency shows whether both effects are significant and whether they differ between opposition and governing parties.

Figures 6.1-6.4 present the results of the regression analysis. More specifically, these figures display the marginal effects of party manifesto issue saliency and average manifesto issue saliency for opposition and governing parties. The marginal effect is the effect of one unit change in the independent variable on the dependent variable (including the interaction effect). Normally these marginal effects can be read in the regression table, i.e. 'one unit change in the independent variable is predicted to result in 0.55 units change in the dependent variable' (*b*-coefficient). For models with interaction effects the interpretation is less straightforward, because the marginal effect of one independent variable depends on

²Including many interaction variables does raise the issue of multicollinearity. Often the interaction variables are correlated to their constitutive terms. Sometimes, centring is presented as a solution to this problem. However, it can be shown that centring of the variables does not alter the algebraic form of the model. Because centred variables are numerically different from the non-centred variables, the coefficients and standard errors in the 'centred model' will be different from those in the 'non-centred model'. However, the marginal effects of each of the variables and their variance does not change (Kam and Franzese Jr., 2007: 93-99). The multicollinearity in the data here does not seem an issue, because the analysis of the UK, which has the highest levels of collinearity, shows a very clear distinction between government and opposition parties.

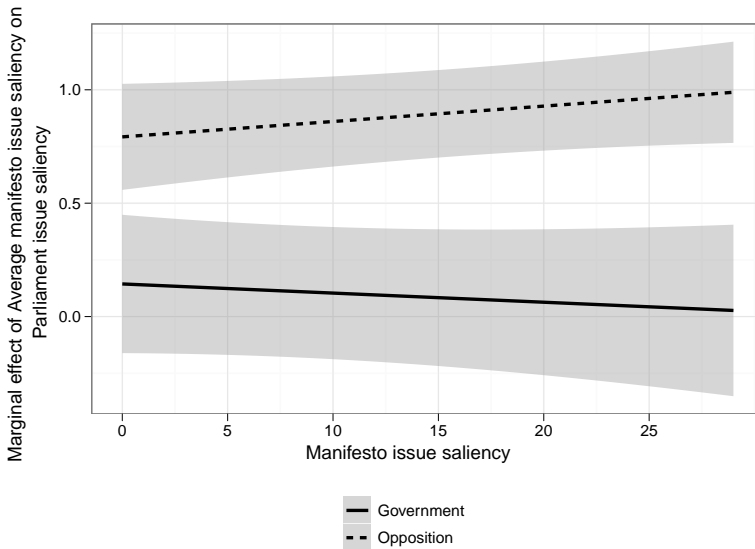
³It is included in the appendix as table A.2 on page 226.

Figure 6.1: *The marginal effect of manifesto issue saliency on parliamentary issue saliency: government and opposition in the UK*



Note: Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence interval.

Figure 6.2: *The marginal effect of average manifesto issue saliency on parliamentary issue saliency: government and opposition in the UK*



Note: Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence interval.

the value of another independent variable. For example, in the current model I expect that the marginal effect of a party's manifesto issue saliency depends on government participation (and average manifesto issue saliency). Thus the effect of a party's manifesto issue saliency is different for parties in government and parties in opposition. In the specification used here, the effect of a party's manifesto issue saliency depends on two other variables: government participation and average manifesto issue saliency. Thus, the marginal effect of a party's manifesto issue saliency is different for different levels of average manifesto issue saliency as well as for parties in government and parties in opposition. For example, in figure 6.1 the marginal effect of a party's manifesto issue saliency is displayed for various levels of average manifesto issue saliency and for two groups of parties: those in government and those in opposition. For the government parties, the marginal effect is about 0.55 for issues with a low average issue saliency and about 0.45 for issues with a high average issue saliency. The effect is 0.5 for issues with an average manifesto saliency of 10%. This means that for government parties, an increase of one percentage point in the manifesto saliency of an issue with an average manifesto saliency of 10%, results in a predicted increase of half a percentage point in their parliamentary saliency of that issue. For the opposition parties, the effect is quite different. The grey line shows that there is a negative marginal effect (although it is not significant, because the 95% confidence interval includes zero). The effect of an opposition party's manifesto saliency is thus not significantly different from zero.

Figure 6.1 shows that the UK government is sensitive to its manifesto issue saliency. The confidence interval is rather wide, but it does not include zero, which means that the effect is statistically significant. No matter what the average manifesto issue saliency is, the governing party is responsive to its own manifesto. This is quite different for the parties in opposition. The marginal effect of their own manifesto issue saliency on their parliamentary issue saliency is not significantly different from zero. In fact, the coefficient is below zero, which suggests it is negative rather than positive. Note that this does not mean that there is no correspondence between the opposition parties' manifesto issue saliency and their parliamentary issue saliency; it means that, once one takes the average manifesto issue saliency for an issue into account, the influence of a party's own manifesto issue saliency disappears.

