The Democratic Deficit Closer to Home
The Democratic Deficit Closer to Home

Agenda-building relations between parliament and the press, and the impact of European integration, in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

der verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, op gezag van de rector magnificus prof.dr. L.M. Bouter, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie van de faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen op donderdag 29 november 2007 om 15.45 uur in de aula van de universiteit, De Boelelaan 1105

door

Lonneke Lily Johanna van Noije

geboren te Waalwijk
Table of contents

Chapter One Introduction 1
  1.1 Agenda building: the political power of attention 3
    1.1.1 Wide-ranging answers to a simplified question 4
    1.1.2 Why should we care? 7
  1.2 The central concepts 8
  1.3 Design of the study 14
  1.4 Outline of the book 18

Chapter Two Agenda building 23
  2.1 Agenda building: the concept & its origin 23
  2.2 The case for top-down agenda building 25
  2.3 The case for bottom-up agenda building 28
  2.4 The balance of power 31
  2.5 Agenda building during elections 34

Chapter Three Mediatisation 41
  3.1 Technological revolution 41
  3.2 Deregulation of the news environment 42
  3.3 The tuned in – turned off voter 43
  3.4 Their joint effect: interpretative journalism 44
  3.5 European integration 46
    3.5.1 Multilevel governance 47
    3.5.2 Authority & proximity as news values 50
    3.5.3 Policy uncertainty 51
      3.5.3.1 EU policy uncertainty & agenda building 52
      3.5.3.2 EU policy uncertainty & national parliaments 55
  3.5.4 The moderating role of Europe in agenda building 57
  3.5.5 Agenda convergence within the European Union 59

Chapter Four Methodology 63
  4.1 Data collection 63
    4.1.1 Countries 63
    4.1.2 Issues 69
    4.1.3 Political agenda 72
    4.1.4 Media agenda 74
    4.1.5 Research period 75
4.2 Operationalisation

4.2.1 Procedure

4.2.1.1 Step 1: retrieving the documents
4.2.1.2 Step 2: validating the selection of documents
4.2.1.3 Step 3: recording attention & validation
4.2.1.4 Step 4: calculating the scores for attention

4.3 Methods for data analysis

4.3.1 Modelling strategy: diagnostics

4.3.1.1 Do the variables have normal distributions?
4.3.1.2 Are the time series stationary?
4.3.1.3 What is the time span of influence?

4.3.1.3.1 Is there residual serial autocorrelation?
4.3.1.3.2 Is there residual heteroscedasticity?
4.3.1.4 Is there long-term causality?

4.3.2 Modelling strategy: testing the hypotheses

4.3.2.1 Structural equation modelling
4.3.2.2 Overall agenda building
4.3.2.3 Distinguishing between routine & election times
4.3.2.4 Allowing time to make a difference
4.3.2.5 Allowing the EU to make a difference
4.3.2.6 Checking for spuriousness due to real-world cues

Chapter Five Country descriptions

5.1 United Kingdom

5.1.1 The disruptive force of Europe
5.1.2 Brussels & British news reporting
5.1.3 Brussels & British parliamentary scrutiny

5.2 The Netherlands

5.2.1 Consensus all the way to Brussels
5.2.2 Brussels & Dutch news reporting
5.2.3 Brussels & Dutch parliamentary scrutiny

5.3 France

5.3.1 Europe’s best friend & worst enemy
5.3.2 Brussels & French news reporting
5.3.3 Brussels & French parliamentary scrutiny

Chapter Six Chronology

6.1 Agriculture

6.1.1 British agriculture
6.1.2 Dutch agriculture
6.1.3 French agriculture
6.1.4 Agriculture: concluding remarks
8.2 The moderating role of European visibility
  8.2.1 Methodology
    8.2.1.1 Data and operationalisation
    8.2.1.2 Ranking issues according to European visibility
    8.2.1.3 Interaction models with European visibility
  8.2.2 Results
    8.2.2.1 Rank orders according to European visibility
    8.2.2.2 The interaction effect of European visibility
  8.2.3 Concluding remark

Chapter Nine The moderating role of conflict
  9.1 Agenda building as a contingent process
  9.2 Conflict
    9.2.1 Conflict & the political influence of media opinion
      9.2.1.1 Advocates of the indexing hypothesis
      9.2.1.2 Challengers of the indexing hypothesis
    9.2.2 Conflict & agenda building
    9.2.3 European conflict & agenda building
  9.3 Methodology
    9.3.1 Political conflict defined & operationalised
    9.3.2 A bottom-up approach to automated content analysis of conflict
    9.3.3 A research design for the validation of a tool
      9.3.3.1 Towards a tool with semantic validity
      9.3.3.2 Towards a tool with predictive validity
        9.3.3.2.1 Choosing maximum entropy over naive Bayes
      9.3.3.3 Validating the best tool with human coding, but without success!
    9.3.4 Concluding remark

Chapter Ten Conclusion & discussion
  10.1 A recapitulation
    10.1.1 Part One
    10.1.2 Part Two
    10.1.3 Conclusion
    10.1.4 A closer look at country differences
  10.2 Limitations of the study
  10.3 Lessons for theory: crossing national and academic boundaries
    10.3.1 Agenda building amidst political communication
    10.3.2 A European public sphere due to news sources?
    10.3.3 The media in multilevel governance

chapter nine
the moderating role of conflict
9.1 agenda building as a contingent process
9.2 conflict
  9.2.1 conflict & the political influence of media opinion
    9.2.1.1 advocates of the indexing hypothesis
    9.2.1.2 challengers of the indexing hypothesis
  9.2.2 conflict & agenda building
  9.2.3 european conflict & agenda building
9.3 methodology
  9.3.1 political conflict defined & operationalised
  9.3.2 a bottom-up approach to automated content analysis of conflict
  9.3.3 a research design for the validation of a tool
    9.3.3.1 towards a tool with semantic validity
    9.3.3.2 towards a tool with predictive validity
      9.3.3.2.1 choosing maximum entropy over naive bayes
    9.3.3.3 validating the best tool with human coding, but without success!
  9.3.4 concluding remark

chapter ten conclusion & discussion
10.1 a recapitulation
  10.1.1 part one
  10.1.2 part two
  10.1.3 conclusion
  10.1.4 a closer look at country differences
10.2 limitations of the study
10.3 lessons for theory: crossing national and academic boundaries
  10.3.1 agenda building amidst political communication
  10.3.2 a european public sphere due to news sources?
  10.3.3 the media in multilevel governance
10.4 Lessons for parliament 268
10.5 Lessons for journalism 270
10.6 Concluding remark 273

References 275

Appendices 293

Samenvatting 313

Dankwoord 327
List of tables

Table 4.1: Newspapers with editorial line, circulation and source per country 75
Table 4.2: Size of the final corpus for content analysis per country 82
Table 4.3: Number of keywords per issue per country 84
Table 4.4: Overview of the diagnostic tests and hypothesis testing with structural equation modelling 88
Table 4.5: Stationarity of weekly and monthly time series (Augmented Dickey-Fuller test) 94
Table 4.6: Optimal number of lags in months (lags 1 to 11) according to SBIC 99
Table 4.7: Residual serial autocorrelation in weekly and monthly VAR models (Breusch-Godfrey test) 101
Table 4.8: Residual heteroscedasticity in weekly and monthly VAR models (Engle’s ARCH test) 102
Table 4.9: Long-term influence between monthly agendas (Granger causality test) 106
Table 4.10: Division of the time series for longitudinal comparison 111
Table 6.1: Attention for issues in parliament and in the media (%) 142
Table 7.1: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from overall SEM models per country 173
Table 7.2: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from election and non-election SEM models per country 176
Table 7.3: Significance of the differences between the (non-) election models per country 177
Table 7.4: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from SEM models per period per country 178
Table 7.5: Significance of the differences between the time models per country 179
Table 7.6: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from SEM models per issue per country 180
Table 7.7: The impact of real-world cues on the agenda-building process of immigration (SEM models) 183
Table 7.8: Significance of the differences between the issue models per country 185
Table 7.9: The dominant agenda according to the SEM models and the Granger causality tests 186
Table 7.10: Agenda convergence among the British, Dutch and French agendas (Pearson’s correlation) 188
Table 8.1: Number of keywords per category of political actors per country 201
Table 8.2: Rank orders of issues according to the proportional visibility of EU actors, member states and national actors in the news per country 210
Table 8.3: Interaction effect of the media agenda and European visibility in
the news on the parliamentary agenda per country (regression
analysis)

Table 9.1: Molotch and Lester’s event classificatory scheme

Table 9.2: Performance of naive Bayes and maximum entropy models with
feature matrices

Table A.1: Examples of British keywords and disambiguation rules for each
issue

Table A.2: Examples of Dutch keywords and disambiguation rules for each issue

Table A.3: Examples of French keywords and disambiguation rules for each
issue

Table A.4: Examples of British keywords and disambiguation rules for each
group of actors

Table A.5: Examples of Dutch keywords and disambiguation rules for each group
of actors

Table A.6: Examples of French keywords and disambiguation rules for each
group of actors

Table B.1: Vector autoregression analysis with weekly data of the British
parliamentary and media agendas

Table B.2: Vector autoregression analysis with weekly data of the Dutch
parliamentary and media agendas

Table B.3: Vector autoregression analysis with weekly data of the French
parliamentary and media agendas

Table C.1: Top 25 most annotated predicates in British and Dutch news
articles as indicators of conflict
List of figures

Figure 1.1: Conceptual path linking power and agenda building 10
Figure 4.1: Difference (top) and similarities (bottom) between the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France according to a most different systems design 65
Figure 4.2: Probability distributions of the British political agenda: an example 92
Figure 4.3: Fictitious response times of media to parliament (in days and hours) 95
Figure 6.1: Attention for agriculture on the British parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 143
Figure 6.2: Attention for agriculture on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 145
Figure 6.3: Attention for agriculture on the French parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 148
Figure 6.4: Attention for the environment on the British parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 150
Figure 6.5: Attention for the environment on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 152
Figure 6.6: Attention for the environment on the French parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 154
Figure 6.7: Attention for drugs on the British parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 157
Figure 6.8: Attention for drugs on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 159
Figure 6.9: Attention for drugs on the French parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 161
Figure 6.10: Attention for immigration on the British parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 163
Figure 6.11: Attention for immigration on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 166
Figure 6.12: Attention for immigration on the French parliamentary and media agendas (hits) 168
Figure 7.1: British agenda building, whole period, all issues 173
Figure 7.2: Dutch agenda building, whole period, all issues 174
Figure 7.3: French agenda building, whole period, all issues 175
Figure 8.1: Visibility of national, EU and member-state actors in the news per country over time (%) 207
Figure 8.2: Influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda for different levels of European visibility in the United Kingdom (in news about all issues) 214
Figure 8.3: Influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda for different levels of European visibility in the Netherlands (in news about all issues) 215

Figure 8.4: Influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda for different levels of European visibility in France (in news about all issues) 217

Figure 9.1: The errors of commission and omission, applied to the classification of conflict 236
Chapter One  Introduction

On October 12, 2005, a parliamentary inquiry committee, led by VVD MP Arno Visser, is installed to investigate the functioning of the Dutch TBS system. In the TBS system, violent offenders with a mental illness are detained and treated ‘during Her Majesty’s pleasure’. In a radio interview two years later, Visser looks back on his conclusions regarding the performance of his fellow MPs during the TBS debate, and remarks (translated by author):

That is that media logic; and so everyone is looking at everyone else, and everyone repeats how terribly serious the situation is, but everyone forgets to look at reality every now and again (Visser in Argos, 2007).

As will be clarified shortly hereafter, this complaint by Visser expresses the topicality and significance of the overarching question of the study that lies before you: who is leading whom in the never-ending dance of politicians and journalists?

On June 7, 2005, a TBS delinquent escapes during probationary leave. He commits a murder shortly afterwards. Politicians and the media are up in arms, since it is the second time that year that a TBS detainee escapes and commits a serious offence. For the second time, a motion of no-confidence is put forward against the Minister of Justice Piet Hein Donner, but is again rejected in parliament. Still, parliament decides to launch a public inquiry, as the current system appears unable to adequately secure society. In May 2006, the committee Visser unexpectedly concludes that there is nothing structurally wrong with the TBS system. MPs exaggerate its security risk to society, largely due to a distorted image of reality presented in the media.1 Visser notes that news about TBS-related incidents increases, whereas the number of incidents decreases. News coverage results in an unrealistic desire for safety among the public, which stirs up a counterproductive strive for safety among politicians (Tweede Kamer, 2006). In fact, it occurs to Visser that the committee has been dealing with the wrong issue all along and should really have investigated youth recidivists, responsible for much higher and growing crime rates: the TBS convicts of tomorrow (Argos, 2007).

The committee’s conclusions that politicians should not react too hastily to incidents in the news, but base their course of action on more thorough analyses, are praised and applauded in parliament (Argos, 2007). Until

---

1 The inquiry committee partly founds its conclusions on two reports by the Dutch Council for Social Development (RMO), an advisory board for government and parliament, i.e. Media logic [Media logica] (2003), and Escaping media logic [Ontsnappen aan medialogica] (2006).
March 4 2007, when a woman is killed by another TBS convict. The media jump on the story. Four days later, Visser’s former VVD fellow party member Fred Teeven calls for drastic and immediate measures to curtail the freedom of movement of TBS convicts in an emergency debate, against the opinion of professionals that such indiscriminate restrictions turn TBS institutions into pressure cookers and enhance flight risk. Teeven gives the following motivation: “Madam Speaker, it is good of you to recollect that we also have this debate as a signal to society that we as Chamber are deadly serious”. Visser responds that the entire political and media circus has started all over again, as if nobody had ever read the committee report (Argos, 2007).

This political uproar vividly demonstrates the potential consequences for politics and society of the sheer capability of placing an issue on, or keeping it away from public display. Members of parliament have the choice to adjust their policy priorities to what they perceive to be important in the media or to what they perceive to be important in society. These two options do not necessarily lead to the same political outcome, as is illustrated by the increasing number of reported TBS-related incidents in the news and the decreasing number of true incidents. The power of the news media to place an issue on the political agenda, as well as the power of political actors to achieve media resonance for issues is known as agenda-building power.

In contrast to the majority of political communication studies, the focus in agenda building is not on the tone of the news, or on news frames, but on the issues in the news: the news agenda. In contrast to agenda-setting research, which traces the effects of the news agenda on the public agenda and from which agenda-building research originates, agenda-building research focuses on the mutual flows of influence between the media agenda and the political agenda.

In the present research, we are particularly interested in media’s potential to compete with the elected watchdog of democracy in Western European societies. Hence, the reciprocal agenda-building influences between the media and parliament are at the centre of attention throughout this study. It may not be difficult to pinpoint either MPs or journalists as the instigators of an isolated political discussion, and one is bound to find flows of influence in both directions if a sufficient number of isolated events is studied. The challenge is in determining the structural flows of influence that constitute the long-term balance of power between parliament and the media, irrespective of incidental agenda-building successes. Such fundamental power relations are not free of context, neither in historical, cultural, nor in institutional respect. It is thus an ambitious objective, one that would advance the current practice of agenda-building research. This study is designed to take up this challenge with an extensive data set comprising cross-national comparative, cross-sectional and longitudinal data, as well as a detailed instrument for automated content analysis, and a comprehensive statistical framework of time-series analysis.
1.1 Agenda building: the political power of attention

As early as 1835, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville acknowledged that the mass media play a vital role in forging the links between politicians and citizens in democratic societies (De Tocqueville, 1835, 1840/1951). Politicians, often ignorant of public preferences (Dekker & Ester, 1989), scrutinise the media to obtain a proxy of the public mood (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). Conversely, citizens would hardly be aware of political policies and political performance, if it were not for the media (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1997; Graber, 1988), with the exception of some highly obtrusive issues such as inflation and personal income, which citizens experience at first hand. Press freedom ensures that citizens have access to the media to express their agenda, while politicians will use the media to gather support for their agenda.

The media, however, do not act as a neutral transmitter but exert an autonomous influence, even regarding the selection and coverage of seemingly objective social and economic facts (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Funkhouser, 1973; Hetherington, 1996; Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995). The ineluctable selectivity of news production is addressed by Kitzinger and Reilly (1997), who trace the rise and fall in media attention to certain risks such as the BSE crisis: “We demonstrate how source competition, journalists’ training, ‘newsworthiness’, news momentum and the organization of news beats and media outlets encourage certain risks to be highlighted at particular times, but encourage other risk debates to be entirely overlooked” (1997, p. 319). Irrespective of the real power that the role as gatekeeper between politics and civil society has given the media, actors with political ambitions are unquestionably convinced of the media’s ability to shape public opinion. Consequently, political actors spend increasing amounts of resources on mass communication strategies, and, as a self-fulfilling prophecy, the media have effectively adopted a role of political importance (Schudson, 2002).

Politicians and the media are involved in a daily struggle, the one for a favourable public opinion and the other for a wide audience. Agenda building refers to the basic process underlying this power struggle: irrespective of who decides how issues are discussed, the first conquest is gained by deciding which issues are discussed. For politicians, being in control of which issues are released in the public arena via the media agenda and which are not, implies being in control of the criteria by which the public judges their performance. Returning to the TBS affair for a moment, the VVD fraction in parliament considered it pivotal for its image as a party that offers effective protection to decent citizens, to promote the risks of the TBS system and the party’s proposals for intervention. For the media, being in control of the issues that make it onto the political agenda is a direct expression of their legitimacy as political watchdogs on behalf of the public (Wolfsfeld, 1997), and of their future profitability as news organisations.
The democratic deficit closer to home

Although parliament possesses the legal powers to decide on political priorities and actions, it remains to be seen whether it takes full advantage of the opportunities that these legitimate powers offer. Do parties and MPs rather feel constraint by the interests and pressures of the media, who are considered to be the public’s advocates? If one is interested in the true performance of parliament compared with that of the media, agenda building is a particularly suitable perspective to adopt. Quoting Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester (1975):

... a crucial dimension of power is the ability to create public events. And since access to media is an essential ingredient in creating and sustaining the realities of publics, a study of such access is simultaneously a study of power relationships (1975, p. 237).