For the opposition parties, it was expected that they are not able to follow their own manifesto's issue priorities, but have to talk about issues that are tabled by the government. This expectation can be tested by looking at the effect of the average manifesto issue saliency on a party's parliamentary issue saliency levels. In figure 6.2 one can observe the marginal effect of the average manifesto issue saliency for each level of manifesto issue saliency for both opposition and governing parties in the United Kingdom. The grey 'opposition' line is much higher than the black 'government' line, which means that party issue saliency of opposition parties is much more sensitive to the average manifesto issue saliency than the governing parties' issue saliency. The confidence interval of the gov-

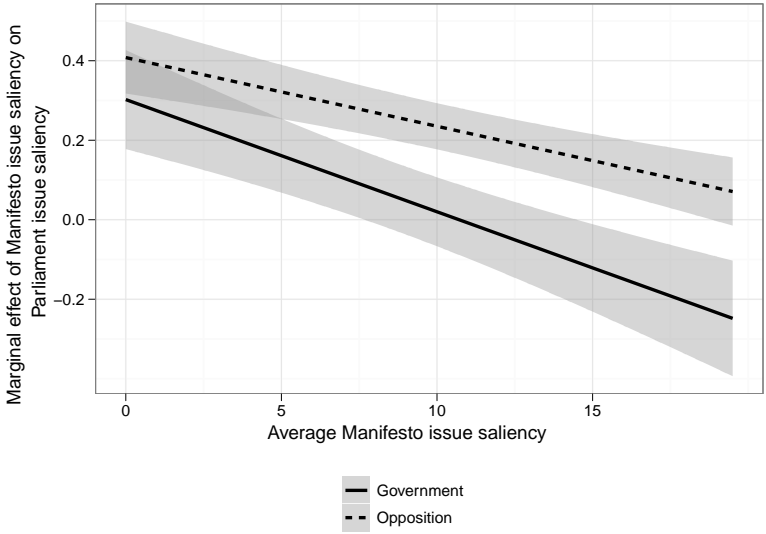
ernment estimate includes zero for each value of manifesto issue saliency, which means that for the governing parties there is no effect of average manifesto issue saliency on their parliamentary issue saliency estimate. Thus, the opposition parties' parliamentary issue saliency is very sensitive to the average manifesto issue saliency, while the government's parliamentary issue saliency is not. These figures do not depend very much on the levels of a party's manifesto issue saliency: the slopes of the lines are almost equal to zero. Thus, the effect is similar for issues that are salient and issues that are not salient to parties. These findings for the UK correspond to the expectations: governing parties show correspondence with their own manifesto issue saliency, while opposition parties' parliamentary issue saliency is better explained by looking at the average manifesto issue saliency.

The Dutch models show a very different picture. Figure 6.4 presents the marginal effect of the average manifesto issue saliency for opposition and governing parties for varying levels of manifesto issue saliency. Two things stand out from this figure. First, there is no discernible difference between government and opposition parties. Both are influenced to a similar extent by the average manifesto issue saliency. Second, both lines show a clear negative relationship between a party's manifesto issue saliency and the marginal effect of the average manifesto issue saliency. This means that if a party's manifesto issue saliency is high, its parliamentary issue saliency cannot easily be explained by the average manifesto issue saliency. In most cases this will be issues where parties deviate strongly from the average manifesto issue saliency both in their manifesto as well as in parliament. In those cases, the average manifesto saliency does not explain its parliamentary issue saliency.

The marginal effect of a party's manifesto issue saliency in the Netherlands is displayed in figure 6.4. The figure shows that as the average manifesto issue saliency increases, the marginal effect of the manifesto disappears. For governing parties, this effect is stronger than for opposition parties. In addition, the marginal effect of manifesto issue saliency on parliamentary issue saliency is significantly higher for opposition parties than for governing parties when the average manifesto issue saliency is larger than 5 per cent. For governing parties, there is no effect which is significantly different from zero for issues with an average manifesto saliency above 11 per cent; for issues with an average manifesto saliency above 15 per cent the effect is even negative. That means that for issues with an average manifesto saliency above 15, a governing party's own manifesto issue saliency is negatively related with its parliamentary issue saliency (*ceteris paribus*). Opposition parties' control over their parliamentary issue saliency is thus higher than governing parties' control. This suggests that the opposition parties in the Netherlands do indeed have the opportunity to talk about the issues that they find important.

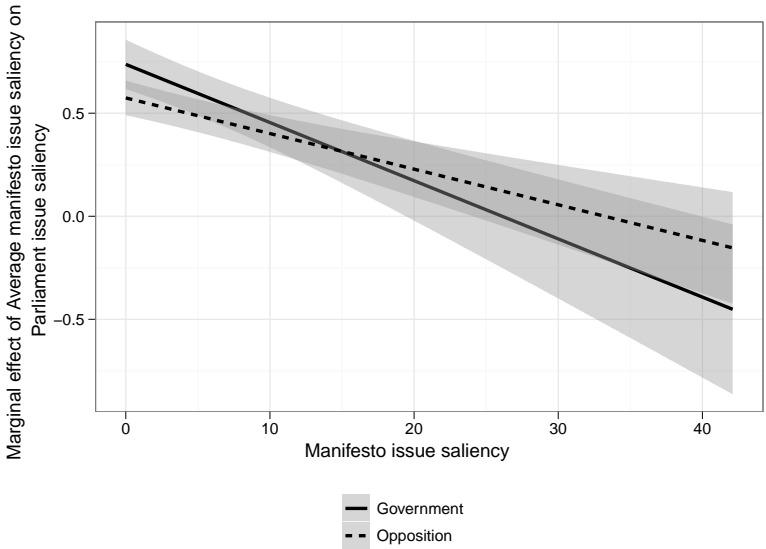
Analysis of the saliency data largely corroborates the expectations concerning the effect of governing participation on mandate congruence. In the United Kingdom, governing parties follow their own manifesto, not the average at-

Figure 6.3: *The marginal effect of manifesto issue saliency on parliamentary issue saliency: government and opposition in the Netherlands*



Note: Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence interval.

Figure 6.4: *The marginal effect of average manifesto issue saliency on parliamentary issue saliency: government and opposition in the Netherlands*



Note: Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence interval.

tention for issues, while opposition parties do not follow their own manifesto agenda, at least not if one also includes the average manifesto saliency of issues. In the Netherlands, the picture is reversed. While the differences are smaller, the predictive value of the manifesto issue saliency is stronger for opposition parties than for governing parties, when correcting for the average attention for issues. For the analysis of the Dutch case, not all differences between opposition and government are statistically significant, and there is thus only limited support for the hypothesis concerning consensus democracies. The data does show support for the hypothesis that in majoritarian countries governing parties show higher levels of mandate fulfilment than opposition parties in terms of issue saliency.

6.2 What parties say

The expectations concerning issue *position* congruence between elections and parliament are similar to those concerning issue saliency congruence. In majoritarian democracies, government parties are expected to show higher levels of congruence than opposition parties, whereas the opposite effect is expected in consensus democracies⁴:

Hypothesis 4: Government parties show higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than opposition parties, in a majoritarian democracy.

Hypothesis 6: Opposition parties show higher levels of congruence between parties' electoral issue positions and parties' parliamentary issue positions than government parties, in a consensus democracy.

What parties say in elections and in parliament can be compared by means of a spatial representation of the party competition in these arenas. Figures 6.5 and 6.6 represent the change of parties' relative issue positions by overlaying the manifesto and parliamentary policy space in one single space. The spaces were also rotated to achieve the best fit between the manifesto and the parliamentary party positions⁵. The arrows connect the manifesto and parliamentary position of a party. It is important to keep in mind that an arrow does not display the change of a party position in a single space. The arrows merely suggests how much a party's position has to be changed to arrive at the configuration of the parliamentary space. The party positions have to be interpreted in *relative* terms. For example, in 1974 there is a very long arrow between the Labour manifesto position and the Labour back bench position. This does not necessarily mean that the Labour back bench has moved to the left, it means that *relative to the*

⁴See section 3.2.

⁵For Britain, I matched the manifestos with the front bench party positions, which ought to be kept in mind for the interpretation of these figures.

other parliamentary parties the Labour back bench is much more extreme than the Labour manifesto was *relative to the other electoral parties*.

In the United Kingdom parliamentary spaces, I distinguish between the front bench and back-benchers of each party⁶. Each of the parties' manifestos has arrows running in two directions (see figure 6.5). The opposition parties' front bench is generally positioned more towards the outskirts of the space than its back-benchers. The opposite holds for the governing party: the government itself is positioned more towards the centre of the space, whereas its back-benchers are positioned more towards the extremes. However, the degree to which this pattern holds varies over time. Particularly in 1966 and 1974 there were large changes in the relative positions of the Labour manifesto and the parliamentary Labour party, with especially large differences between the Labour government and the Labour back benches. At the same time, the Conservative benches' position changes were relatively small. Moreover, the Conservative front benches and back benches were positioned relatively close to one another. The Liberals moved to the centre of the spaces in these years: during elections their position was rather strongly in opposition to the incumbent, but in parliament they took a moderate position.