Hence, in order to gain or sustain power, politicians will want to influence the perception of citizens through the mass media. Walker (1977) approaches the ‘access question’ from a political point of view when he says:

Those who manage to shape the legislative agenda, in other words, are able to magnify their influence many times over by determining the focus of attention and energy in the entire political system. By dictating the issues under debate, they indirectly determine the kind of political alliances likely to be formed and at the same time prevent others from gaining a hearing for logically incompatible or competitive issues (1977, p. 445).

Journalists, whether driven by ideological engagement, personal ambition or the practical need to deliver an audience to their news organisations, will want to get a foot in the door among the politically powerful. In sum, MPs and journalists both have an interest in placing an issue at the centre of the public’s concern, as well as the means thereto; but who takes the lead? The overarching research question of this study is:

What is the balance of power between the national parliamentary agenda and the national media agenda?

The ensuing section will briefly discuss why this question is still in need of an answer, followed by what the present study intends to add to the existing body of knowledge in agenda-building research.

1.1.1 Wide-ranging answers to a simplified question
Although agenda building represents the most basic of possible interactions between the media and politics, and is a conceptually straightforward process, scholars within this line of research have to date not been able to agree on the most likely balance of power. In a comprehensive overview of the
agenda-building literature, Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) aptly diagnosed the field to consist of a loose collection of individual studies, which have come up with wide-ranging answers to an often over-simplified agenda-building question. A possible reason is that the empirical tradition of agenda-building research is of fairly recent date compared with other fields in political communication, and consequently theoretically not as mature. Also, within this empirical strand a wide array of methodologies is applied, both qualitative and quantitative designs, experimental, cross-sectional as well as longitudinal designs, to name but a few. Different assumptions about which agenda is supposed to be dominant underlie many different methodological designs, with equally wide-ranging answers to the question of the balance of power between the media and a diversity of political actors (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

Although especially the more recent empirical scholars tend to agree with Walgrave and Van Aelst that agenda building should be treated as a contingent process, only few and modest attempts have been made to put this contingency to the test. In practice, the agenda-building process has too often been approached as a context-free, and thus over-simplified process. Some studies have tested the contingency of the agenda-building dynamics upon issue types, based on a global classification of features such as the level of newness or obtrusiveness of the issues (e.g., Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2003; Trumbo, 1995; Wanta & Foote, 1994). Unfortunately, not mistaking the quality of these studies, this has hardly resulted in an accumulation of theoretical knowledge. Agenda-building literature is still inconclusive.

The current objective is to find a more conclusive answer to a contingent agenda-building question by presenting a more integral research approach, both theoretically and methodologically. The task is therefore to reconstruct the flows of influence between the parliamentary and the media agendas not as a one-for-all process, but under different, theoretically relevant, circumstances. The remainder of this section briefly touches upon the contingencies that will be addressed in this study’s assessment of the balance of agenda-building power.

Time. An aspect of the media-politics relationship that has abundantly been addressed by political communication scholars, but which has been ignored by agenda-building scholars, is the influence of time. Communication literature repeatedly shows that the ethos of journalism has changed in the transformed technological and economic environments of contemporary democracies, resulting in a more assertive approach of its political subjects. Political actors have adjusted their publicity strategies accordingly (e.g., Altheide & Snow, 1979; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Keppinger, 2002; Tunstall, 2002). Additionally, the links between politics and civil society have undergone equally major changes. Politicians are faced with an electorate that is both less loyal and less easy to reach.
The democratic deficit closer to home

(e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002). Hence, it would be far from realistic to assume that politicians’ control over the media agenda would remain unaffected. This study aims at filling this theoretical and methodological void in agenda-building research by assessing the mutual flows of influence for different periods in recent history.

**Elections.** Political communication research has historically shown a particular interest in campaign and news effects on voting behaviour. In line with this tradition several studies have investigated agenda building in the heat of the election battle. The advantages of choosing elections as the setting of an agenda-building study are clear: a well-defined and limited time frame, with an abundance of party activities and an abundance of political news. These campaign studies have produced much more consistent evidence in favour of political dominance than the overall body of agenda-building literature has. However, the fundamental difference between the dynamics of elections and routine political times has been insufficiently acknowledged in these contributions. There has hardly been an exchange of ideas between these two strands of research. Walgrave and Aelst (2006) have been the first to explicitly call for an empirical comparison of agenda building inside and outside elections. With this study a first attempt is made to comply with their request.

**European integration.** Closely related to the lack of attention for the time-dimension in agenda-building research, is the lack of attention for the true political context. The political context will vary across countries, and again through time. Admittedly, most studies have focussed on the United States and scholars have merely had to deal with a known and stable institutional environment. But as soon as the focus of research shifts to another less studied country, the national stature of the political agenda vis-à-vis the media agenda should be explicitly reflected in the theoretical framework, or at least used as the backdrop against which the results are interpreted.

This is particularly relevant in the case of member states of the European Union. A transfer of decision-making authority from national institutions to the EU might seep through to a weakening influence of the national political agenda on the national media agenda. Supported by insights from the multilevel governance tradition within political science (e.g., Anderson, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2003; Jachtenfuchs, 2001; Kohler-Koch, 2003; Marks, Nielsen, Ray & Salk, 1996), our study represents the first initiative within the agenda-building tradition to assess the contingency of national media-politics dynamics on the true institutional setting in which they evolve. This is done not only by breaching the single-country approach of the existing designs, but also by introducing the EU as a moderator of agenda building in the research model (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

**Conflicts.** Theoretical assumptions about the political power of the media within the broader field of political communication are again used as an inspiration to improve our understanding of agenda building. Among
communication scholars it is widely acknowledged that the media stand the biggest chance of influencing policy decisions when political opinions about the appropriate course of action are divided (e.g., Bennett, 1997; Niven, 2005; Robinson, 2001; Zaller, 1992). The more controversial the topic, the more interesting the news story, and the weaker the publicity management of politicians, which means that they are more susceptible to public opinion and media influence. Within agenda-building research, the role of political conflict has hardly been suggested as a factor that might enhance media’s agenda-building power (for exceptions, see Baumgartner, Jones & Leech, 1997; Lang & Lang, 1981; Soroka, 2003), let alone that it has ever been empirically investigated (for an exception within the agenda-setting literature, see Peter, 2003).

In the present study, political conflict is suggested as a factor that might help to explain the mechanisms through which European integration impacts the agenda-building process. It will be tested whether political conflict accounts for part of the potential moderating effect of European integration. The logic behind this suggestion is that the complexity of the networks of political negotiation has exponentially increased within the European Union, and consequently so has the number of relevant actors that must come to an agreement and that might fail to do so. Political conflict should then be more strongly associated with European actors than with national actors.

1.1.2 Why should we care?
Besides the fact that the agenda-building question is of interest because it reflects the struggle for political power, its answer also has consequences for our understanding of the democratic performance of our societies. Citizens attribute power to political figures for them to act on their behalf. Periodically citizens can withdraw this license. If it appears that the political elite, entrusted with the governance of the country, takes its cues from news coverage on a routine rather than occasional basis, should one not consider officially electing the editors in chief? Press freedom is a great good, but it also implies that official mechanisms to hold the media publicly accountable are lacking. If the media indeed possess great powers over the parliamentary agenda, and thus over the allocation of national resources, a different and opaque light is shed over the true democratic functioning of our societies.

As long as journalistic products consistently meet the highest quality standards, and one can be sure that every fact is checked three times over, powerful media are nothing but an enrichment to every society; and let us assume they usually are. However, it is hardly ever questioned whether a news story was created according to the professional standards of journalism, let alone that sanctions are applied if it was not (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Schudson, 2002). As demonstrated by the TBS inquiry, even if journalists get their facts straight, the instant gratification that only certain
eye-catching incidents can offer in terms of sensationalism combined with efficiency, may be so enticing that journalists may lose sight of the true contribution of a news report to the public debate. These news stories may nonetheless create an alleged social problem, which takes over the political debate for days.

If this study shows that the balance of agenda-building power is shifting towards an increasingly powerful media agenda, and that European integration enhances this trend by reshaping the traditional perceptions of authority and newsworthiness of national political news sources, a discussion about the adequate democratic functioning of our European societies is all the more appropriate. It is well known, and often deplored, that the European Union to date suffers from a democratic deficit, primarily because EU citizens cannot directly elect the members of the European Parliament (EP) and because the EP is not authorised to co-decide in all policy domains. The gap between EU citizens and EU decision making, caused by this democratic deficit, is responsible for and widened by an information deficit (Baisnée, 2001; Gerhards, 1993; Meyer, 1999). EU’s increased importance is not picked up and communicated accordingly to the home publics by the national news media. EU politics lacks transparency and is often too complex even for EU correspondents to understand. Moreover, the few pan-European media initiatives that have developed over the past decennia cannot make up for the gap between EU politics and the every-day lives of European citizens (Kevin, 2003; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Semetko, De Vreese & Peter, 2000).

Hence, when national parliaments increasingly rely on the media agenda to select their political priorities, partly as a result of European integration, our national representative democracies show cracks, on top of the EU system failures that have yet to be resolved. The citizens of Europe might be facing a democratic deficit closer to home.

1.2 The central concepts
A few things have already been said in the previous sections about agenda building as a struggle for political power. The first step towards influencing the course of policy is being able to decide which issues are seriously considered as problems in need of a political solution. What does it mean, in more practical terms, to successfully place an issue on the agenda? It means convincing the other, either the media or parliament, of the importance of a specific issue. And although in theory both MPs and journalists are focused on the needs of citizens or the public, in practice they often cannot or do not take the pulse of the public agenda when deciding whether they will adopt an issue on their agendas (e.g., Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). They both often take a short cut straight to the agenda of the other and evaluate issue importance according to the amount of discussion that an issue has triggered, meanwhile assuming that the public follows. Agenda building can be simply
defined as the process of influencing the perception of issue importance, through the level of attention paid to an issue.

**Power and influence.** Academics have long been sinking their teeth into the concept of power and many different dimensions have been stressed (e.g., Scott, 1994). As we do not wish to get bogged down in a philosophical exposition of the concept, we will address the thoughts of some influential authors only insofar as they help clarify our conceptualisation of agenda-building power and the extent to which we can empirically identify it.

The Concise Oxford English dictionary (2004) gives three definitions: 1) the ability to do something or act in a particular way, 2) the capacity to influence the behaviour of others, the emotions, or the course of events, 3) a right or authority given or delegated to a person or body. Definition 2 describes power as it is commonly used in political science (e.g., Kuypers, 1973). It is this definition that suits agenda-building power, as it understands power as a relational concept. Agenda-building power is the capacity to influence someone else by having him place an issue on his agenda or by having him refrain from doing so. The distinction between influence and power is in the word ‘capacity’, a distinction that pluralists such as Dahl, Polsby or Wolfinger omit in their account of power as they restrict power to the observable behaviour behind decision outcomes (Lukes, 1974). He who has power may choose not to put it into practice by exerting influence. He who has influence effectively affects someone’s behaviour, attitude or emotions (Kuypers, 1973). Influence thus involves an effective outcome, whereas power may go unnoticed. Note that an agenda-building outcome can take two forms: issues that do or do not appear on the agenda of B as a result of their (non-) appearance on the agenda of A. This is in agreement with Bachrach and Baratz’ idea of ‘power as exercised as much by suppressing unwelcome issues from the public debate so that no potentially harmful decisions will be made, as by participating in decision outcomes affecting others (1970).

Agenda building essentially deals with influence that may have been brought about by power. Journalists and MPs nowadays find themselves in a mutually dependent position. Both are forced to give and take (see chapters 2 and 3). Hence, a relative approach to power is therefore more interesting than a static approach: what is the balance of power between the actors? In an empirical assessment of the agenda-building process, our means are restricted to measurements of observable outcomes, thus influence. Thus, the balance of power will be assessed via reciprocal agenda-building influence. The question arises what can be concluded about the balance of power from measurements of reciprocal influence (see figure 1.1).
We cannot prove agenda-building power, but we can make a plausible case for it, which is almost watertight. If it would be observed that the media were to systematically copy the agenda of parliament, then parliament has a great influence over the media agenda. A scholar like Lukes (1974) might argue that the media could nevertheless be the truly powerful if it is their free choice to follow the parliamentary agenda. They may even have employed all kinds of manipulative strategies to get parliament to only launch issues in the media’s interest. By assessing the reciprocal flows of influence this can be shown to be at least implausible. Would only the behaviour of one actor be observed, for example parliament’s influence on the media, no statements could be made about the influence or power of the media. But if a one-way flow of influence is observed in a reciprocal assessment, i.e. parliament structurally ignores the issues in the media, it has become implausible that it is really the power of the media that determines the agenda-building outcomes. If this were true, parliament would have paid attention to the media in the instances that the latter do raise issues. One can have power and choose not to exercise it, but one is unlikely to have power if others can choose to ignore it. The distinction between agenda-building power and agenda-building influence is thus acknowledged in this study. Still, we believe that reciprocal agenda-building influence is a robust indicator of power. Hence we use both terms interchangeably in this study for reasons of convention and practicability.

In agenda building, the reasons why one is capable of exerting influence are very diverse. These different reasons are immaterial here as long as the result is the same: either MPs or the media determine the political debate and thereby strengthen their position in the political process. To illustrate, agenda-building influence may come about through coercion (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970), for example when an MP threatens a journalist to deprive him of a future scoop, or when journalist is threatening with bad publicity. Authority is another form of power and applies, for instance, when a
journals. A journalist is naturally inclined to print an MP's statement because of his mandate or expertise. Among the types of power that Bachrach and Baratz distinguish, Lukes (1974) places much weight on power through manipulation. Actor A can exert power over actor B without the latter having any clue, as his very wants and preferences may have been changed in the direction preferred by A. Similarly, an MP may trick a journalist into initiating a discussion while having him think it was his own idea. Compared with these authors, Clegg places more stress on the fact that power needs not be harmful to the interests of its subjects (Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006). This is also true for agenda building. Anticipating public scrutiny, MPs may see no other option than to react to a media issue revealing their negligent performance. Likewise, although they may feel publicly forced, MPs may be happy to adopt a media issue if it is more detrimental to political adversaries than to themselves. Our research question, however, does not ask for the reasons why power was exerted, or influence was allowed.

Whereas we thus assume to know about the balance of power by observing reciprocal agenda-building influence, and belief we can safely leave aside the subtleties in the types of underlying power, there are some aspects of power that cannot be empirically accounted for. A first difficulty concerns Bachrach and Baratz' non-decisions. If the two actors never mention an issue, we cannot trace whether parliament is silent because the media are, or vice versa. This is the statistical problem of multicollinearity. However, we can identify silence as influence if the actors are silent during a limited period of time and one actor systematically falls silent whenever the other actor drops the issue. If there is sufficient variation in attention on the agendas, multicollinearity is not an issue. Second, the possibility cannot be excluded that a journalist writes about an issue, which is then copied in parliament, because a few hours earlier some individual MP picked up the phone and suggested this topic to the press. We would unjustly identify this as media influence. Luckily it can be assumed that this does not occur systematically. The same goes for anticipation: an MP might raise an issue in parliament for reasons of damage control, anticipating tomorrow's headlines. Third, it should be made clear that by identifying the dominant agenda builder, no conclusion is drawn about decision-making power. If the media have gained power over the parliamentary agenda, they have gained political power in terms of the issues that become the objects of policy decisions, but not in terms of the outcomes of the decisions. MPs may say one thing in public, but return to the party program when the decision is made behind closed doors. In this respect, our conclusions about political power will necessarily be modest.

Issue. As clear-cut as this concept may be, it is desired to explicitly formulate its usage in this study, for it underlies all other concepts in the agenda-building process. Here, an issue is understood as a recurring theme discussed in the public domain. An issue is recurring, as a political problem
or as a topic in the news, because it represents a collection of individual but thematically similar events. In political terms an issue might be conceptualised as a policy domain.

**Political agenda.** There are as many political agendas as there are political institutions and activities. Some institutions are more resistant to media pressure than others, and some institutions have easier access to the media agenda. If journalists were given the choice between interviewing the prime minister or a trade union leader, few would opt for the latter, ceteris paribus. Within the institutions, some political activities will be more susceptible to media influences than others. A prime minister is likely to respond more freely to hot news during working visits in the country than during budgetary negotiations in the council of ministers. Hence, the type of political agenda that is chosen as the antagonist of the media agenda to reconstruct the flows of agenda-building influence, inevitably has great consequences for the balance of power that the researcher is to find (e.g., Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

In this study, parliamentary debates are chosen as the source of data for the political agenda. This choice is primarily based on a particular interest in the way that agenda building impacts the democratic process. There is an official but thin line between the function of the mass media and parliament as democratic watchdogs. Although MPs are engaged in different sorts of activities, debating with each other and with the executive, during scheduled hours in plenary sessions, is the most significant and consequential. The choice to investigate the relationship between the media and parliament implies that no conclusions shall be drawn about the position of national executives or any other political actor in the face of the media. However powerful or powerless the media agenda turns out to be in this study, it will not provide an answer about whether the media govern the nation, but about whether the nation’s representation and control of government reside with the media.