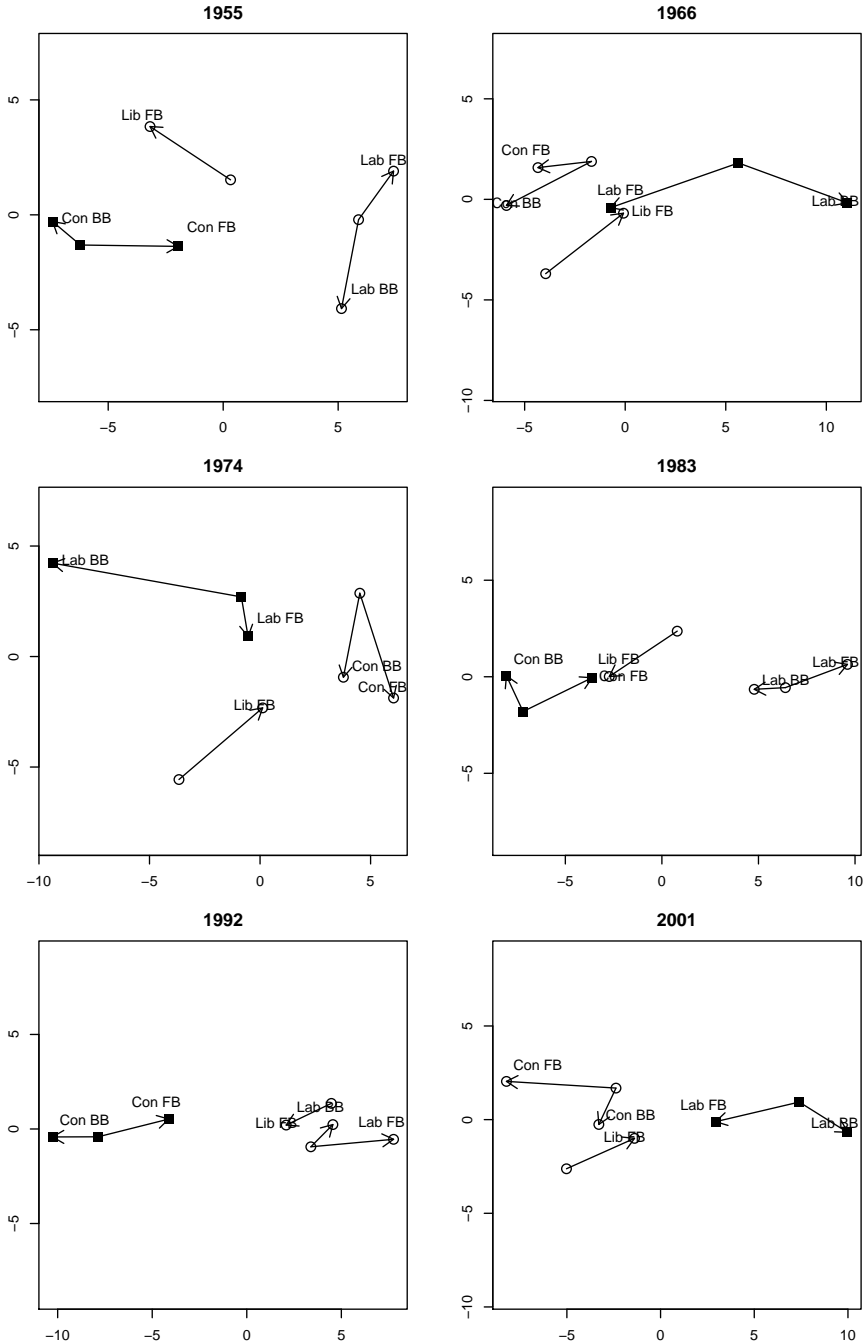
The changes between manifesto and parliamentary spaces were apparently much smaller during the Conservative governments, especially in 1983 and 1992. The extent to which the government moved to the centre and the back-benchers towards the outskirts was much smaller than in the 1966-1970 and 1974-1979 parliaments. This pattern also held in the 2001-2004 parliament when the Labour government was positioned more towards the centre than its back-benchers, but the differences between the two were smaller during the earlier Labour governments.

In the Netherlands, one would expect that coalition formation leads to a convergence of governing parties and a larger distance between opposition and governing parties. In 1952 and 1959 this expectation was only partially met (see figure 6.6). The position of two of the governing parties in 1952, PvdA and KVP, converged. The two other governing parties, CHU and ARP, also got somewhat closer, but these two blocks (PvdA/KVP and CHU/ARP) were still located rather far away from each other. The opposition party, VVD, did move away somewhat from the governing parties. In 1959, the opposition party PvdA also moved away from the governing parties. The three Christian governing parties moved away from the PvdA on the vertical dimension, but not so much on the horizontal dimension. The VVD, also in government, moved towards the other governmental parties on the horizontal plane.

The space of 1972 did not show a clear government convergence. The governing parties ARP, KVP, PPR and PvdA did move closer to one another, but so did two main opposition parties: VVD and CHU. One of the opposition parties, D66,

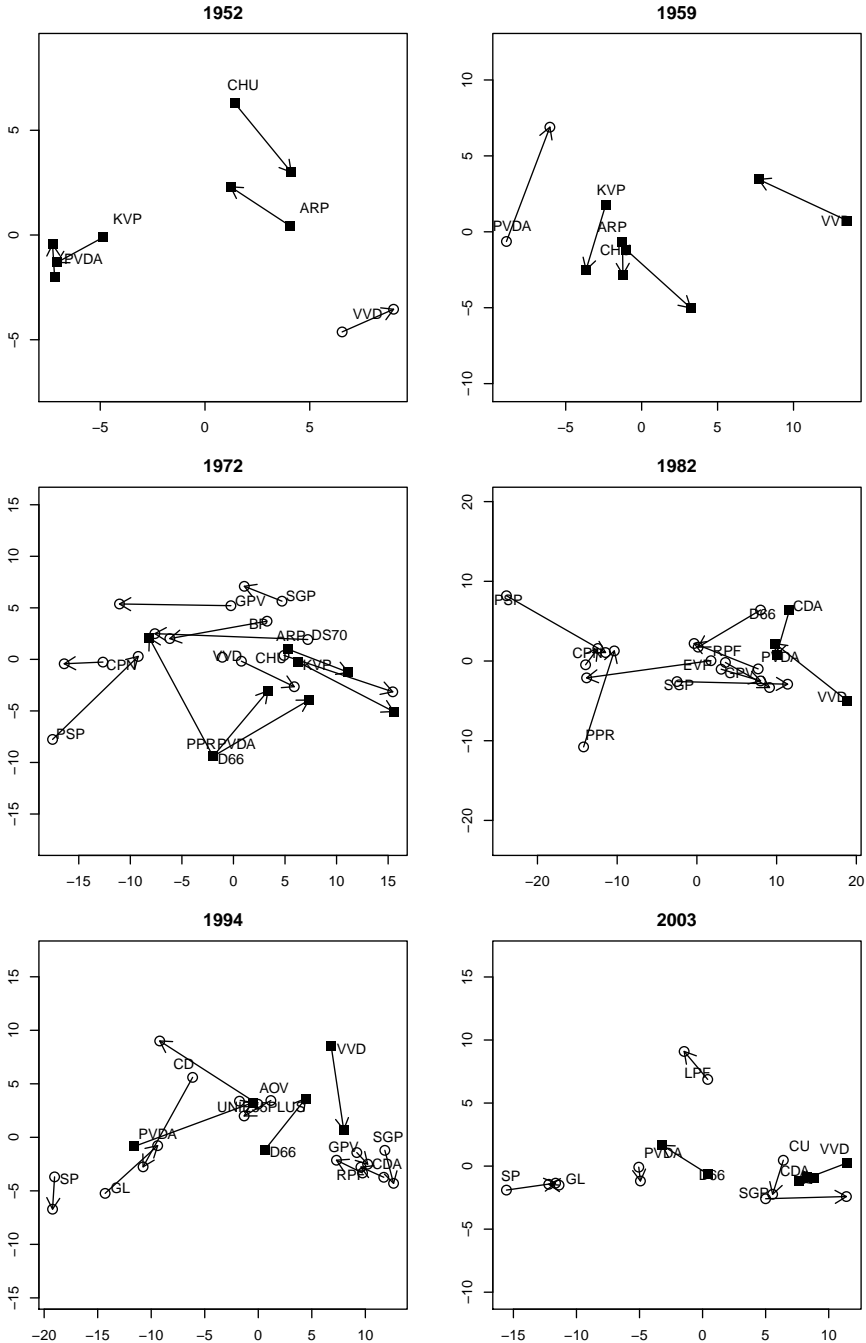
⁶Except for the Liberals/Liberal Alliance/Liberal Democrats, because these groups are small and until quite recently did not have a shadow team.

Figure 6.5: Party position changes between manifesto and parliament, United Kingdom



Note: Government parties are marked by black squares, opposition parties by circles.

Figure 6.6: Party position changes between manifesto and parliament, the Netherlands



Note: Government parties are marked by black squares, opposition parties by circles.

moved in the direction of the other opposition parties. The parliamentary competition was organized in two clusters: most of the smaller (opposition) parties versus the larger parties.

The combined spaces of 1982, 1994 and 2003 showed evidence of governing parties' convergence. In 1982, governing parties CDA and VVD moved even closer to each other than they already were. At the same time, the opposition rearranged itself into three groups: left-wing opposition (PSP, CPN, EVP and PPR), centre-left opposition (PvdA and D66) and religious opposition (SGP, RPF and GPV). Because the governing parties were already rather close to each other, these parties did not change their position very strongly, whereas some of the opposition parties did (e.g. EVP, SGP and PSP). This shows that coalition dynamics do not necessarily lead to larger position changes for the governing parties.

The 1994-1998 parliament did show large position changes for the governing parties PvdA, D66 and VVD, which moved towards one another. To the right of the government, there was some minor movement of the religious parties (SGP, RPF, GPV and CDA). The left-wing opposition did also slightly change its position, but not too much. The three other parties (AOV, UNIE 55+ and CD) showed larger position changes. In 2003 there seems to have been particularly little change between the manifesto and parliamentary space: the arrows connecting manifesto and parliamentary positions of parties are rather short. The governing parties CDA and VVD did move closer to one another. The third governing party, D66, however, moved away from its coalition partners, compared to its manifesto position. This government did eventually end when D66 withdrew its support.