According to the common conceptualisation, which is also ours, the political agenda refers to the topics that are considered sufficiently important to be debated for potential future action in the political arena (e.g., Baumgartner, Jones & Leech, 1997; Soroka, 2002). Though only a minor difference in meaning, it is important to clearly distinguish the concept ‘political agenda’ as used in communication science from the one that is still commonly used in political science and public administration studies (Hix, 2002; Schattschneider, 1960/2003). The latter are mostly concerned with agenda setting as a preliminary stage in the decision-making process. Once an issue has made an entrance on the political agenda, a real decision or policy to deal with this issue will follow. This is also referred to as policy agenda setting (Schattschneider, 1960/2003). Political communication is concerned with the political agenda as a reflection of the amount of attention that issues receive.
Media agenda. As the current definition of the political agenda is the amount of attention that an issue receives during parliamentary debates, the definition of the media agenda is the amount of attention paid to issues in the news. The focus logically lies on generalist news media when the objective is to trace issue dynamics between journalists and politicians. The focus on news reporting reduces the universe of appropriate alternatives for the media agenda substantially, since it excludes entertainment programmes on radio and television, and numerous hobby magazines, but also the specialist news magazines that solely focus on international relations or the stock market for example. In political communication research the classical choice is between television news and newspapers, or ideally both. In this study, which is interested in media effects on politicians rather than on the public, and therefore relies less on the popular reach of television, the parliamentary agenda is linked to issue attention in the national daily press.

European integration. The Treaty of Paris, signed in 1951 and establishing the European Coal and Steal Community can be considered to be the foundational step on the path towards European unification. Europe has been in a state of flux towards increasing cooperation between increasing numbers of member states ever since. Obviously, there is no comparable moment in history that marks the finish of the great European project. Hence, European integration is conceptualised as an incremental process of nation states transferring increasing amounts of authority in an increasing number of policy areas. During certain periods the process of integration was accelerated – typically as a result of new treaties such as the Treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1997) or key events such as the introduction of the Euro (in 1999 and as tangible money in 2002) – and during others it was slowed down.

European integration might impact the balance of agenda-building power over time and across issues, in line with the actual transfer of decision-making authority from nation states to the EU over time and across issue domains. This is based on a strictly legal understanding of European integration, i.e. the formal level of decision-making authority of the EU institutions as laid down in the consecutive treaties. However, we do not wish to exclude the possibility of spill-over effects from formal supranational or intergovernmental cooperation in one policy area to informal and ad hoc negotiations and cooperation in other policy areas. Therefore, the conceptualisation of European integration is expanded by adding a functional actor-centred approach to the aforementioned formal authority-centred approach in a second part of the study. This functional conceptualisation of European integration thus also includes the process towards intensified contacts among key figures of European member states or the EU, whether expressed in (attempts at) negotiation, cooperation, or even (unsolicited) interference.
Political conflict. When two or more politically relevant actors engage in a negative relationship, there is a political conflict. It is important that this negative dimension expresses an evaluative judgement (for example, ‘he is a useless campaign leader’) and not an objective observation (for example, ‘the party lost many votes during his campaign’). Further, the disapproval may be directed at the person itself (dislike), but also at his or her issue position (disagreement). Although the central political actors in this agenda-building research are members of parliament, the conflicts need not necessarily be restricted to those directly involving MPs. Whether the battle is fought by MPs or by others, conflict is expected to affect the agenda-building opportunities of anyone who would like to have a say in the matter, as will be duly explained.

1.3 Design of the study
This section elaborates upon the necessary ingredients of the research design, as well as on the central methodology. The study aims at opening new ground in agenda-building research, in terms of testing different contingencies. A theoretical elaboration of the politics-media interaction of the kind that is envisaged, presents the researcher with a list of demands regarding data and design, reviewed below one by one.

Cross-national comparative design. The unique institutional context of the EU is introduced as a factor upon which national agenda building in Europe may be contingent. A single-country approach would be inadequate since up until May 2004 the EU counted fifteen member states. It would not allow for generalisations to the other fourteen political and media systems. A cross-national comparative design will be presented as an alternative to the ‘naive universalism’ (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990) that has firmly held agenda-building research in its grasp (for an exception see Soroka, 2003). The countries in this study are selected according to a most different systems design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970, see also Pennings, Keman & Klein-nijenhuis, 2006). In contrast to a most similar systems design, the selection of countries does not need to be as exhaustive as possible. If a relationship between variables is robust, it stands upright despite large heterogeneity of the national contexts regarding those specific variables. The current selection includes the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, as representatives of contemporary European democracies in general. It will be explained in chapter 4 why precisely these three countries are appropriate test cases, by combining the criteria of country heterogeneity and homogeneity according to a most different systems design, with Daniel Hallin’s and Paolo Mancini’s (2004) classification of countries in three ideal-typical models of political and media systems.

Running slightly ahead of chapter 4, the central variable regarding which the countries are supposed to be ‘most different’ is briefly discussed. The countries should be heterogeneous regarding the public (media and
public) and political relationship they maintain with the European Union, the central variable of interest, which allows us to test the robustness of the theoretical assumption that the EU, regardless of national attitudes, might impose itself on national agenda building. Roughly speaking, the United Kingdom has the most sceptical and, both politically and economically, the most autonomous profile in the face of European integration (Allen, 2005; Geddes, 2004). While political support has been largely pragmatic, the attitudes towards the EU among the media and the public have been utterly negative. Until recently, the Netherlands and France have competed for the title of most supportive member state. The Netherlands has won regarding support for European integration at the political level, even at the expense of its own sphere of influence (De Graaff, 2003; Pijpers, 2005). France has won regarding the public and journalistic enthusiasm for the European project (Pfetsch, 2004). Whereas France has been ideology-driven and politically powerful (e.g., Balme & Woll, 2005; Drake, 2005; Elgie & Griggs, 2000), the Netherlands has been pragmatic, indifferent, and politically small. The research design cuts across the national divides that have traditionally existed in the EU, which makes a comparison of these specific three countries especially worthwhile.

Cross-sectional design. It has been common in agenda-building research for quite some time to reconstruct the flows of influence for several different issues (e.g., Baumgartner, Jones & Leech, 1997; Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Gilberg, 1980; Soroka, 2002; Walker, 1977; Wanta & Foote, 1994; Wood & Peake, 1998). Although it has not matured into theory, some issue characteristics are expected to moderate the relative power of the political versus the media agenda. In this study a cross-sectional design of multiple issue domains is imperative for yet another reason than increasing the validity of generalisations. One of the objectives is to test the moderating impact of European integration on the power of the national media agenda. To allow the design to discriminate between agenda-building dynamics within a European context and within a national context, a natural point of departure is to compare policy domains (issues), with much and little or no official decision-making authority. Based on this rational of formal European involvement in national policy dynamics, the balance of agenda-building power will be tested for the issues agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration.

The level of European vs. national authority over issues is determined by the classification of those issues according to the three-pillar structure of the EU, introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Issues in pillar one, the Community pillar, are subjected to supranational EU authority. Intergovernmental cooperation and negotiation mark decision making in the pillars two and three: it is the collective of national executives that decides (e.g., Dinan, 2005; Laffan & Mazey, 2006). Agriculture and the environment are incorporated in pillar one (e.g., Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Schimmelfennig
& Rittberger, 2006). If EU authority matters to the national agenda-building process by empowering the media agenda, these are the two issue domains where to look for such influence. The two pillar-one issues will be compared with the intergovernmental pillar-three issue immigration, as well as with the issue drugs, over which the national executive has full monopoly. The weak or absent EU authority on the latter issues should be reflected in a sheer unaffected national balance of agenda-building power.

*Longitudinal design.* Both time-independent questions (Which agenda is dominant?) and time-dependent questions (Are the media becoming more powerful? Is the balance of power different during elections than during routine politics?) are posed regarding national agenda-building dynamics. A longitudinal design is pivotal to both types of questions, because influence through time is an inherent feature of agenda building. The advantage of longitudinal designs over one-shot (cross-sectional) measures is that causality between the two agendas can be established much more reliably. Moreover, the longer the time series, the better it can be excluded that inferences are based on coincidence due to sudden whims of MPs and journalists. Therefore, regarding the time-independent questions, longitudinal data allow to assess agenda building as a structural process, rather than as an accidental state of affairs (see also, Bartels, 1996; Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Fleming, Wood & Bohle, 1999; Kleinnijenhuis & Rietberg, 1995; Soroka 2002, 2003; Trumbo, 1995; Wood & Peake, 1998). Regarding the time-dependent questions, it is evident that longitudinal data should be used. Different periods need to be compared, in order to identify whether and how the balance of agenda-building power changes between election and non-election times, and between the years before and after cultural changes in journalism and European key events. This study uses over fifteen years of British data, over eight years of Dutch data, and over five years of French data.

*Content analysis.* Both journalists and MPs produce a verbal account of their activities: newspaper articles and parliamentary debates. First, a qualitative content analysis is performed to explore the most important discussions and events on both agendas. Second, and most importantly, automated content analysis is conducted to reconstruct the media and parliamentary agendas from the levels of attention to the different issues in these two types of documents respectively. Five to fifteen years of continuous observations, in three countries, about four issues on two agendas produce an unparalleled amount of data, certainly by agenda-building standards. The large number of documents in this study clearly cuts off the possibility of manual content analysis. An important feature of the current approach is the top-down automated technique of content analysis.

The advantages that computer assistance offers in terms of the ability to process large quantities of data and of high coding reliability, are counterbalanced by the disadvantage that, unlike human coders, computers are unable to make semantic inferences from verbal expressions by themselves.
According to Krippendorff the purpose of content analysis is "making replicable and valid inferences from texts ... to the contexts of their use" (2004, p. 18). Whereas the first objective (replicable inferences) is automatically taken care of – a computer is 100% consistent in its proceedings until told otherwise – the second objective (valid inferences) demands special attention in the case of automated content analysis. To that end, the objects of interest must be expressed into explicit and unambiguous coding rules. With a hierarchical list of keywords, a detailed a priori knowledge representation of each issue and actor (European vs. domestic) domain is created, better known as an ontology (e.g., Calvanese et al., 2005; Minsky, 1975; Smith, 1995).

The content analysis is used to establish how much attention has been paid over time to the issues of interest on the parliamentary agenda as well as on the media agenda, by tracing the frequency of keywords (extended with rules for disambiguation) in the parliamentary debates and newspaper articles. Additionally, a similar content analysis is used to measure the amount of attention that the national press devotes to EU, member-state, or domestic actors in its news coverage of the previously mentioned issues. The purpose here is to evaluate the moderating role of European integration in national agenda-building dynamics.

Finally, some attention is in order for the methodology used to analyse the role of conflict in the agenda-building process, which represents an experimental sidetrack from the main content analysis. Conflict is an evaluative concept. Compared with the fairly factual indicators of issues and actors, linguistic expressions of conflict are much more semantically ambiguous and context sensitive. Therefore, rather than using pre-established top-down wordlists, it is necessary to resort to a bottom-up approach that partly relies on human coders after all. In a selection of the relevant corpus, human coders identify indicators for conflict as they occur in their natural linguistic environment. With these features an attempt is made to develop a validated instrument for automated content analysis of conflict news in a technical procedure borrowed from artificial intelligence.

**Time-series analysis.** Two time series of issue attention represent the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda. Determining whether highs and lows of issue attention on one agenda are followed above chance by highs and lows on the other agenda, will tell us about the direction of influence, hence about the balance of agenda-building power. This is a straightforward question about reciprocal influence that deserves a straightforward answer. This answer will be provided by deductive structural equation modelling (SEM), which is an elegant technique due to its conceptual simplicity, capable of simultaneously assessing reciprocal flows of influence. Nevertheless, modelling time-series data is susceptible to a number of pitfalls. To make sure that the data meet the appropriate conditions, a sequence of diagnostic statistical tests is conducted in advance to actual hypothesis testing.
addition, SEM models rely on a priori knowledge about which variables to include at which exact time lags. The time structure underlying the agenda-building process may vary with every other combination of actors. So, rather than relying on common-sense assumptions about the speed and duration of mutual influence between parliament and the press, the appropriate time span of influence will be empirically determined by means of inductive vector autoregression modelling. Vector autoregression is a common technique for time-series analysis, but carries some important disadvantages compared with SEM given the specific objective of this study. The current approach combines the strengths of vector autoregression and structural equation modelling, which makes its analytical framework unique and thorough amidst agenda-building research.

1.4 Outline of the book

The book is divided in two parts. The first part (chapters 2 to 7) is devoted to the balance of agenda-building power. Theoretically different agenda-building models are hypothesised and tested with a uniform methodology to reveal the agenda-building dynamics under various circumstances. An adaptation of part one, with the results for the UK and the Netherlands, is accepted for publication in the British Journal of Political Science. In the second part (chapters 8 and 9), we take a closer look at one of those agenda-building hypotheses, i.e. the moderating role of European integration. Here, a different methodology is chosen to revisit the earlier findings of media influence in a European context, as well as to suggest a possible explanatory mechanism behind European influence: political conflict.

Chapter 2 lays the theoretical foundation for a general understanding of the power balance between the agendas of parliament and the media. It reviews the core empirical findings within the field of agenda building and combines them with broader theoretical insights from political communication literature. Next, a first specification of the model is proposed: how do elections interfere with these overall flows of influence between the parliamentary and media agendas?

The time dimension is introduced in chapter 3. In line with general trends in the practice of political communication and journalism, the question is addressed whether time has worked in favour of journalists. As a central argument behind a shifting balance of power, the role of European integration is elaborated in further detail. This argument builds on a combination of theories from political communication and political science. Besides specifying changes through time, an issue-specific hypothesis is formulated,

which distinguishes between agenda building in EU and national domains of authority.

The empirical assessment of the theoretical expectations outlined in the previous chapters can be captured in a uniform research design. Chapter 4 discusses the methodological procedures, including the choices behind the data set, the instrument of content analysis, and the techniques of time-series analysis.

Chapters 5 and 6 paint the political and media landscapes of the three investigated countries. Chapter 5 describes the political institutions and traditions, as well as the styles of journalism in terms of national attitudes towards the European Union, during the past half century. Chapter 6 gives a global qualitative account of the data by reporting the key events that marked the parliamentary debates and the newspaper stories.

Chapter 7, the final chapter of the first part of the book, presents the results of the tests constructed in chapter 4, and provides answers to the hypotheses of chapters 2 and 3.

Chapters 8 and 9 take the analysis of the moderating role of European integration on the agenda-building process a step further. Each chapter presents an additional study, with its own methodology. In chapter 8, an interaction regression model is built to assess the effect of the functional ‘Europeanness’ of an issue on the balance of agenda-building power. In chapter 9, a suggestion is made for the mechanism explaining the link between Europe and national agenda building. In order to introduce political conflict in the aforementioned interaction model as a moderating variable, a validating procedure is undertaken to arrive at a content analytical tool that is able to identify conflict in the news.

After a recapitulation of the main findings, the quality of the study is evaluated in chapter 10, and new and improved directions for future research are put forward. In addition, an attempt is made to point out the theoretical significance of this study’s conclusions, as well as their implications for the daily practice of both parliamentary politics and journalism.
Part One

The balance of agenda-building power
Chapter Two  Agenda building

Of the diverse and complex relationships that have developed between the political elite and the media in contemporary democratic societies, our focus is on agenda building. This chapter will first briefly elaborate on the concept of agenda setting, from which agenda building has evolved, and then on agenda building itself (see section 2.1). It then presents an inventory of agenda-building literature to understand how these power relationships are perceived to be distributed between political officials on the one hand and the media on the other hand. Theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, which either advocate political officials to have the upper hand (section 2.2), or rather plead a powerful media agenda (section 2.3), will be compared. This shall come together in a hypothesis intended to come up with a conclusive answer to inconclusive literature about the strength of the flows of influence between the political and media agendas and about which agenda leads and which agenda follows (section 2.4). This chapter continues with a discussion of the question why the balance of agenda-building power may be expected to differ between elections and routine political times (section 2.5).

2.1 Agenda building: the concept & its origin

As the precursor of agenda building, agenda setting is one of the earliest, best-known and most-tested paradigms within the field of communication science (Dearing & Rogers, 1996). The majority of agenda-setting studies have aimed at clarifying when, how, and to what degree the agenda of the mass media influences the agenda of citizens. Agenda setting was introduced by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) as one of the mechanisms through which the mass media might possibly have some real impact on society: “the mass media confer status on public issues, persons, organizations and social movements” (p. 101). However, according to the authors the effects of the media were often overrated by contemporary scholars and were no match for the consequences of the arrival of the automobile (Kinder, 2003). The first concrete empirical support for the agenda-setting hypothesis came with McCombs and Shaw’s famous Chapel Hill study (1972). A small sample of voters was interviewed about the most important problems they believed the country to be facing during the 1968 US presidential election. They found a high correlation with the problems that were most prominent in the news. McCombs and Shaw summarised the importance of the media’s agenda-setting effect as follows: “in choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality” (1972, p. 176).

Their cross-sectional design has been replicated many times with much more moderate media effects. Later, the agenda-setting effect was confirmed
by more advanced research techniques (Kinder, 2003), such as time-series analyses (e.g., Funkhouser, 1973) and experimental designs (e.g., Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Strong agenda-setting effects repeatedly emerged from studies that controlled for real-world cues (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Sheafer, 2007), the obtrusiveness of issues (e.g., Lang & Lang, 1981), or the credibility of the news source (e.g., Wanta & Hu, 1994). Thus, the uncontested but contingent agenda-setting conclusion is that more intense coverage of a topic in the media will result in a heightened awareness and priority of the topic in the minds of the audience, whereas no reverse effect occurs (see also, Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Cohen, 1963; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Peake, 2001). Two research traditions matured alongside and intertwined with agenda setting. As many other traditions, framing research addresses the public opinion. More specifically it tackles how it may be steered by media’s presentation of issues and events. In practice, however, framing research is often difficult to distinguish from agenda-setting research, since emphasis of (or attention to) issues or aspects of issues recurs as the most common operationalisation of frames (e.g., Chong & Druckman, 2007; Druckman, 2001, 2004; Edy & Meirick, 2007; Entman, 1993; Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997; Scheufele, 1999). Priming scholars are interested in media’s potential to set the standards by which citizens evaluate political candidates and policies, by highlighting some issues and de-emphasising others (e.g., Krosnick & Kinder, 1990; Lee, 2004; Shah, Watts, Domke, Fan & Fibison, 1999; Sheafer, 2007).

In the mid-1980s new ground was broken within the field of agenda setting, as the political agenda emerged next to the public agenda as a potential object of media influence. The sub-area of agenda-setting studies devoted to the question of who is leading whom, the media or political institutions, will be referred to as agenda building (e.g., Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976; Lang & Lang, 1981). Agenda building describes the political battle through which political institutions try and influence the political climate by steering the news content that reaches the population, and through which the media try and serve their audience by confronting the political representatives with their own list of priorities and interests. To what extent are they capable of determining each other’s issue priorities (agendas)? Do they both try equally hard? How then is the political battle for access settled?

Often the political role of the media is suggested to be in the reinforcement of the status quo, in the legitimisation of the forces in power by providing them with a platform. This would suggest media’s subordination to political actors. The majority of scholars has taken this position (e.g., Schudson, 2002), especially the early ones. For example, Gans has claimed that “[t]he relationship between sources and journalists resembles a dance, for sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources. Although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading” (1979, p. 116). Others claim
that there is more to media power than the affirmation of power (Cook, 1998). The leeway they have to select among news issues and news sources enables them to considerably influence whose authority is supported, whose authority is not, and what his priorities should be. Consequently, Cater (1959) and later Cook (1998) go as far as to conceive of the media as a governmental institution. At least, as most scholars would have it, they are a political institution, but one that does not strive after power and its influence remains largely hidden from the public as well as from its employees (Smith, 1999). The interaction between newsmen and their political sources is one of informal courtship rather than subordination: authority is emphasised, but only some.

Until the 1980s, opinions about the (lack of) existence of politically influential media have readily been expressed, and Cohen’s discontent that “the impact of newspapers on the political system is more often assumed than investigated” (1963, p. 3-4) was still very much legitimate. From that time onwards, both scholars from the field of political and communication science contributed to an ever-growing – but equally dispersed – body of empirical agenda-building research. Both traditions were already engaged in agenda-setting research, but until then, there had been a strict separation of their fields of action. Communication researchers stuck to the aforementioned processes involving the media and their audiences, whereas political scientists focussed their attention on the policy agenda and interactions between political institutions (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

Contrary to the growing conviction of the existence of large media effects in the agenda-setting community, the cross-pollination of communication and political researchers has to date not converged in any agreement about the balance of power in the agenda-building process (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Traditionally, political scientists tend to deny the thought that the media might play an independent role in shaping the policy agenda, whereas communication scientists have trouble accepting a minor role of the media (Bartels, 1996). This lack of consensus inspires the first and straightforward question that will be tackled in this study, i.e. the question about the balance of agenda-building power. The following sections outline the most prominent theoretical assumptions and research findings of politically controlled agenda-building relations, as well as those of a predominantly media-dominated agenda-building process.

2.2 The case for top-down agenda building
There are sound reasons for expecting that the political agenda will dominate the media agenda, which may be labelled as top-down or ‘aristocratic’ agenda building. First, political leaders of national or even international renown are newsworthy (e.g., Altheide & Snow, 1979; Bennett, 1990; Bennett, 1997; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). This is explained by Schönbach et al.: “The more threatening or beneficial the consequences that their actions may
have for citizens, and the greater number of citizens likely to be affected, the more ‘relevant’ they are” (2001, p. 520). Authority is among the most important news values guiding the selection of sources. After all, officials have inside information, which makes their opinions legitimate (Schudson, 2002). Therefore, commitment to the routines of objective reporting, which journalists consider a guarantee for their independence, will result in top-down agenda building as the natural state of affairs (Hallin, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Additionally, journalists consider it inherent to the democratic function they perform to favour the viewpoints of the political elite, since they have been chosen by the people to represent them (Bennett, 1990).

Second, on a more practical level, modern democratic institutions have proven to be a reliable and constant source of information for the media. They provide information in an efficient way compared with time-consuming journalistic investigation, since officials have learned to deliver their messages in a format in which the media’s demands are anticipated (Schudson, 2002; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

Third, politicians, both those in power and those in opposition, are certainly set on taking the lead in public discussions (e.g., Budge & Farlie, 1983; Eilders, 2002; Peters, 1996), which means defining the terms through which the issue is understood and discussed, thereby defining the two sides of a conflict. Preferably they create the news themselves by organising press conferences or granting interviews, so as to meet the media’s primary concern of filling the daily news gap (Cook, 1998). Nowadays, they can count on well-trained media professionals, the ever-present spin-doctors, to guide them in front of the cameras or when formulating a press release. It is about being one step ahead of one’s opponents when the interpretation of an issue is consistent with the policy decisions one happens to propose. Issue management is aimed at binding fellow party or government members and at fragmenting the opposition (Cook, 1998). Politicians are eager to withhold this instrument of power – which is a just term for having the political initiative – from their opponents, as well as from ‘investigative’ journalists. Paradoxically, the wish to take the lead results in adjusting issue priorities to the taste of the media for conflict, drama and the horse race (Cobb et al., 1976), which will be discussed further in the section on media power.

Fourth, if it would be up to the government executives and their coalition partners in parliament, the political process would unfold out of public sight. In order to safeguard their room for manoeuvre, secrecy is largely preferred to critical public scrutiny of the terms on which negotiating and bargaining proceed, of possible inter-party or intra-governmental conflict (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Cook, 1998; Street, 2001). This is nicely illustrated by the observation that politicians are generally willing to show up in an infotainment program – labelled ‘the bypass strategy’ by Brants and Van Kempen (2002) – where they can have a charming chat with a television presenter.
rather than be interrogated by a political journalist. They do not trust the
latter to give them a fair shot at expressing their true viewpoints (Brants &
Van Kempen, 2002). This avoidance of political involvement when little pop-
ular credit can be gained is tackled in Bachrach and Baratz’ analysis of the
non-decision (1970). Political power is exercised just as much by succeeding
in deliberately failing to act upon an issue forwarded by citizens, interest
groups, or the media, as it is by introducing an active policy regarding other
issues. Not picking up issues from the media agenda will practically always
result in the absence of media influence on the political agenda.

So, to control the flow of information is to control the issues that enter
the public debate and the issues that stay behind closed doors. Parties and
politicians now and again manage to feed the media with some confl icts or
sweeping opinions, which means that they will simultaneously be success-
ful in diverting public attention from politically sensitive problems.

Research results that back up a top-down relationship between the polit-
ical and media agendas are easily found. We will fi rst discuss the studies that
claim the media agenda to be entirely or practically negligible when it comes
to the agenda choices of the investigated political institutions. As early as
1977, Jack Walker used time-series data to describe the trends on the agenda
of the US Senate. He found the New York Times to respond to, rather than to
lead, the elite discussions about the domestic issues of ‘traffi c safety’, ‘coal
mine health and safety’, and ‘occupational safety and health’ between the
years 1950 and 1972. Based on document inspections and interviews, Paul
Light (1982) argued that other political actors than the media, for instance
congress, are the primary source of domestic policy issues for the US presi-
dent. It must be said that the eff ect of the president on the media agenda
was not explicitly taken into account. A study by Kleinnijenhuis and Riet-
berg (1995) used cross-sectional time-series data to show that the political
agenda, represented by party manifestos in three subsequent elections, is
unchallenged when considering a pool of six domestic economic issues in
the Netherlands from the early 1980s. Their model showed that the impact
of the media on the political agenda depends on the willingness of politi-
cians to respond to the public agenda, which is partly contingent upon the
media agenda. Plenty of support for a prevailing party agenda can be found
in agenda-building studies that are designed around elections. This specific
strand of research will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Among the evidence of reciprocal but still politically dominated fl ows of
agenda-building infl uence, we fi rst of all refer to the influential work of John
Kingdon (1984/1995), who concluded from interviews with US decision
makers that the agenda-building process should be seen as cyclic. Hence,
he recognised that politicians certainly take notice of what journalists pub-
lish about social issues whenever the national mood signals them to do so,
but that in the end journalists will lose out to the privileged position of the
political elite. He attributed this political dominance to media’s short atten-
Wanta and Foote (1994) studied twelve domestic and three international issues in a time-series design and found mixed evidence for the US president’s agenda-building success. Especially when there are few alternative news sources or less credible news sources, the president successfully influences the media agenda. This was most often observed in the case of international crises. Importantly, the majority of topics on the media agenda appeared unaffected by the president’s efforts. The president now and again also consults the media agenda to determine policy priorities, mostly concerning social issues and crime. Another extensive time-series example can be found in the work of Flemming, Wood and Bohle (1999), who found that the US institutional agenda, consisting of either the president, congress or the supreme court, is more successful in setting the (print) media agenda for the civil rights/civil liberties issues and the environmental issue, than the other way around. Congress and the supreme court were by and large the most influential. They identified strong horizontal connections between the different political agendas. The authors also emphasised that it would be unwise for scholars to construct their agenda-building research models as purely top-down or as purely bottom-up processes. In the overview of agenda-setting and agenda-building research by Dearing and Rogers (1996), the authors concluded from a summary of empirical findings that the initiative is assumed to ultimately lie in the hands of political actors.

2.3 The case for bottom-up agenda building

Good reasons can be found for expecting the media agenda to affect the policy agenda as well, which may be labelled as bottom-up or ‘mediocratic’ agenda building. First, politicians are urged to pay court to the media, because of the media’s superior access to mass audiences. Parties and government officials need to play themselves into the spotlights to win favourable attention and support for their policy intentions and past and future performance on their own issues. The other side of the coin is that news is also a useful tool to withdraw public attention from opponents. Politicians are forced to react to issues that arise in the media, for among the volatility and competition of politics, they risk being accused of inaction if they fail to come up with solid solutions quickly or if they deliver weak opposition (Cook, 1998; Yanovitzky, 2002).

Second, on the party level, politicians compete with each other for public and media attention. Government officials may be faced with leaks from within the administration: known as denuncismo in Latin American (Schudson, 2002). The political arena does not form an airtight unity; instead, media scoops can often be traced to lack of loyalty, hostilities and healthy competition from within the political system, rather than to masterly journalism. Classified information will find its way to the front page much quicker than any other official story, which is available to all journalists and all outlets at once. If issues enter the public domain prematurely,
at least according to political wishes, officials are forced to look for ad hoc short-term solutions, in order to satisfy both media and voters (Yanovitzky, 2002). This jeopardises their initial policy plans and their political position. Irrespective of whether political competition means that the news media are provided with party or state secrets, it generally holds that the larger the number of sources that the media have at their disposal, the more difficult it is for politicians to gain control over the political environment and the flows of information (Cook, 1998; Wolfsfeld, 1997). The same goes for the number of events and issues on the shelves that can be turned into newsworthy stories (Yanovitzky, 2002). Also, in case of a shortage of sources or issues for the media to work with, journalists may opt for the investigative strategy. Again politicians run the risk of seeing news coverage getting ahead of them.

Third, media’s reliance on their own values of news production, which allows them to survive in the competitive information environment, makes for choices and interpretations that are not always in the politician’s best interest. Since political actors often disagree about the priorities of issues, the media are enabled to focus on controversial issues, which are expected to deliver a continuing stream of political conflicts and political drama.

Fourth, as has already been mentioned in the previous section, politicians have no choice but to work with the media. This implies that they will have to conform to the working values of the media in order to gain access (e.g., Altheide & Snow, 1979; Negrine, 1999; Sheafer, 2001). Being able to regulate the flow of information, which according to Wolfsfeld (1997) is one of essentials for keeping control over the political environment, comes down to satisfying journalists. It comes down to giving them just enough material to write about – for example by means of the occasional strategic leak – and giving it to them in a format that hardly needs interpretation or editorial rewriting, ideally with a touch of drama so as to appeal to their values of newsworthiness. The long-term background aspects of social and political developments, touching upon the process and structural dimensions of an issue, are ‘dumbed down’ and exchanged for concrete events with a beginning and an end, with a cause, an effect and a solution (Street, 2001). This is rarely in the best interest of a politician who depends on compromise and nuance. Importantly, politicians should deliver their stories and statements with due warning. News thrives on predictability and continuity (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). A political actor may well have taken the initiative in creating and offering a story for publication or broadcasting, the media have the ultimate say in which of all available stories is most to their liking. In short, already in 1979 Altheide and Snow claimed that the real power of the media in contemporary society is in the fact that “media are the dominant force to which other institutions conform” (1979, p. 15).
Although it is not always acknowledged in theoretical accounts of the politics-media relationship, a considerable and seemingly growing number of agenda-building studies have indeed provided empirical support for the media’s hold over the political agenda. Starting with one-way bottom-up evidence, Gilberg, Eyal, McCombs and Nicholas (1980) looked at four domestic and four (semi-) international issues and came up with pioneering evidence for strong media influence (TV and press) on the US president’s state of the union address, while the reverse influence was absent. The US congress was found to follow newspaper coverage of the global warming issue by Trumbo in a day-to-day time-series analysis (1995). He found that television news is inclined to follow the congressional agenda, but that TV coverage consequently generates new attention on the political agenda. He pointed to the ‘newness’ of an issue to explain politicians’ reliance on the media, which causes a need for orientation on the part of politicians. Trumbo thus identified a bottom-up process as far as the print media go, and a reciprocal process as far as TV is concerned. Johnson et al. (1996) used a time-series path analysis to demonstrate that the press agenda only responds to real-world cues of the issue of drugs, while determining the public agenda. The public agenda in turn influences the president’s speeches, which neither influence the press nor the public. Yanovitzky (2002) also showed in a time-series model that media initiatives (press) are unidirectionally followed by attention and action in congress regarding the issue of drunk driving. Time-series analysis by Wood and Peake (1998) demonstrated media (TV) dominance over the US president in the case of three foreign issues. Edwards III and Wood (1999) used comparable models, which again resulted in one-way media (TV) influence on the president’s agenda regarding the foreign policy issues, as well as one-way media influence on the congressional agenda regarding the issue of education. However, in the case of the domestic issues education and health care they found mutual agenda-building dynamics between the media and the president.

In their often-cited work on the Watergate scandal, Kurt and Gladys Lang (1981) showed the determining role of media coverage in the chain of political events for a ‘high-threshold’ issue. According to the authors, media’s potential to influence the political agenda depends on whether an issue is unobtrusive, controversial and entails a continuous stream of stories. They define agenda building as “a collective process with some degree of reciprocity”. “The media respond to political developments in which the press itself was one of the movers” (p. 465). In a quadriptych of quasi-experiments, Cook et al. (1983), Protess, Leff, Brooks & Gordon (1985), Leff, Protess & Brooks (1986), and Protess et al. (1987) established that news coverage, both print and television coverage, has a strong or moderate impact on policy making in all four studies concerning the issues home health care, assaults against women, policy brutality and toxic waste disposal respectively. Rather than the sheer news attention to the problems, it was suggested that personal col-
laboration between journalists and policy makers might have had the greatest impact on policy change. Although these studies did not investigate the impact of policy makers on the media agenda, we treat them as support for a reciprocal media-dominated model. We draw this conclusion from their observation of close cooperation between the actors, as well as from statements such as “we found that the series provided a platform for those already pushing for reform of rape legislation” (1987, p. 183-184). Cook and Skogan (1990) showed the New York Times to be behind the rise and fall of the issue of criminal victimisation of the elderly on the congressional agenda. They also posited that it is the political institutions that decide to offer such a window of opportunity in the decision-making process. A day-to-day time-series analysis by Larry Bartels (1996) demonstrated flows of influence to the media agenda (TV, national and local press) from the executive branch regarding the international issues NAFTA and Bosnia, and from congress regarding the issues Medicare and the Whitewater scandal. However, his study also showed an even stronger flow of influence in the reverse direction, especially for NAFTA and Whitewater. Baumgartner, Jones and Leech (1997) found the agenda-building process to be a cyclic process in which media (magazines) took the lead on congress, concerning the issues of drug abuse, smoking and nuclear power. News media’s often critical approach triggers politicians to engage in the discussion, again inviting the media to react. Some of the more recent time-series agenda-building work has been conducted by Stuart Soroka. In 2002, he established a powerful effect of issue salience in the press on foreign policy, which is likely to be mediated by public salience. The reverse effect was not found. In 2003, he found one-way influence from the Canadian parliament on the media agenda for the obtrusive issue of inflation, but also one-way influence from the press on the parliamentary agenda for the unobtrusive and dramatic issue of environment. A third unobtrusive and abstract issue, the state budget deficit, involved strong press influence on parliament, but also a strong agenda-building influence from the speech of the throne on the press.

2.4 The balance of power
We must now draw up the balance of this dispersed collection of agenda-building results, with arguments and evidence both in favour of political control and in favour of media control. The conclusion should be that the debate about the distribution of power is still inconclusive. However, this does not prevent us from taking a stand in the present research. In this study we understand the bottom line of the close link between journalists and officials as the mutual affirmation of their ‘raison-d’être’. The privileged position that officials are offered in the media is a repetitive symbolic recognition and reinforcement of the legitimacy of their authority (Hallin, 1994). Likewise, officials’ authority rubs off on the credibility of a story. It validates a news story (e.g., Cook, 1998; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Smith, 1999) and
assures a constant flow of news (Bennett, 1990). In the words of Gadi Wolfsfeld: "Power is a question of relative dependence: who needs whom more at the time of transaction?" (1997, p.14).

This idea of mutual dependence is the point of departure in this study and translates into mutual influence within the agenda-building process. The empirical results leave us no other option than to assume mutual agenda-building power. Cohen’s observation that many firm, usually one-sided, claims about the balance of power are based on theoretical rather than empirical assessments (1963, p. 3-4), still applies today to some extent. The empirical evidence still does not solve the puzzle; it portrays a shattered picture, in which general patterns, if any, are hidden below the surface. Nonetheless, it allows for a few conclusions to be drawn.