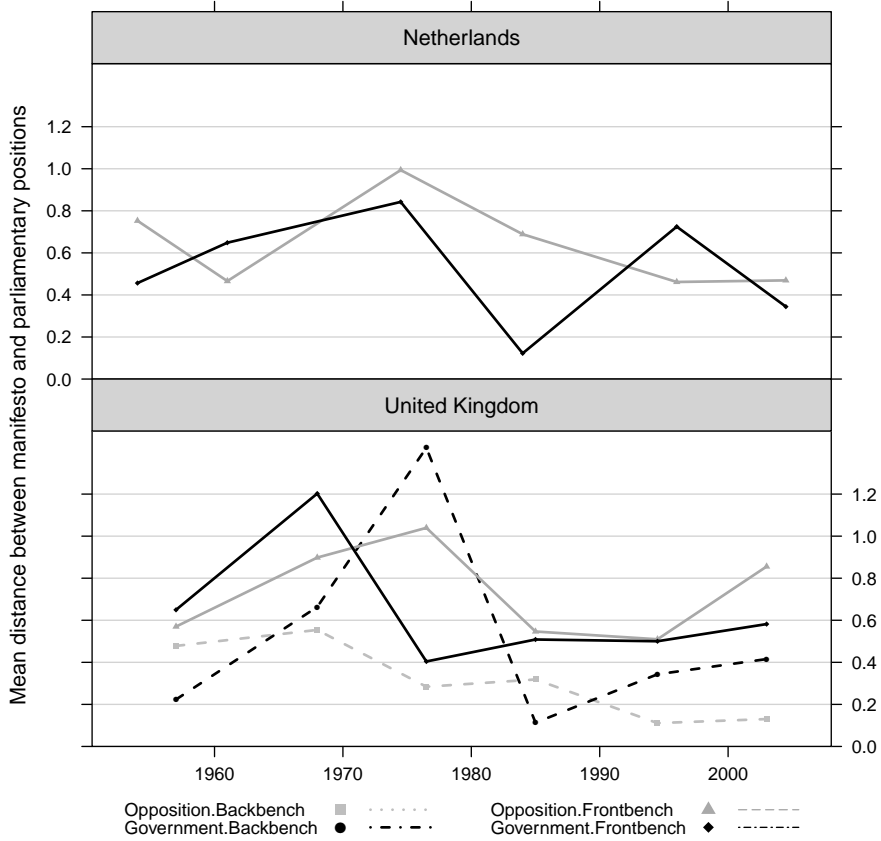
With the exception of 1972, there is thus some proof for the influence of coalition dynamics on parties' parliamentary positions. Generally, the positions of coalition parties converge in the Netherlands. This does not imply that the relative position of governing parties changes less than that of opposition parties. Exactly because this comparison is between the relative positions in the manifesto and the relative positions in parliament, looking at patterns of convergence is more appropriate than simply measuring distances of government and opposition parties.

The differences between government and opposition parties in terms of the stability of their relative policy positions can be expressed in terms of the mean distance between the manifesto and parliamentary positions of parties on the separate issue dimensions⁷. For the Netherlands I distinguish between opposition and governing parties, while in Britain an additional distinction between front bench and back bench has been made, which yields four groups in total.

In the United Kingdom, the difference between front bench and back bench in terms of the difference between manifesto and parliamentary positions, is larger than the difference between government and opposition (see figure 6.7). The

⁷The distance for each party was calculated using a mean of the distance on each issue, weighted by the saliency of each issue for a party. In this way, distances on more important issues contribute more to the total statistic.

Figure 6.7: Distances between manifesto and parliamentary positions



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

distances between the party manifesto and the opposition back bench is relatively low in each of the election-parliaments. In fact, it declines over time from just over 0.5 in the 1950s and 1960s to just over 0.1 in the 1990s and 2000s. Taking into account that the positions on issue dimensions are standardized and therefore generally lie between -2 and +2, a change of 0.1 means that the relative position of a party (group) is as good as stable. Government back-benchers do also take a (relative) position in parliament that is generally close to their party's manifesto position. The one clear exception is 1974 when the (governing) Labour back-benchers were further away from their manifesto (at least in relative terms) than any of the other groups, which is also very clear from the long arrow in figure 6.5. Apart from this exception, the mean distances are consistently lower for back-benchers than for front-benchers.

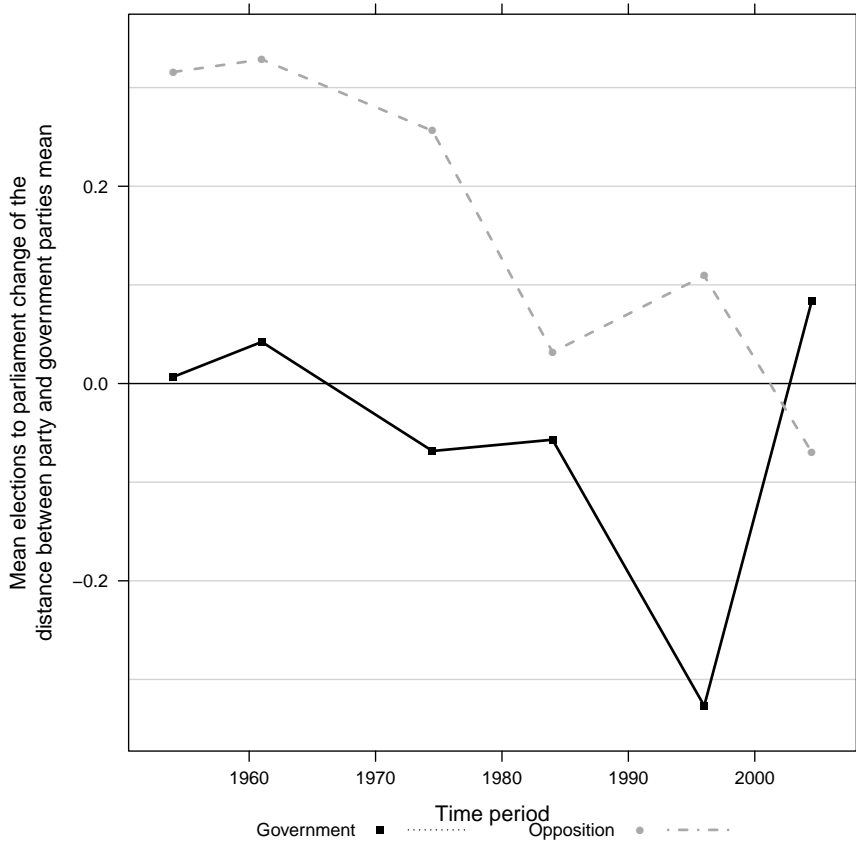
The difference between the United Kingdom government and opposition front benches are generally rather small. In the 1950s and 1960s the distance is somewhat smaller for the opposition front benches. In these cases, the government moves to a considerably more moderate position than its manifesto, which resulted in a large distance (see figure 6.5). In all other years, the distance was somewhat smaller for the government front bench, especially in 1974.

The explanation of the relatively large distances of the front benches is different for the opposition and for the government. For the government, it is the result of the government taking a more moderate position in parliament than in its manifesto. I outlined in chapter 4 that although this is partly a result of the measurement procedure, I am confident that it does reflect actual accommodating behaviour on the part of the government (see also appendix A.3.3). The Liberals also show a tendency to move towards the centre of the political spectrum. The main opposition party front bench, on the other hand, is always positioned on the outskirts of the space of competition. Thus its movement is not explained by accommodation but rather by confrontation.

In the Netherlands the governing parties' distances between their electoral and parliamentary positions are smaller than those of the opposition parties in four out of six election-parliaments. As I argued above, part of the explanation is that we are comparing relative positions of parties. One cannot easily distinguish between 'movement' of parties that is the result of a party itself changing its position and 'movement' that is the result of other parties changing their position. Additionally, there are large position changes for some of the (smaller) opposition parties in some cases (see figure 6.6, e.g. EVP, PPR and PSP in 1982, AOV and CD in 1994). These changes can often be attributed to the fact that the manifesto was short and focused on a limited set of issues. Longer manifestos generally provide better predictions in terms of saliency and positions than shorter manifestos.

One way of studying the effect of coalition government in the Dutch case is by looking at the distance between a party's position and the (weighted) position of the governing parties. If the argument is that coalition politics leads governing parties to abandon their manifestos in favour of a coalition comprom-

Figure 6.8: Parties' movement towards the mean government parties' position, the Netherlands



Note: the distance change between a party and the mean government position on an issue is given by:

$$distancechange = |pp_{parliament} - mgp_{parliament}| - |pp_{manifesto} - mgp_{manifesto}| \quad (6.1)$$

where pp is the position of a party and mgp is the (weighted) mean position of the government parties. . The figure only includes the selected cases for this study, plotted at the midpoint of the parliamentary period.

ise, these parties should be closer to one another in parliament than during the electoral competition. Figure 6.8 shows that this is indeed the case. Negative values in this graph mean that the governing parties were, on average, closer to the (weighted) mean of the government parties in parliament than they were to the (weighted) mean of the governing parties in the manifestos. To put it differently: the governing parties were closer to each other in parliament than in the manifesto (except for the second and the last case). This shows that a government effect does exist. The effect is the most pronounced in 1994-1998, when governing parties are clearly closer in parliament than in their manifestos.

By the same logic, one could expect that opposition parties would distance themselves from the governing parties. Figure 6.8 illustrates this. Positive values mean that the opposition parties, on average, are further away from the mean position of governing parties in parliament than in their manifestos. This shows that the opposition parties in the 1950s and 1960s clearly moved away from the governing parties' mean position in parliament. However, in the 2003-2006 parliament the opposition parties actually moved towards the governing parties' mean position⁸. The dynamics are even opposite to what one would expect: the governing parties move away from each other, while the opposition parties move towards the governing parties mean position. From figure 6.6 one can observe that this is primarily caused by the governing party D66 moving to the left, away from its governing partners. At the same time, the mean position of the governing parties shifts somewhat to the left, slightly bridging the gap with the opposition parties. Of course, the governing parties are much closer to their mean position than the opposition parties are.