Very few studies emphasise the total subordination of the media agenda to political institutions. The ones that do, are designed exclusively to detect the absence or existence of media influence on the political agenda, but not to observe the reverse influence (Light, 1982; Walker, 1977). Hence, political influence on the media is assumed but not proven in these studies. Kleinijenhuis and Rietberg used a structural equation model that is suited to estimate the mutual causal relationships. Still, they chose a yearly time unit, which cannot capture the routine short-term behaviour of both actors. They also chose a political agenda – the party manifesto – that is both well planned by the political parties and well awaited by the media, and thus involves no routine interactions. Moreover, their model implied that some media influence reached the party manifestos via the public agenda after all. Interestingly, all three studies selected purely domestic issues to test the agenda-building model (safety and economic issues), a feature to which we will return shortly.

With the exception of Gilberg et al. (1980), the studies that indicate a complete domination of the political agenda by the media used more advanced statistical techniques to test the causal relations in both directions. Although we are not able to explain away the lack of political influence by pointing to particularities of each of these research designs, some comments are in place.

First, it appears as though one should be weary of presidential acts of symbolic value, such as the state of the union (Gilberg et al., 1980) and public speeches in general (e.g., Johnsen et al. 1996), since their purpose is to get the president in the public’s good grace. They may therefore closely relate to the public mood (and media), and say much less about real policy concerns. Again, the state of the union is a yearly, and thus problematic measure.

Second, whether the investigated issue is part of foreign or domestic policy may be a factor of importance. The three top-down studies only tested domestic issues. The one study that focussed exclusively on foreign issues (Wood & Peake, 1998) found unambiguous bottom-up evidence. Edward III and Wood’s study (1999) supported this in the case of the US-Soviet rela-
ations and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whereas they found mutual influence in the case of two out of three domestic issues. This is also supported by Bartels (1996), who found mutual flows of influence, with particularly strong media power in the case of the foreign issue NAFTA, but slightly less in the case of the foreign issue Bosnia. In contrast, Wanta and Foote (1994) found that among the mixed results of top-down and bottom-up agenda building, the president is the strongest regarding international crises. The role of foreign issues will be further elaborated in section 3.5 of chapter 3.

If we briefly run ahead of the central argument in chapter 3, we suggest not only to distinguish between domestic and foreign issues, but also between foreign issues in which a country is diplomatically and militarily engaged. Consistent with the argument of some of the bottom-up advocates (e.g., Bartels, 1996; Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Wood & Peake, 1998), diplomatic foreign issues can be expected to increase policy uncertainty for the initial news source (president or congress), as a greater number of authorities will be allowed the chance to participate in the policy discussion. Consequently, media’s freedom to choose among any of these authoritative news sources increases, possibly resulting in bottom-up agenda building vis-à-vis the initial presidential or congressional agenda. Military interventions, closer to the international crises of Wanta and Foote (1994), involve extremely hierarchical and watertight executive control, which is much harder to penetrate by political challengers (Hawkins, 2002; Livingston, 1997). As long as the executive ranks remain closed, no policy uncertainty will be created and the media depend on tightly organised press briefings, likely to result in top-down agenda building.

Third, why have the three remaining studies (Johnsen et al., 1996; Trumbo, 1995; Yanovitzky, 2001) indicated a one-way bottom-up balance of power? One guess might be that just one single issue was investigated. Notwithstanding the excellent designs of these studies, chances are that a different issue would have generated different results.

The number of studies that found evidence for mutual flows of influence largely outweighs the collection of studies that upheld one-way political dominance, as well as the number of those denying political influence. Some of these former designs were sensitive to more detailed time dynamics, some used impressionistic methods, others used statistical techniques, but the large majority based its conclusions on a diverse set of issues, political actors and agenda indicators. One might say that from this third group of studies the agenda-building process under average circumstances surfaces. In this exploratory phase of the present study, it is the ‘average’, ‘normal’ or ‘standard’ flows of influence between the national press and parliament that we are initially looking for.

But assuming mutual flows of influence still leaves the choice between political dominance or media dominance. Except for the slightly greater number of bottom-up models, agenda-building literature leaves us no sub-
stantial reason to prefer one above the other. The answer does not lie in distinguishing between the presidential and the congressional agenda: besides a stronger association between influence of the US president and international interventions, there is no question of one political actor clearly dominating the media agenda, while the other political actor consistently being dominated by the media agenda. They seem randomly divided over the three groups of aforementioned agenda-building evidence. However, literature has indicated that, historically and theoretically, political influence on the media agenda has hardly ever been questioned (e.g., Schudson, 2002), while media influence on political agenda has. Therefore, the real question seems to be whether the media are capable of influencing the political agenda (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). This question is largely answered affirmative by the empirical evidence, which most often points to mutual flows of influence, giving rise to hypothesis 1:

H1 The parliamentary agenda does not only influence the media agenda, but the parliamentary agenda is also influenced by the media agenda.

This hypothesis applies to a data set pooling different issues and different moments in time. It will reveal the agenda-building process under average circumstances. But media’s agenda-building power is not just expected to arise no matter the circumstances. It is expected to be contingent upon several theoretical and methodological factors. The first contingency to be tackled in this study is the role of elections versus routine politics.

2.5 Agenda building during elections
In contrast to the agenda-setting tradition, it is difficult to speak of an accumulation of knowledge in the field of agenda building, as we have just seen. A shattered picture emerges from the agenda-building literature, due to mixed results, diverging methodologies, designs and subject choices. However, within a specific strand of agenda-building studies a distinct pattern of results seems to have developed. Studies that choose to focus on election times to reconstruct the agenda-building process, unanimously dismiss the influence from the media agenda on the political agenda. We will argue and test that different agenda-building dynamics are at play, which cannot be compared with agenda building during routine political times (see also Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

H2 The agenda-building power of parliament over the media is stronger during elections than during times of routine politics.

Among the modest collection of agenda-building research during election campaigns, a study by Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch and Weaver (1991) that focused on media effects in general, is worth mentioning. They studied the
1983 British general elections and the 1984 US presidential elections and concluded that the political candidates were able to take over and determine both the print and television agendas. The British media were more easily influenced by the candidates, since they were not yet as assertive and adversary as the American journalists in those days. Thomas Boyle also found a one-sided influence from political advertisements of the major traditional parties and the main challenger Dole on the agenda of the prestige press and television in the 1996 US presidential elections. Pippa Norris and colleagues (including Semetko) chose the 1997 British general elections as the focus of study (Norris, Curtice, Sanders, Scammel & Semetko, 1999). Although they established that the party campaign strategies were not as successful in determining the issues discussed in the more volatile and fragmented media as in previous elections, the influence of the media on the party agenda was absent altogether. In 2002, Brandenburg reanalysed the data set by Norris et al. at a day-to-day interaction level. His results corroborated the hypothesis of a unidirectional flow of influence from the party agenda to the media agenda. His 2002 results were confirmed by his study of the 2002 Irish general elections in which he again found leading parties and following media (Brandenburg, 2004). Kleinnijenhuis and colleagues showed how the populist candidate Pim Fortuyn was able to determine the media agenda during the 2002 Dutch general elections (Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema, De Ridder, Van Hoof & Vliegenthart, 2003). However, it should be added that this result might not be a representative agenda-building result, since Fortuyn was and still is seen as a political phenomenon without precedent. Not only was he able to set the media agenda, he was also able to set the agenda of most other political parties. Finally, indications of a party dominated agenda-building process were found by Sheafer and Weimann (2005) in a study of the 1996, 2001 and 2003 Israeli general elections.

Why is it that this island of evidence in a sea of inconclusive routine agenda-building research should not surprise us? These election studies have more in common than just the selected period of research. During elections, divisions between different political institutions (for example parliament versus government) give way to divisions between parties and their candidates. Therefore, the party agenda, or more precisely campaign outlets such as party manifestos or press briefings, is put forward as the antagonist of the media agenda (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Campaign is the central concept when explaining the autonomy of the political agenda in the face of the media agenda. Not only does it describe the changed behaviour of politicians: because the political process is temporarily organised for the sole purpose of serving the interest of the party, with the underlying motive of contributing to the democratic process, the political agenda is able to take a substantial head start. Campaigning is also responsible for changes in the behaviour of journalists: politicians are suddenly stunningly successful in convincing the media that they should pay attention. The media willingly...
limit their freedom of source choice to the collection of competing parties. We will now put forward arguments for the singular character of agenda building during elections, by explaining these behavioural changes of political actors and the media respectively.

Enormous amounts of party money are spent during a very concentrated period of time, and all with one goal: to control the public debate. As during times of routine politics, parties must defy the main route to a mass audience: the mass media, especially since reaching that last politically disinterested and undecided voter is more important than ever. This is where their expensive and extensive teams of campaign experts come in. The most catchy and inventive slogans and images are created for the occasion. Most importantly, parties stage their own media events. Candidates let themselves be caught on camera sitting down with the locals in a pub, for example. The final TV debate between the main candidates is another example of such a media or pseudo-event. In this context a campaign image of Wouter Bos, leader of the Dutch Social Democrat Party PvdA during the 2006 general elections is illustrative. As any candidate he held public speeches in the main shopping areas across the country. He did it standing on a soapbox in a red coat, while his fellow workers were busy handing out red roses, in the tradition of the early Socialists. While an important function of such a nicely staged event overflowing with symbolism is to get the party message across to the people accidentally passing that soapbox, one might argue that the primary function is to create a perfect image for the evening news. The media have a strong preference for well-defined episodic and repeatable stories, with a clear beginning and end (Street, 2001).

Elections create the ideal circumstances for politicians to comply with this demand, since elections are not as much about complex long-term policies, but about short-term provocations, conflicts, symbols, and slogans of ideal visions of society. The supply of ready-made stories at the party’s initiative is huge. Hardly any effort on the part of the media is required to fill the news pages. As a consequence, hardly any initiative is required or undertaken by journalists to raise their own issues.

In contrast to periods outside elections, politicians also invest in direct means of communication with potential voters, which do not include the traditional media. Recently much attention has been paid to the party website, the dissemination of personalised e-mails and SMS messages. In the 2006 Dutch elections all major candidates, including those with a slightly old-fashioned image, could be found on Hyves, a website on which people, mostly teenagers, maintain a network of friends (e.g., Utz, 2007). A well-known form of direct communication in the UK is the Party Election Broadcast (PEB), the campaign spot. From the 1960s onwards, the PEB has been one of the main campaign tools. Although public attention for PEBs among other campaign news has declined considerably since the early days, these political advertisements still give parties the opportunity to use televi-
Agenda building

Whereas media prefer horse-race news and news about the political strategies that parties try to conceal (Boyle, 2001; De Vreese, 2001; Patterson, 1993), the PEB allows the party to use precious airtime for elaborating on their viewpoints and issues. Another effect of the BEP that is beneficial for the political agenda, is that the PEB generates news in itself. Contrary to American journalistic commentary on the political advertisement (adwatch), coverage of the British BEP is mostly descriptive rather than evaluative or interpretative. The British press spent much space on reproducing images or statements from last nights BEP during the 1997 elections. It was also keen on speculating on the content of next evening’s BEP. The political advertisement, used nearly exclusively during elections, is an effective tool for achieving resonance of the substantive political message (Hodess, Tedesco & Kaid, 2000), and is familiar in many countries.

One must also look at the media, which facilitate party dominance over their agenda during elections. Media’s sense of duty to the democratic process was mentioned to explain top-down agenda building earlier in this chapter. Media naturally offer a platform to the representatives of the nation’s democratic institutions (Bennett, 1990). Since elections are the main instrument of democracy, it is quite obvious that the relevance of this news value, which also applies during routine times, is blown up during election times. Hence, elections are inherently newsworthy (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002); subsequently the media are more accessible for the parties and candidates around which the elections evolve. From observations and interviews in the newsroom of the NOS Journaal, the Dutch public news broadcast, De Vreese (2001) reported a temporary expansion of the staff in the political unit during the 1998 Dutch general elections, to digest the increased amount of incoming political information. Of all NOS news bulletins 27% concerned election news in 1998. In 1994 the share of elections news amounted to 32% in the final weeks of the campaign. In the UK a standard 20-minute election segment was added to the BBC Nine O’Clock news in 1997 (De Vreese, 2001). Clearly more resources are invested in political news during elections than outside elections (e.g., Semetko et al., 1991). Nevertheless, a central observation of De Vreese is that this intrinsic journalistic interest in elections is steadily declining, both in terms of the amount of election news and in terms of respect for the political agenda. Election news carried a stronger journalistic spin in 1998 compared with 1994, and the selection of election stories was consciously made to depend on the conventional news criteria, which apply to all news stories. Still, there undoubtedly remains a clear difference in the susceptibility of the media to political messages between election and routine times.

Besides the dexterity of campaign professionals to make the party message fit the news slots, the nature of elections is in and by itself very suited for news coverage. First, elections are well-defined events, during well-
defined periods of time, with well-defined actors and a well-defined goal, with which the average audience is familiar. Although there is a considerable workload during a short period of time, elections do not demand much of journalists’ skills and energy to make it suitable for consumption. Second, elections capitalise on media’s special attention for two other news values: conflicts and the closely related horse race. Elections are all about conflicts, and their winners and losers. The campaign battle between parties and candidates strongly appeals to these important news frames, which journalists can pull straight out of their desk drawers (Kleinnijenhuis, 1998, 2003; Patterson, 1996; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Soroka, 2003; Tunstall, 2002).

The condition of objective reporting prescribes journalists to match an argument with a counterargument, a proponent with an opponent, which is simply resolved by matching a competing party with another competing party or a winner with a loser. In order to keep the story interesting to the public during the months before the final election outcome, regular opinion polls help the media to keep the horse race between the battling parties going by anticipating on the most likely winners and losers. Moreover, disagreements between parties also spice up a story and are a good recipe for gaining an audience. Again, during elections there is hardly a need to go out and actively search for conflicts, since politicians are happy to blow them up and hand them over.

An important comment is in place here. If one speaks of elections as conflicts, when explaining the dependence of the media agenda, one must be careful not to treat them as just any kind of conflict, and for two reasons. First, the election conflict is so all absorbing and so prominently about party actors and conflicts between those actors, that all other actors that might have served as potential sources of news for the media, vanish out of sight. The media may still have the freedom to choose among many sources, but in the name of democracy, they feel obliged to limit themselves to those actors participating in the electoral battle. Any outside actor, for example a lobby group, a social movement organisation or a foreign government, who might otherwise have had the potential to challenge the agenda-building opportunities of the party agenda as a whole, is eliminated. Still, the agenda-building power of the individual parties, rather than the collection of parties, is likely to be very disappointing. Parties never cease to complain about lack of media attention, especially when a competing party is suddenly at the centre of media attention. Whereas a single party may thus still lose out to media’s agenda-building power, it is the collection of parties, glued together by the dynamics of the election battle, which manages to completely occupy and build the media agenda. Second, the election conflict is an indispensable element of the party campaigning strategy, as was just mentioned. It differs from other conflicts, because it is wilfully created and anticipated by the parties to simultaneously emphasise their own strong assets and their opponents’ weaknesses. No political attempt is made to cover up such
conflicts; on the contrary. Therefore, the election conflict is not the type of conflict that is the ultimate scoop for the investigative journalists, such as a scandal. All conflicts have the power to draw the attention of the media (e.g., Patterson, 1996; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Tunstall, 2002; Zaller, 1992), but whereas the election conflict guarantees the dominance of the party agenda, the more accidental or unwelcome type of conflict serves as a trigger for the (investigative) media or alternative news sources to take the initiative and promote a political issue (e.g., Bennett, 1997; Niven, 2005; Robinson, 2001; Schattschneider, 1960/2003). In sum, conflicts generally increase media’s freedom to choose among alternative news sources. Hence, conflicts increase media’s agenda-building opportunities vis-à-vis the political actors they choose not to follow. However, during elections media limit this choice to one type of agenda: the agenda of the collection of parties, in the name of democracy. We will return to the specific agenda-building dynamics triggered by this latter type of conflicts in chapter 9.

Concluding, the agenda-building dynamics are turned upside down during elections. The media lend a willing ear to political campaigners. Paradoxically, journalists are seldom more sceptical about the activities of politicians than during campaigns. They are well aware that politicians’ only objective is short-term political benefit and they know that they are being played for that purpose (Semetko et al., 1991). This awareness does not prevent the media from giving full coverage to the issues that politicians put forward for political profiling. Gitlin appropriately describes the journalistic routines during elections as “reporters dancing attendance at the campaign ball while insisting that they were actually following their own beat”, (1991, p. 123). However, party dominance over the media agenda during elections does not mean that the media have no influence over the party image that is conveyed in the news, thus over whether a campaign is successful. For example, the issue-ownership hypothesis states that attention to some issues over others may favour the party with the best reputation in those areas (e.g., Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1994; Petrocik, 1996; Sheaffer & Weimann, 2005). The media also retain the power to frame the issues to their liking, with unpredictable consequences for the candidates (e.g., Norris, 1999; Price, Tewksbury & Powers, 1997; Valkenburg, Semetko & De Vreese, 1999). Such alternative media effects are beyond the scope of this agenda-building study.
Chapter Three  Mediatisation

Rather than advocating the primacy of politics, which is still often assumed inside and outside the academic society, the previous chapter sought to make a reasonable case for media influence on the parliamentary agenda in modern societies during times of routine politics. This chapter takes the plea for media power one step further. It is one thing to come up with evidence that the media play a vital role within parliamentary systems, but quite another to prove that media prominence is even on the rise, to prove that the daily activities of politicians are more and more attuned to media incentives. We refer to this trend as 'mediatisation' (e.g., Kepplinger, 2002; Mazzoleni & Schultz, 1999; Sheafer, 2001). Mediatisation of the political debate can easily be defined in terms of agenda building. It presupposes either politicians' increased responsiveness to media's caprices or politicians' loss of monopoly on news coverage.