Government-opposition polarization in the Dutch parliament is stronger in the 1950s and 1960s than in the 2000s. It must be said that in the 1950s and 1960s the analysis includes only one opposition party, making the picture more clear-cut than in later years. In later years, for example, the 1982-1986 and 2003-2006 parliament the governing parties were already rather close to one another: there is little room for further convergence. However, the graph for the 2003-2006 case does show a problematic pattern from the point of democratic representation. If opposition and coalition converge in parliament towards the governing parties' mean position, this will fuel the complaint that parties are too much alike. Even if the convergence is the result of the coalition being in a more moderate position, as it seems to be in 2003-2006, the development can be a reason for caution from the party mandate perspective. After all, it does limit the congruence between the electoral and parliamentary spaces of competition.

The analysis of relative party position change shows patterns of change that are most likely the result of government-opposition dynamics. In the United

⁸One can observe from figure 6.6 that in 1994-1998 the move away from the government position is caused by the smaller parties, while the larger opposition parties (especially CDA) are actually located closer to the government position in parliament than in the electoral space. If one weights the distance by the parties' seat share, the opposition actually moves almost as far towards the mean government position as the government itself.

Kingdom, the government generally takes a somewhat more moderate position, whereas the opposition front bench moves towards an extreme position. The largest differences are found between the front benches and the back-benchers. The relative positions of back-benchers are generally closer to the party's relative manifesto position than those on the front bench. On the whole, there is no difference in the positional congruence of government and opposition parties.

A further analysis of the Dutch spaces shows evidence of a government-opposition effect. This cannot be directly translated into a larger positional difference for governing parties than for opposition parties, because of the relative nature of the measured positions. In some cases, such as the 1982-1986 government, the governing parties were already close to one another and occupied one side of the political spectrum. The governing parties remained on that side of the spectrum, while opposition parties changed their positions away from the government. In other cases, such as the 1994-1998 cabinet, there were large changes for governing parties, but also some changes for the opposition parties. In general, governing parties move closer to one another and opposition parties move away from the average government position. The congruence in terms of policy positions of the governing parties does not differ from the congruence of the opposition parties. The effect of coalition formation is visible in the direction they change in: towards or away from the government.

These findings imply that the hypotheses that government participation results in higher (United Kingdom) or lower (Netherlands) levels of issue position congruence have to be rejected. The influence of being in government is visible at the level of the party system, but not at the level of the relative positions of individual parties.

6.3 Conclusion

The effect of being in government on a party's electoral-parliamentary congruence is most clear for party issue saliency. In the United Kingdom, governing parties show higher levels of issue saliency congruence when correcting for the mean issue saliency than opposition parties. In the Netherlands, the opposition parties are slightly more congruent by this measure, although the differences are not statistically significant in each case.

Governing parties are not more or less congruent in terms of their relative issue positions than opposition parties. However, government formation does play a role in the parliamentary spaces of party competition. I find that there is a general tendency of governing party convergence in the Netherlands, while opposition parties distance themselves from the governing parties except for the latest two decades. The government effect is thus visible at the level of the party system, but not at the level of the individual parties. In the United Kingdom, the difference between front-benchers and back-benchers is more pronounced than the difference between government and opposition. The front benches show the

largest positional differences between elections and parliament: governments move towards the centre, the official opposition to the extreme and the Liberals to the centre. On the whole, there is no discernible difference between government and opposition.

The findings here are somewhat different from those of researchers in the pledge and saliency traditions. Royed (1996) finds that governing parties are much better able to implement their manifesto pledges than opposition parties. In the Netherlands, the difference is smaller but still quite substantial (Thomson, 1999, 2001). Of course, the difference between my findings and these findings is primarily the result of a different conceptualization of the party mandate. Whereas Royed and Thomson measure the enactment of manifesto pledge, the current study examines the congruence of issue positions between elections and parliament. The saliency approach taken by Klingemann et al. (1994) is closer to my approach, both in terms of the research design as well as the result. They find that in Britain, public spending relates just as strongly to issue saliency of opposition parties as it relates to the saliency of governing parties. They argue that there is no 'mandate' effect in Britain, meaning that whether a party is in government does not enhance the predictive power of their manifesto for government spending. The results of this study show that there is a *parliamentary* mandate effect in Britain, meaning that the manifesto position of a party predicts its parliamentary position rather well. This effect is equally strong for opposition and governing parties. When looking at issue saliency, I find that governing parties are better able to pursue their manifesto priorities than opposition parties. Klingemann et al. (1994) find that the Dutch case fits none of their models. They find a 'reverse' effect of ideology: when the left-wing PvdA shares government with the Christian-Democrats, policy moves to the right, and when the right-wing VVD shares government responsibility, policy moves to the left. The findings here show that the Dutch opposition is relatively strong in terms of agenda setting powers, especially if one compares the Dutch and British cases. Coalition formation does have an effect on the parliamentary space of party competition, but this affects the congruence of both the government's as well as the oppositions' positions. The general pattern found here is that opposition and governing parties move away from each other in the Dutch parliament.