H3 The influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda has increased compared with the influence in the reverse direction.

Speculations on the mediatisation of politics are widespread. How often does one not hear journalists being accused of creating mountains out of molehills? Nevertheless, such media hypes may keep members of parliament busy for days on end and occasionally result in a political landslide. As with the overall agenda-building question, empirical research lags behind the common-sense assumptions. Four groups of arguments will be discussed explaining either the enlargement of media's room for manoeuvre or the reduction of the latitude of politicians. The first three are familiar within communication theory: the revolution in communication technology (section 3.1), drastic changes in national communication regulations (section 3.2), and the declining political engagement of citizens (section 3.3). These three trends explain the rise of a modern style of journalism, to which the rules of the political game have been adapted (section 3.4). The final argument of this study, European integration, is introduced for the first time as a factor not to be ignored when explaining recent developments in the area of politics and journalism (section 3.5).

3.1 Technological revolution
The developments in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) of the past decades have led to a rapid expansion of the communication equipment within news agencies, ranging from satellite television, broadband cable to the Blackberry. These news agencies serve as the core suppliers of news to editorial offices all around the world. Whereas in previous times journalists would patiently wait in front of their typewriters for
their editor in chief to appoint them a story, or patrol the political head-
quarters for hours on end in order not to miss a minister's statement of the
day, shortages of news coming in from the agencies are now exchanged for
overflows of continuous updates. Not only is there more news at a faster
pace, but also the reach of this ever-freshening flow has become worldwide,
changing the nature of the stories at the journalists’ disposal. Journal-
ists can pick and choose among global, national, regional and local news,
an increasing share of which is devoted to international economic, finan-
cial and other semi-political stories alongside traditional politics (Tunstall,
2002). Journalists are dealing with scoops and deadlines almost every hour.
A newspaper is easily filled, which means that national political affairs must
share a much more restricted number of pages. Journalists are subsequently
no longer entirely left to the tender mercies of a politician. Moreover, besides
the greater supply of news, the higher speed of news considerably shortens
the time for journalists and politicians to reflect upon broader issues that
underlie the daily events. News becomes old hat more quickly. When politi-
cal initiatives and policies become stale news within a day or two, politicians
are tempted to give up their own agenda and instead link up with the media
agenda of the day so as to remain newsworthy.

3.2 Deregulation of the news environment

A second change within the media environment, hardly separable from
the first, is the liberalisation and subsequent expansion of media markets.
The deregulation of communication has led to a highly competitive news
environment in which consumer market shares are more important than
ever. Audiences must be entertained. When efficiency is the magic word,
news organisations can no longer afford to spend the lion’s share of their
resources to either tiresome or too complicated political matters. A new
genre has emerged: infotainment. Every broadcaster has at least one ’light’
version of a political affairs programme, each with its own journalist or
rather upgraded interviewer/presenter. Especially the arrival of commercial
television has led to a rapid increase in the number of journalists jostling
one another for the same – mostly evasive – political interviews, inevitably
implicating the print journalists in this turmoil as well.

Most of us will be familiar with screen shots of politicians surrounded by
dozens of microphones covering all but their faces; an every-day example of
the practice of contemporary journalism, also called pack journalism (e.g.,
Brants & Van Kempen, 2002). One of the media’s most important infor-
mation sources are competing media. It is a known fact that, in the news-
making process, media make sure to keep a close eye on their colleagues, a
mechanism also known as the ‘self-referential media momentum’ (Breed,
1955; Eilders, 2002; Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003; Mathes
& Pfetsch, 1991). At a minimum, the daily newspaper content is required
to cover the story that the others cover. But just getting a story is no longer
enough to beat the competition, since an endless choice and continuous update of news implies that the same array of stories is at the disposal of all journalists at the same time. The profit is to be gained in the packaging, the journalistic interpretation, comments and extra details (Tunstall, 2002). The profit, in terms of sales, but certainly also in terms of personal status, to be gained is in the scoop, giving the advantage to the proactive or audacious journalist. Since no journalist can serve two masters, the media will often spring their agenda on politicians in search of the juicy details.

3.3 The tuned in – turned off voter
The third trend within American and most Western European societies is the retreat of ideology as the primary axis around which daily life is organised. Individualism has taken its place. The traditional links of loyalty between parties, news organisations and especially voters have vanished. More often voters reach last-minute decisions at the ballot box, relying on an image of a political personality that left the longest lasting impression. Voters have broken adrift. Whereas in earlier times, they could fall back on univocal social precepts to effortlessly perform their civic duty, it is now up to them to gather information and form an opinion, preferably still as effortlessly as possible. So they turn to the media, which are the sole sources of information for the average citizen.

Tailored to the needs of their consumers, the media present politics in intelligible clear-cut pieces. To retain the interest of a politically turned off audience, which is moreover consistently threatening to switch to another channel, the emphasis has shifted from substantive background reports to on-the-spot analyses of party image and performance, often via personality evaluations of the party leaders. Politicians have a harder time holding on to their grassroots support. At the same time, the audience is divided across a large number of media outlets. One interview will no longer suffice to receive the exposure politicians are hoping for. More media will have to be paid a visit (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002).

The fading of ideology within society has also resulted in a rapprochement of the party-party positions, making it more difficult for voters to discriminate between them. When issue stances are no longer the stake of the competition, the opportunity to appear in the media, in order to emphasise the integrity and vigour of their political heavy weights, becomes all the more important to parties (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002). Hence, political actors and their advisors have to think hard about the presentation of the message they want to get across, since their opportunities to reach a sufficient part of the voters at once have dramatically shrunk in terms of time, space, and sound bites, while the need has strongly increased. The more media are an indispensable platform for politicians, the more politicians will comply with the preferences of the media.
3.4 Their joint effect: interpretative journalism

These three trends, which occurred during the past two decades: digitalisation, commercialisation and individualisation, are intertwined causes of the emergence of a modern journalistic practice, which from here onwards will be referred to as the 'interpretative' style of reporting (Patterson, 1993). Different countries in the western world got acquainted with these news journalistic customs at different moments in history, with France and the Netherlands lagging behind the United States and the United Kingdom for example. On the threshold of the 1990s, the calculating journalists of the interpretative tradition were familiar in the former countries as well. Blumler and Gurevitch (1995), in a British context, and De Vreese (2001) speak of a shift from a sacerdotal style, which still largely prevailed in the 1980s, to a pragmatic style of reporting from the 1990s onwards to refer to the same phenomenon.

Members of the political elite used to be high and mighty up in their ivory towers, while journalists would patiently wait at the gate for them to climb down and carry out their monologues. Whereas each party could rely blindfolded on its own partisan newspaper or broadcasting station to get its message across to a home public, the priorities of the media have shifted from pleasing the officials (sacerdotal or descriptive journalism), through the brief intermediate stage of serving public interest as watchdogs (investigative journalism) – which according to Patterson (1993) demanded a level of thoroughness, devotion and talent of journalists which could not be upheld for long – to pleasing the audience (pragmatic or interpretative journalism). Parties must now answer to a media logic (e.g., Altheide & Snow, 1979; Mazzoleni & Schultz, 1999). According to the principles of a media logic, events come to be defined as news only if they meet the criteria of news selection (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). These criteria have come to be tailored not so much to the public interest, but rather to media’s perception of audience preferences (Brants & Van Kempen, 2002). Political news is more and more subject to the same treatment as other stories (e.g., De Vreese, 2001). The central elements of this pragmatic approach, and its consequences for the level of control that politics still manages to exert over news selection, will be discussed next.

In the era of sacerdotal or descriptive journalism, political affairs, and elections in particular, were considered inherently newsworthy because they were believed to represent the backbone of democracy. Prudence and respect typified journalists’ approach of politicians. ‘Lapdogs’ is a frequently used metaphor to describe the journalists of those days (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002). The common way of communicating politics to the public was by drawing up integral reports of speeches and debates (Negrine, 1999; Patterson, 1996). Hence, politicians were automatically offered plenty of space to expose their viewpoints about the issues of their interest. The political agenda was used as the central point of reference to set the daily news agenda (Asp, 1983).
Interpretative journalism has decreased the amount of attention enjoyed by the national politicians, as numerous international, local, and financial stories also end up at the news desk every day. The political stories that do make it past the editor-in-chief are now largely exempt from literal transcriptions of politicians’ statements. A leading part is set aside for the journalist himself. His performance has become equally important for the construction of meaning as the performance of his interviewee. Studies have shown that sound bites of politicians have become shorter, whereas those of journalists have become longer (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002; Hallin, 1994). As a symptom of diminished deference, the journalist takes the liberty of interpreting statements as he sees fit. Facts and quotes are merely used for the purpose of illustration and anchoring (Patterson, 1996; Tunstall, 2002). Furthermore, reporters have developed the habit of incorporating their own opinions, mostly criticism, within these paraphrases. Their suspicion towards politicians is conveyed by instantly redirecting the central argument from politicians’ issue-based statements to the political opportunist motifs behind their statements. News stories about politics often take the form of a strategy frame (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). By exposing politicians’ professional strategies, the credibility of the original political message is damaged. Politics is explained in the light of the incessant battle between political opponents (Mazzoleni & Schultz, 1999; Patterson, 1996). Hence, politicians have lost direct control over the sound bites with this interpretative style of reporting (De Vreese, 2001; Mazzoleni & Schultz, 1999; Negrine, 1999).

In order to ensure the scoop of the day, in order to be one step ahead in a commercial and competitive news environment, journalists have adopted a much more proactive attitude towards their political sources. They cannot wait for politicians to prepare and hand over statements; they must go out and trigger news events themselves. Intercepting leaks is a preferred strategy of newsgathering. Whether a leak is deliberate or accidental, it allows the journalist to create a story in a highly efficient manner by confronting politicians with details about their opponents, which were unknown to them up until that moment (e.g., Tunstall, 2002). Journalistic ethos prescribes that facts must be checked and that there are two sides to every story. Listening to both sides is considered to be a prerequisite for the delivery of objective news stories. Publishing immediate reactions by political opponents has become a substitute for creating balance in news stories through tedious investigation by the journalist himself. The credibility and quality of an initial claim is measured against the extent to which the claim of the adversary is convincing. The politicians that are addressed to elicit this oppositional viewpoint must improvise their answers on the spot, which may put them in a very awkward position. Moreover, it assures the newsworthiness of a news item by an inevitable focus on conflict, regardless of whether journalists or their audience will be able to obtain a balanced understanding.
of the interests involved. To ensure the attention of the public, while keeping the appearance of critical watchdog, the media dwell on the secretive and negative aspects of political affairs, most often found in scandals and conflicts (Patterson, 1996; Tunstall, 2002). In the end, the self-referential media momentum of pack journalism reinforces the image that politics is nothing but a struggle for power, infighting and scandals (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002).

All of this has forced politicians in a position in which they themselves increasingly compete for the appropriate attention from the media, who, in turn, may be increasingly successful in setting their own agenda. However, politicians have taken precautions against what they experience as muckraking journalism. Media training has become part of the standard equipment of every politician. Every ministerial department has its publicity division and its professional spokesmen, the spin-doctors. Political communication has professionalised to the extent that one might just as well speak of political marketing (Tunstall, 2002). Journalists rather than citizens are the primary objects of concern. Politicians stage pseudo-events, such as conventions, press conferences or visits to a local pub, to attract media attention, just like commercials that aim at selling a desired image. The strategy of product placement is well thought through by communication experts: where do we stand amidst our opponents and public opinion? Which message do we send out to pull the largest audience away from our political adversaries? The political product is distributed in easily digestible chunks, labelled with ready-made messages, in order to seduce and convince as efficiently as possible and leave as little room as possible for alternative reflection. This has made the work of journalists more difficult. Spin-doctors often rub them the wrong way, enhancing journalists’ suspicion towards the political elite. Suspicious journalists are known to display little eagerness to indiscriminately copy political messages as well as much eagerness to expose (e.g., Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Brants & Van Kempen, 2002; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Morgan, 1995).

3.5 European integration
The fourth argument for increased media agenda-building power that we put forward in this study pertains to the influence of internationalisation on the national politics-media interaction. Not only are news media invited to consider publishing more international stories because technological possibilities have brought global information closer, but especially because intensive national involvement in international developments has become a political reality. Nation states participate in numerous international military, political and deliberative bodies, such as NATO, United Nations, G8, GATT, and WTO. None of these international bodies are as important to national legislation and daily life of European countries as the European Union. The focus will be on European integration throughout this section, since EU is
expected to be of particular importance to the position of national political institutions both in terms of their formal status as well as in terms of their status, or newsworthiness, in the eyes of the media.

Before entering the European integration literature, it should be noted that there are wide academic cleavages about questions as fundamental as whether the EU has gained power over the nation states or whether the nation states have accumulated power through their control over the EU. We will not begin to attempt a complete reconstruction of the debate or take position on every remaining question; and it should not be necessary, because this study does not aim at solving questions about how to understand the nature of the EU or the process of integration – or in terms regularly chosen by Europeanists, of interest is neither the explanandum nor the explanans (Jachtenfuchs, 2001) – or the remaining sovereignty of its member states (e.g., Aalberts, 2004). Note that this national agenda-building study even does not aim at identifying the influence of EU agenda on national agendas or the reverse influence. Without including the EU as an independent actor, this study rather aims at empirically testing whether the flows of influence between national agendas change as soon as they are confronted with European authority via the issues they deal with. The review below remains limited to the strand of research, multilevel governance (MLG), which can shed light over why and how such indirect influence might occur, as well as to the major schools of thought from which MLG has sprouted and which continue to be directorial in the discussions.

3.5.1 Multilevel governance
In the run-up to this fourth argument, we borrow from a perspective within an extensive body of political ‘Europeanisation’ studies (e.g., Bulmer & Radaelli, 2005; Cowles, Caporaso & Risse, 2001; Harcourt, 2002; Hix & Goetz, 2000; Mair, 2000), labelled multilevel governance. Emerged in the 1990s, the MLG tradition understands the political structures in contemporary Europe as resulting from the dispersion of authority away from nation states (See, for example, Aalberts, 2004; Anderson, 2002; Jachtenfuchs, 2001; Kohler-Koch, 2003; Marks et al., 1996; Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2003). MLG theorists reject the state-centric intergovernmentalism for its view that European integration is nothing more than a framework for well-organised negotiation and cooperation between states, in which each gives in minor domains in order to receive in domains in which the stakes are high. In this view, European policy is considered as little more than a pragmatic extension of foreign policy (Milward, 1992). Intergovernmentalism originated from rationalist institutionalism in international relations theory and came into existence in the mid-sixties. According to intergovernmentalists the core principle explaining government action in the process of European integration is rational choice. They posit that nation states remain the central players in an international structure of anarchy. Supranational
institutions either act in the national interests by raising the efficiency of international cooperation, or merely have a symbolic function (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2005; Hix, 2005; Schimmelfennig & Rittberger, 2006). Thus, the European institutions do not undermine but strengthen the nation states (Milward, 1992). Important names associated with intergovernmentalism are Stanley Hoffmann, Alan Milward (realist school) and Andrew Moravcsik (liberal school).

At the opposite end, neofunctionalism, the predecessor of the supranational school of thought, is dismissed by MLG scholars as well, although they agree that authority is reallocated to the supranational level. Neofunctionalists claim that member states have lost control of the integration process and that a state above the states has formed in a self-reinforcing dynamic. The mechanisms leading to the self-reinforcing development of supranational institutions differ considerably between rationalist supranationalism and constructivist supranationalism. Rationalists share rational institutionalism with intergovernmentalists. They adhere to the principle of path dependence according to which the costs of going back on previous decisions are much higher for nation states than of adapting national institutions and preferences to the new and perhaps unforeseen supranational structures. Of late, in the tradition of sociological institutionalism, constructivists have recourse to social learning theory to describe nation states’ willingness to create supranational institutions. They act according to their view of what is appropriate. Progressive institutionalisation reflects increasingly shared identities, norms and values, and stronger resonance of the EU’s legitimacy. Progressive institutionalisation in turn encourages the development of a collective identity and reinforces the perceived legitimacy (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2005; Hix, 2005; Schimmelfennig & Rittberger, 2006).

Among the leading scholars are Ernst Haas, Philippe Schmitter (neofunctionalism), Wayne Sandholtz and Alec Stone Sweet (rational supranationalism), Thomas Risse and Jeffrey Checkel (constructivist supranationalism).

In MLG elements from both streams are combined and the territorial boundaries of traditional polities are crossed (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). The nation state will remain a vital actor, but its claimed monopoly on EU policy making has been breached: competence is shared with others within a single multilevel polity (Marks et al., 1996). Originally, the dispersion of authority was thought to take place from one governmental structure to another, with both the European and the regional or local level in a winning position. Later, MLG’s idea of ‘multiple levels’ was extended to include non-governmental actors as well, such as the industry and social movement organisations (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2003). Consequently, a horizontal dimension was added to depict the political structures within contemporary Europe. To stress the contrast between the academic streams once more, the intergovernmentalists claim that these subnational groups will continue to have to defend their cases before their central governments. Irrespective
of the level of competence accorded by member states to the supranational institutions, the domestic hierarchical relationship between subnational actors and central governments will not change (e.g., Parsons, 2000). On this point, MLG scholars argue, admittedly in the legacy of neofunctionalism, that the further the domain of European competence reaches, the more national governments are deemed obsolete, and the more direct contacts are sought between the subnational level and the EU, changing the domestic relationships in a positive feedback loop (Jeffery, 2000; Parsons, 2000). However, unlike the supranationalist view, the position of member-state governments in the development of EU policy is still acknowledged. Across the governmental and non-governmental levels, actors engage in a continuously changing and non-hierarchical network of governance, in which nobody can claim monopoly over any policy domain (Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Marks et al., 1996).

Regional governments have managed to circumvent the gatekeeping role of their national governments and claim direct authority in specific EU policy areas (e.g., Jeffery, 2000). Likewise, interest groups have succeeded in organising their activities at the supranational level, often in cooperation with counterparts from other member states (Mahoney, 2004). The exact paths of causation of activity across multiple layers of the European polity are hard to disentangle. Both top-down or demand-side forces and bottom-up or supply-side forces are likely to have contributed to a system with various points of access for actors other than central state actors (e.g., Jeffery, 2000; Mahoney, 2004). It has essentially come about through mutual recognition by EU institutions and by subnational governments, interest groups as well as the industry of the opportunities they carry for one another. The European Commission may reward subnational and societal mobilisation through the instrument of direct subsidy. It may also provide access to the early stages of policy making through the ‘Committee of the Regions’ (CoR), regarding the subnational authorities, and the ‘Consultative Committees’, regarding interest groups. The Consultative Committees are formal platforms of access to the EU institutions and are typically appointed to the policy areas in which the input from society is deemed most rewarding (Mahoney, 2004). In turn, the Commission appreciates this additional pool of information sources, in order to become less reliant on central state executives (Marks et al., 1996). Moreover, the Commission turns to these alternative voices from society to enlarge the legitimacy of its preferred policy direction, thereby harnessing itself against possible objections from central governments (Christiansen, 2001; Keating & Hooghe, 2001). In general, it applies to subnational governments and interest groups as well as to the industry that they become increasingly active on the supranational level.

Hence, the creation of the supranational European authority led to a redistribution of resources and interests between national state actors and other non-state domestic-level actors, which may have affected their respec-
tive governance opportunities (see also, Anderson, 2002; Hix & Goetz, 2000; Jachtenfuchs, 2001; Kohler-Koch, 2003; Mair, 2000). In contrast to formal authority, competence or governance may be understood as the actual capacity to act autonomously (e.g., Richardson, 2006). National governments are still influential actors, but what has changed is that they are now merely influential actors among many others. We borrow the assumption of many actors sharing power from multilevel governance and extend it to the domain of political communication. Here, the assumption is that potentially weakened governance opportunities of national political actors caused by European integration, may change the journalist-source relationship and decrease the efficacy of officials to build the national media agenda. What follows is an exposition of the explanatory factors behind this assumption; first from the perspective of the national media, who might be increasingly drawn to outside incentives through the workings of professional news values (section 3.5.2); second from the perspective of national political actors, who face increased uncertainty as soon as they enter the domain of foreign politics (section 3.5.3).

3.5.2 Authority & proximity as news values
Shifts in political decision-making power may be of influence to the distribution of news values, which media attribute to European actors and European issues vis-à-vis national actors and national issues. In their selection of news and news sources, media are guided by news values, of which first and foremost is the degree of authority attached to the stakeholders (Bennett, 1990, 1997; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Hallin, 1994; Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997; Negrine, 1999; Schönbach, De Ridder & Lauf, 2001; Street, 2001). Actors are considered authoritative news sources by the media if, for example, they have expert knowledge about the subject, such as university professors, or primary information about an event, such as victims and eyewitnesses, but most importantly if they have the authority to directly influence the course of events, such as political officials (see chapter 2). The ability to exert influence on the media agenda is directly linked to the capacity of national politicians to determine the national political agenda: their monopoly on state authority.

Decision-making power is now redistributed across several state and non-state levels. Domestic-level politicians share this power with others, most importantly with foreign executives within the Council of Ministers (also known as the Council of the European Union or the Council), with the European Commission and with the European Parliament. Within several issue domains domestic-level politicians are subordinate to European-level executives, whose authority and subsequent credibility and legitimacy as news sources is enhanced. Likewise Bennett argues, “when decisive actors emerge outside of domestic political institutions, journalists can be expected to bring their voices and views into stories” (1997, p. 114). He considers this
one of the rules of thumb within journalism and calls it ‘the trail of power’. Whenever national executives are caught up in international discussions, involving foreign or supranational partners, journalists will turn their attention to whomever is most likely to have a final say in the matter, hence to whomever can be considered as the most authoritative news source.

On top of the significance of authority as a news value, media also deliberate on the relevance of the stories they print or broadcast to their audience. They mostly focus on their own, that is to say national, political centre, for that is where the decisions that may affect their audience, used to be taken. If this principle of *proximity* (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Semetko, De Vreese, & Peter, 2000; Sheafer, 2001) is applied in a consistent manner, its span broadens, since news originating from any other member state has become more relevant to the national public, and therefore more newsworthy to domestic media. The opinions of the French president may have tangible consequences for the Swedish population. More attention will go to issues abroad, most notably to foreign politicians (Bennett, 1997). Due to the enlarged scope of the news values authority and proximity within Europeanised issue domains, changes may occur in the mutual dependence between media and politicians (Wolfsfeld, 1997). National politicians, who are aware that their hands are tied because a given issue is dealt with in Brussels, will presumably engage less often in efforts to build the national media agenda with respect to that issue. Simultaneously, even if they do, journalists will consider them less often as a relevant source for such an issue.

3.5.3 Policy uncertainty

The agenda-building privileges of the national political elite may not only be challenged by the increased news value of international political competitors, as the previous section described, but also by the fact that its own political competence can no longer be taken for granted. We argue that multi-level governance causes national politicians to face increased policy uncertainty as soon as they enter the European arena. Piers Robinson’s definition of policy (un)certainty, which he uses to “theorize the circumstances under which the policy process is most susceptible to media influence” (2001, p. 533), is particularly helpful for explicating how increased power of the media agenda relates to European policy making. Robinson defines policy uncertainty as follows:

If an issue suddenly arises and no policy is in place, or if there is disagreement, conflict of interests or uncertainty due to an ambiguous policy between the subsystems of the executive there can be said to be policy uncertainty. Conversely, policy certainty is the result of agreement and coordination between the sub-systems of the executive (2001, p. 534-544).
To arrive at this definition he draws upon Hilsman’s model of the political process in foreign affairs, which “sees a number of different individuals involved in the policy-making process. Each of these has power. Some have more power than others, and the power of each varies with the subject matter. … Sometimes they succeed in getting their ideal solution adopted.” But the trade-off of this bargaining process according to Hilsman is “a policy that none of the power centres really wanted but a compromise that achieves something less than half a loaf for all” (1987, p. 82-83). We will now move on to explain how this concept of policy uncertainty, which Hilsman already associates with the multiple power centres involved in foreign policy in general, might especially apply to the multi-layered reality of the European Union.

3.5.3.1 EU policy uncertainty & agenda building

One can derive from Robinson’s definition of policy uncertainty that the more numerous the power centres involved in the decision-making process or the more dispersed the interests they defend, the more the policy-making process risks resembling a bargaining process with less than optimal outcomes for the actors involved. In the multi-layered reality of the European Union with its multiple points of access, not one single actor at any political level of any member state is certain of pushing through his issues and policy positions. On top of the conventional internal policy battle between national institutions referred to above, an international battle has to be fought. Due to the inevitable interference of foreign actors in more and more policy areas, routine domestic policy making may belong to the past.

Here we follow Wood and Peake (1998) who apply the concept of policy uncertainty specifically to agenda building. They argue that domestic policy issues involve fundamentally different, notably more routine dynamics than foreign policy issues (see also Bartels, 1996; Edwards III and Wood, 1999; Soroka, 2003). In order to make sense of the social environment, policy makers are guided by routines. Like the media they are forced to deal with only a selection of available problems at a time. Routines lay down a hierarchy on the issues to be dealt with and thus on political activity (Wood & Peake, 1998; Yanovitzky, 2002). Typically the policy-making process is in a state of equilibrium, long-term solutions are preferred over ad hoc solutions, and progress is incremental. Usually domestic issues gradually evolve into problems of public awareness. The sequence of steps is anticipated, and politicians have prepared themselves (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Wood & Peake, 1998; Yanovitzky, 2002). However, accidents happen, disturbing information turns up, events that require politicians to put their daily occupations aside and get ready for some damage control (Bennett, 1997; Cook, 1998; Hallin, 1994).

Wood & Peake argue that this latter rational of the unexpected especially applies to the domain of foreign policy issues; that foreign events involve a
higher dosage of unanticipated drama, to which the public is highly sensitive; that the (US) president’s sensitivity to the public perception “moves attention to foreign policy issues away from presidential discretion” (1998, p. 174). As a consequence of the fact that the news coverage is the source of the public’s concern with foreign drama, the chief executive is perceptible to the media agenda, which Wood and Peake indeed empirically confirm. Other empirical agenda-building studies explicitly focussing on foreign policy have also provided evidence against the classic notion of political dominance as presented in the aristocracy model (Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Morgan, 1995; Soroka, 2003). Foreign policy dynamics can more often than not be traced to conflicts and crises. The national executives are faced with the unpredictable behaviour of foreign actors or diplomatic incidents, in which they have something to win or lose, not least their reputation. However, in the process of developing the preferred intervention, they are forced to enter negotiations with equal or even mightier authorities, each with its own interests. Either officials are unprepared, or they are not in complete control over policy outcomes. According to Wood and Peake:

... the foreign policy agenda operates in the context of a continually unfolding international drama. The drama depends on the media for production and interpretation. The president is drawn into the drama as an integral part, but he has no script and often must respond in impromptu fashion to media interpretations (1998, p. 182).

In the context of what Wood and Peake describe as “a president without a script who must respond in impromptu fashion”, Wolfsfeld’s concept of the “level of control over the political environment” seems appropriate. He argues that “it’s the key situational variable that determines whether the news media will play an independent role in a political conflict” (1997, p. 24).

Nevertheless, a substantial body of literature claims a limited role for the media in shaping foreign policy. It is very important to note that these influential studies deal with the influence of the actual tone of news coverage on policy development, rather than with media’s role in raising the political prominence of an issue. Moreover, they evaluate media’s autonomous political role in one specific type of foreign events, i.e. preparations for or the course of US military interventions, for example in Vietnam (Hallin, 1994), Somalia (Mermin, 1997; Robinson, 2000), the Gulf war (e.g., Herman, 1993; Mermin, 1996) or the Panama invasion (Mermin, 1996). During such international conflicts, the executive position of the US president is exceptionally strong and the governmental communication apparatus highly hierarchical and controlled, and the media entirely dependent on official statements. Taking Livingston’s argument (1997) that media effects vary with the type of military intervention slightly further, we argue that academic support in favour of media’s political role emerges, as soon as the focus shifts from
(unilateral) military intervention to multilateral political negotiations, and from media opinion to the media agenda. So, although this prestigious and critical body of studies may immediately spring to mind when discussing the subject of media influence as we do in the present study, the political circumstances and media effects that these scholars assume are different. In his internationally comparative study of the CNN-effect, Virgil Hawkins stresses exactly this point:

> It is important to note that intervention decisions, however, are extreme examples of conflict-related foreign policy decisions. Academic discussion that is limited to intervention decisions will neglect to examine the much broader effect of the media (or rather lack thereof) on foreign policy decisions. ... While pushing a government to intervene militarily in a conflict may usually be beyond the power of the media, encouraging engagement in other such areas is not (2002, p. 233).

Such monopoly over foreign affairs typically associated with the US president, is out of reach for European heads of state as soon as EU issues are concerned; there are always fifteen of them (during the period of research), and all claim authority. National executives within the EU can no longer claim to be on top of proceedings, and certainly not to the same extent as the US president. This might negatively affect the status of the political agenda, and subsequently enhance the level of journalistic initiative in digging up new stories.

Of course the governments from the various member states enter into negotiation willingly rather than coercively and start out with the intention of cooperation and the realisation of common goals. In the practice of multilateral negotiations, however, several axes can be drawn alongside which diplomatic complications may occur. First, internally member-state representatives are tied down by obligations towards their parliaments and voters. Their lenience towards the negotiating partners can only go so far. Second, alongside the external intergovernmental axis, it is not rare for member states to attack a specific domestic policy matter of another member state, under the pretence of European harmonisation. This can be illustrated with France’s initiative to present the *Action Commune* to its colleague member states in Brussels in November 1996, a proposal for harmonisation of national drug policies in Europe. It was specifically targeted at adjustment of the Dutch policy, which has always been rejected by the French for being shamelessly liberal. It evolved into a severe diplomatic dispute until the Dutch were ready to sign an amended version of the proposal (see section 6.3). Third, alongside the external supranational axis, European institutions might also judge it necessary to penalise member states for failing to perform their legislative duties. For example, in November 1997 the European Commission published a report (Belloli) that strongly disap-
Mediatisation proved of the Dutch handling of the swine-fever outbreak. The commission imposed a financial fine on the Netherlands, which was not acceptable to the Dutch secretary of agriculture (see section 6.1.2). Diplomatic clashes are thus not just part of the larger international scene, but have proven to be right around the corner in the European Union as well.

3.5.3.2 EU policy uncertainty & national parliaments
This section, in which the theoretical link between policy uncertainty, European policy making and a more powerful media agenda has been established, will be concluded with the argument that the concept of EU policy uncertainty especially applies to national parliaments. To that end, a brief review follows of the actual changes to the competences of national parliaments, which the EU has brought about. What should cause academic and popular concern about the de-parliamentarisation of politics, if the European Parliament (EP) has nothing but gradually gained influence in EU policy making? Well, the fact that the extended co-decision procedure of the EP since the Treaty of Nice (signed in 2001), which permits the EP to participate in the decision-making process together with the Council of Ministers in more and more policy areas, still does not compensate for the loss of influence of the national parliaments (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Maurer, 2002). The transfer of sovereignty to the EU level has caused the loss of legislative control of national parliaments, but has not weakened the position of national executives to the same extent, because of the latter’s presence in the Council and direct involvement in European legislation. The executive may now place issues on the Council agenda without having consulted with the national parliament in advance. Importantly, it may also use the EU as a scapegoat by presenting European decisions to its MPs as accomplished facts on which negotiations cannot be reopened. The national executive not only has an informational head start, it is also in a position to determine which policy documents reach parliament at what time and in what ideological frame (Auel & Rittberger, 2006). Since the Maastricht Treaty (signed in 1992) qualified majority voting replaced unanimity in the Council of Ministers. A proposal is approved as soon as over 70% percent of the weighted votes agree. So, even in the case that a national parliament has done an excellent job in mandating its government, its policy position may still very well be overruled by other member states, eroding its policy-making influence even further (Maurer, 2002).

Nevertheless, the importance of national parliaments to the democratic legitimacy of the EU was officially acknowledged and enhanced in the Treaty of Amsterdam (signed in 1997) with the legally binding ‘Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union’ (PNP) (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Maurer, 2002). The PNP was created to improve unilateral parliamentary scrutiny competences. It holds that national parliaments shall receive all Commission documents that propose binding legislation for the
member states, but it does not make explicit whether it is the national government that is responsible for delivering these documents to parliament or some other institution. Hence, no one is responsible. Furthermore, the PNP excludes legislative documents from the second pillar (Common Foreign and Security Policy) from parliament’s right to information, as well as documents pertaining to the ‘Protocol on the integration of the Schengen acquis into the framework of the European Union’. Also the PNP commits the European Commission to distribute legislative proposals in time, in order to assure that national governments have sufficient time to discuss them with their parliaments. However, again it does not compel the governments to actually use this period for informing MPs. Finally, the PNP formally recognises the inter-parliamentary deliberative body COSAC, which is composed of representatives of the national European Affairs Committees and EP representatives. It is active in three policy areas: (1) freedom, security and justice; (2) legislative activities of the Union, especially the application of the principle of subsidiarity; and (3) fundamental rights. A structural shortcoming of COSAC is that MPs from the general EU affairs committees are represented, not MPs from committees specialised in the COSAC policy areas. This lack of specialised knowledge obviously limits their effectiveness.

Despite the aforementioned provisions in the PNP, and due to the limitations to the same provisions, the actual level of parliamentary scrutiny may vary considerably across the member states, and ranges from the right to receive information after the decisions have been made, ex-post information rules, to mandatory procedures of consultation and consent. It depends on parliaments’ strategies for institutional adjustment to enforce the necessary amount and type of information sufficiently in advance, on the formal relationship between government and parliament, on the national parliamentary culture, on parliamentary and public support for the EU, and so on (Maurer, 2002). Irrespective of parliament’s scrutinising capacity, the majority parties in parliament are first and foremost faced with a dilemma regarding the fierceness with which they intend to control their governmental representatives at the EU level. On the one hand, majority parties are expected to support their own government; on the other hand, they must hold it accountable according to the interests of the citizens. Compared with domestic affairs, there often is a stronger motivation among the majority parties to have the latter prevail, because the European agenda does not originate from the programme that both government and the majority parties agreed upon. There is a higher willingness to take into account the public agenda and public opinion. However, this critical stance may result in a less than optimal outcome at the EU negotiating table, because the executive sees itself bound by national interests. Irrespective of whether parliament is capable of drafting binding or non-binding resolutions, government is morally obliged to seek the consent of the parliamentary majority. But since a bad deal in the Council is in nobody’s interest, parliament may choose to
refrain from using this powerful tactic and grant their ministers some room for manoeuvre, while reducing their position to a merely symbolic one (Auel & Rittberger, 2006). Hence, the national parliament is irrefutably the institution that saw its sphere of influence most seriously compromised by the transfer of national autonomy to the EU. If EU policy uncertainty indeed favours the media agenda over the political agenda in the national agenda-building process, as will be empirically assessed in this study, this will certainly become apparent in media’s control over the parliamentary agenda. We will return to the subject of actual parliamentary influence in the countries investigated in this study in chapter 5.

3.5.4 The moderating role of Europe in agenda building

The argument throughout section 3.5 has been that European decision-making authority is expected to have a moderating effect on the agenda-building process (Baron & Kenny, 1986). European integration is thus introduced as an independent variable, as its contribution to the domestic socio-political process of agenda building is of interest. Most Europeanisation scholars studying European integration as an independent rather than dependent variable have focussed on institutional change at the domestic level (national politics). As pointed out earlier, opinions are fiercely divided about the extent to which the EU is capable of bringing about such institutional adaptation (e.g., Hix & Goetz, 2000; Olson, 2002). The most sceptical school contests any change because of the stickiness of institutions (see Anderson, 2002), others at least contest that such change would go as far as institutional convergence among member states as the level of adaptation depends on the level of ‘institutional fit’ – the greater the misfit between the national and supranational governance structures, the greater the pressure for national institutions to adapt (e.g., Börzel & Risse, 2000). Few studies have traced the impact of European integration on national politics (Börzel & Risse, 2007), let alone on the political process of agenda building, in which such an ‘uninstitutional’ institution as the media is a stakeholder. Conclusions from literature focussing on polities, with ample evidence for limited European impact, cannot be imposed on studies of politics. Anderson concludes after having found no Europeanisation of the national democratic polity:

At the extreme, it is as if we are looking at the well-preserved banks of a mighty river that altered course long ago – parliaments and other national political institutions and processes have survived in their original form precisely because they have become less relevant (2002, p. 817).

Institutionally, the European integration may leave the nation state practically untouched, but according to Anderson this is largely due to the fact that some polities have no need to adapt as European integration has simply
The democratic deficit closer to home

reduced them to political players of little relevance. Hence, the game of politics, and the actors who play a role of significance may then change within the original framework of institutions, procedures and rules. This is why the present study finds more leads in literature that chooses a governance perspective over a government or state-centric perspective, as outlined in section 3.5.1 on MLG. Nevertheless, despite the clear position chosen in this study, i.e. European integration might enhance media’s governance opportunities through altered the agenda-building relations between the media and parliament because of the latter’s political uncertainty when faced with European matters, we are well aware, as stressed earlier, that the academic discussion about the extent as well as the direction of European influence is alive and kicking. Hence, it is difficult to prevent the presented argument from being a contested one.

This level of contest prompts a careful approach to the question of where to locate such influence, if it indeed exists. As a natural point of departure, European influence on national politics is expected to be most prominent in policy areas of the strongest European decision-making authority. To stay clear of arbitrary impressions of decision-making authority, a judicial path is followed by having the three-pillar structure of the EU determine which policy domains are subject to which type of European decision-making authority. The precise contents of the three-pillar structure of the EU will be discussed during the selection of issues in the methodological chapter (section 4.1.2). The notion that especially politicians who are fully in charge feel entitled to press hard to build the media agenda, whereas journalists are easily convinced to follow, should thus become manifest in different distributions of power across different issue domains from different EU pillars of authority. In addition to the general time-specific hypothesis about media-tisation (hypothesis 3), which was also motivated by the three earlier arguments leading up to interpretative journalism, the fourth line of reasoning about European integration results in an issue-specific hypothesis as well:

H4 In issue domains with more European decision-making authority, media agenda-building power increases vis-à-vis parliamentary agenda-building power.

This hypothesis contends that the ability of domestic politicians to be the centre of orientation and attention of the news media, a structural approach to the media-politician relationship (Baisnée, 2001), should be substituted for a more dynamic/competitive one, in which journalists appoint such media privileges to ‘multilevel actors’ within a European context. Nevertheless, news media are known to be very much focussed on the domestic centre of politics. This is also true when journalists are covering European politics. A national swing is given to the story. The European Union still suffers from an information deficit (Baisnée, 2001; Gerhards, 1993; Meyer, 1999).
Several causes of this problem can be mentioned, of which we will quickly name a few. The complex and multiple interactions undermine the transparency of the European decision-making process. It takes a very long period of socialisation before European correspondents understand the proceedings themselves and become insiders (Baisnée, 2001). Additionally, negotiations are held behind closed doors. It is only when a decision is reached, that it is made public. The battle that led to a particular outcome would be well suited for media coverage, since it meets the criteria of media logic. Instead, journalists are forced to write their stories based on very technocratic elaborations (Gerhards, 1993; Meyer, 1999). This does not meet the wishes of the editors back home and European issues will easily lose out to more appealing stories (Baisnée, 2000). As long as there are no mechanisms through which the accountability of European politicians and the influence of European citizens are arranged, the information deficit will persist (Gerhards, 1993). Thus, we deem it more appropriate to hypothesise that less power of national politicians due to European integration will not primarily result in less national newsworthiness or visibility in the news, as one would expect in line with the news values (Bennett, 1990, 1997; Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Hallin, 1994; Kitzinger and Reilly, 1997; Negrine, 1999; Schönbach et al., 2001; Street, 2001), but in less influence to determine the national media agenda.

3.5.5 Agenda convergence within the European Union

So far, we have introduced four arguments that are expected to enhance the control of the media agenda over the parliamentary agenda, one of which is European integration. In the remainder of this paragraph on European integration, we will take a quick sidetrack away from explaining ‘mediatisation’ as such, towards establishing whether any such connection between European integration and the national agendas, the fourth argument, is at all plausible. It will be assessed whether the parliamentary agendas on the one hand and the media agendas on the other have become increasingly similar in different European member states. The aim here is twofold. First, it gives an idea of the degree to which political and media concerns are shared between different EU countries, thus whether the public debate is increasingly similar across the European Union and moves towards a common European debate. Second, it provides an indication of whether national agenda building in Europe might be contingent upon European integration.

The scope of domestic politics has expanded, or parts of foreign policy domains are domesticated. Either way of looking at it, the fact is that at the very least member states have agreed to sit down together and take their mutual wishes into account within specific policy areas. In other areas member states have voluntarily handed the European institutions full authority to control the policy agenda, which the executives now have no choice but to comply with. From the increased interdependence logically fol-
allows that the executive agendas of the European member states should have become more alike. They are confronted with identical problems, and they must respond to identical European directives. The executive agenda will be passed on to the national parliaments. The national parliaments, although not all of them equally well equipped for scrutinising their governments on the subject of European matters, nor always equally interested in doing so (Boerboom, 2004; De Vreese, 2003; Maurer, 2002), may be expected to increasingly take part in political debates that transgress national borders and that consequently also occupy their foreign European colleagues. A convergence of the national parliamentary agendas within Europe would logically result.

There are at least two reasons for expecting agenda convergence among European media as well, both of which we came across earlier in this chapter. First, the developments in the domain of information and communication technology have globalised the news service. News desks across the world are in business with a few gigantic news agencies. Media have the same continuously up-to-date abundance of mostly international stories, whether political, economic, or financial. Although journalists are still able to differentiate with the details they choose to emphasise and the way they gear the information to their home publics, a larger share of the newspapers is now filled with events that are likely to surface in the news desks abroad as well.

Second, it may be expected that media are not as indifferent to European integration as is often claimed. Domestic politicians have become more active on the European scene. The European policy agenda is a common acquisition not to be ignored by any of them. Converging political agendas might seep through to European media agendas. Moreover, since news originating from any member state has become increasingly relevant to national publics in other countries, it has become more newsworthy to national media. The self-referential media momentum – the phenomenon that journalists haunt each other to get the same scoops and use each other as source of information – may come to include foreign media as well (e.g., Breed, 1955; Elders, 2002; Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003; Mathes & Pfetsch, 1991). In this context, the British, French and German press are especially eligible for being closely watched and copied by others, because some of their newspapers are widely reputed for their high quality standards (*The Times*, *Le Monde* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* for example), but also because they belong to the three countries considered the power centre of Europe, often referred to as the EU3. Irrespective of the question of who influences whom, we expect a general trend towards corresponding agendas among political actors on the one hand, and among the media on the other.
H5 The national political agendas in EU member states display convergence over time.

H6 The national media agendas in EU member states display convergence over time.

Does the EU matter at all? That is the question that will be answered by confirmation or rejection of these two hypotheses. It provides evidence either in favour or against the earlier argument that European integration contributes to mediatisation.
Chapter Four  Methodology

This methodological chapter will elaborate upon the necessary stages to arrive from raw political and media data at the ultimate time-series models for causal inference. The first stage involved the collection of suitable data – parliamentary debates and newspaper articles – on which the content analysis was performed (section 4.1). Next, the theoretical concepts have been made operative, in order to construct a workable instrument for computer-assisted content analysis (section 4.2). The variable agenda, the central theoretical concept of the agenda-building process, has been defined for each of the issues in terms of the research instrument. The section on operationalisation is followed by an outline of the analysis. Estimation of the reciprocal causal relationship between the parliamentary and the media agendas required a multivariate and longitudinal design. The path towards the final design for analysis was twofold. To begin with, a set of diagnostic tests was performed on the time series (section 4.3.1). Time-series data are known to come with several statistical difficulties that needed to be tackled prior to the actual model testing. Finally, the resulting technique and models for hypothesis testing were specified (section 4.3.2).

4.1 Data collection
Four choices need to be considered in this section. Agenda-building studies ideally rely on time-series data. In our study it is not just preferable, but it is required to use a longitudinal design, since it is theoretically assumed that media will have gained a stronger hold on the parliamentary agenda in Western European countries, due to several technological and commercial developments in modern societies, as well as to internationalisation of politics within the European Union. From such an expectation also follows that a cross-national comparative design is called for. The first step of the data collection was the selection of countries. In a second step several issues were selected, based on their ability to discriminate between the lack and the presence of European interference into the agenda-building process. The third step involved the selection of the parliamentary and the media agendas; what type of parliamentary platform and which media outlets are both theoretically interesting and methodologically appropriate? In the fourth and final step the research period was chosen, to allow any changes in the agenda-building dynamics to surface.

4.1.1 Countries
If one is to arrive at a conclusion about the balance of power, about a shift towards increased media control and about the possible role of European integration in the empowerment of the media in modernised democratic societies, a single country design is not adequate, since it does not allow for
generalisations to other political and media systems. A cross-national comparative design can offer a way out from this ‘naive universalism’ (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990). The three-country design of this study is a considerable improvement of the majority of political communication studies so far. Some worthwhile contributions can be mentioned, however, for example those by Peter (2003a), De Vreese (2003) and Trenz (2004). The selection of countries in this study was based on a most different systems design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970). A most different systems design prescribes a limited number of countries that are very different on a central feature: a causal relationship, which emerges despite large country-level differences, proves to be a robust relationship (Pennings, Keman & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006; Przeworski & Teune, 1970). In contrast, a most similar systems design needs as many cases as possible to make the area of generalisation as wide as possible.

It was clear that member states of the European Union should be selected. That still left fifteen options (until the enlargement in 2004). Beside pragmatic considerations, such as limited availability of digital data, language barriers and personal interests of the researcher, more fundamental considerations have led to the selection of the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France. Ideally, one wants the cases to be representative of all contemporary EU member states; one thus wants them to embody the broad spectrum of national systems available throughout Europe. Although perfect representativeness in case of such complex and idiosyncratic systems as countries is not feasible, the most different systems design offers a way of approaching it by prescribing a selection of countries that are ‘most different’ on one central feature of interest: their outlook towards the EU, and similar on all other relevant features, and seeing whether the hypothesised relationship – European integration enhances media’s agenda-building power – emerges despite the heterogeneity of the countries’ relationships with the EU. Figure 4.1 schematically summarises the theoretical argument that underlies the cross-national design of this study. The remainder of this section will walk through each of the elements in the figure, starting with the most-different feature of the countries (top boxes). Next, it elaborates upon the context features that are expected to be sufficiently similar across the countries (bottom half of figure 4.1).

The countries were selected for their ‘most different’ attitudes and policies towards European integration. Such national outlooks affect whether and how the national parliamentary and media systems, and hence their agendas, are sensitive to incentives from Europe. Consequently, these outlooks might determine the extent to which the agenda-building process is moderated by European incentives. Let us now roughly sketch the differences in EU public and political outlook. See chapter 5 for a detailed overview of the historical political and media contexts in relation to European integration in the three countries. Eurobarometer data show the British to be among the EU citizens least pleased with all aspects of participation in
the European project, whereas the Dutch and the French have until recently figured high on top of the list of EU supporters (e.g., Pijpers, 2005; Startin, 2005; Thomassen, 2005). Until the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, they competed for the title of most pro-EU citizens, but for different reasons: the French identify most strongly with the EU in ideological terms, and the Dutch are most supportive of key events such as the arrival of the Euro and EU enlargement, which they pragmatically value for their economic benefits (Thomassen, 2005). The journalistic styles and opinions also diverge across the countries. The British media are known to be very outspoken, often aggressive, on the subject of European integration. Dutch coverage of the EU is neither utterly critical nor utterly supportive. The Dutch press approaches European integration pragmatically but constructively. The French press is among the most enthusiastic defenders of the (ideological and political) European cause (Pfetsch, 2005; Trenz, 2004).

Figure 4.1: Difference (top) and similarities (bottom) between the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France according to a most different systems design

The three countries also assume very diverging positions with respect to their EU policies. The UK entered the EU only in 1973. Ideologically still very much reluctant, they wanted to be part of an open European market. In 1978, the UK was the only member to decide not to get involved in the European Monetary System or the European Currency Unit. Likewise, it was the UK that negotiated the three-pillar structure of the EU, in order not to have to surrender national autonomy in all policy areas, specifically in the areas of social policy and defence. When it was decided to introduce the Euro in
1998, the UK again opted out. The EU has proven a fiercely politicised issue (Allen, 2005; Schimmelfennig & Rittberger, 2006). During all these decisive moments of European integration, the Netherlands has shown itself a reliable and progressive partner. As one of six signatories of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the Netherlands has supported the European cause all along the line, primarily for pragmatic economic reasons. The question of whether or not to go along with new EU initiatives has never provoked real discussion. Until the 2005 referendum, Dutch citizens had hardly questioned their government’s EU policy (De Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003a; Pijpers, 2005). France is also one of the six founding members and several French statesmen have defined the intellectual spirit of the EU. Although the issue of European integration has proven divisive in the battle between and within parties, the French authorities have always pushed for further integration. However, the friction between outside interference in ‘La grande France’ on the one hand, and the wish to expand its sphere of influence through a political EU on the other, surfaced on many occasions. The French membership is marked by contradictions (e.g., Balme & Woll, 2005; Drake, 2005; Elgie & Griggs, 2000).

These often opposite attitudes towards the EU do not appear from nowhere, but are the products of the national socio-political identities. The political systems of the three countries, and the related media systems, are indeed of a very different nature and origin, as thoroughly described in Hallin and Mancini’s *Comparing Media Systems* (2004). They have created three ideal-typical models of the connections between national political and media systems, to which they have assigned eighteen Western countries. The question of why the three present countries are representative of European member states is most concisely answered by the fact that each of their three models incorporates one of the three countries. The United Kingdom is assigned to the North Atlantic or Liberal model. The Netherlands is incorporated in the North Central European or Democratic Corporatist model and France to the Mediterranean or Polarised Pluralist model. According to Hallin and Mancini there are fundamental cleavages in political, journalistic and civic institutional traditions between the UK, the Netherlands and France. These institutional cleavages can be argued to naturally underlie the aforementioned diverging EU outlooks. For example, the supranational authority and bureaucracy of the EU conflicts with the free-market ideology in the Liberal UK and its commercial sensation-driven press. The pragmatic Dutch permissive consensus towards the EU as a negotiating partner – along with the inevitable bureaucracy and compromising – is consistent with the Democratic Corporatist strive to involve and appease all social groups (or pillars) in society by means of endless consultation, in which especially the Dutch excel. The strong role of the state in France as a Polarised Pluralist country conflicts with docile compliance to a supranational authority, which explains the occasional recalcitrance of France. At the same time it explains
its wish to be a forerunner in designing the EU as an extension of the French state. The media in France as in any other Polarised Pluralist country have never had a strong mass-binding function and are more elitist. This might account for the fact that the French press tends to prefer background reporting to sensationalism, giving a fairer chance to the EU than the British media. Apart from a description of differences in the political systems of the three countries, which will be discussed in section 4.1.3 on the political agenda and in chapter 5, we ask the reader to consult Hallin and Mancini’s thorough and detailed analysis, for further information of these ideal types and additional country-specifics. What matters for now is that the research design cut across traditional divides in the EU, with respect to the available media systems, the available political systems, and the resulting differences in EU outlook. This is why a comparison of precisely these three countries is especially worthwhile.

In order to allow the case selection to be ‘most different’ on one central feature, the surrounding national contexts should ideally be equal. Of course, country specifics can never be fully controlled. Therefore, only country characteristics that might also interfere with the agenda-building process as alternative explanations, should be held as constant as possible. In chapter 3, the features of the political and media systems that are expected to influence the agenda-building process have already been mentioned. They represent three aspects of modernisation, i.e. technological advancement in communication (section 3.1), commercialisation of the media system (section 3.2), and the disappearance of traditional voter-press-party loyalties (section 3.3). Translated into constant contextual country features, these three trends imply: liberalisation and professionalisation of the media systems, no formal links between newspapers and political parties, and importantly, no state intervention in media content, hence press freedom (see figure 4.1).

Again it is helpful to consult the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004). The cautionary remarks the authors express regarding reducing eighteen idiosyncratic countries to three ideal types, can help understand why the selection of countries sufficiently controls for alternative explanations for this study’s outcomes. Some nuances that Hallin and Mancini add to the models themselves show that the countries are indeed rather similar on the features of newspaper-party relations, commercialisation, and state intervention. They add:

We have also seen that changes in economic and political structure, together with the influence of technology and commercialization of media systems, particularly since the 1980s, has produced a process of homogenization that is substantially eroding the variations among national media systems that prevailed through most of the twentieth century. This process of homogenization involves, most notably, a weakening of the connections that historically...
tied the media in the Polarized Pluralist and Democratic Corporatist systems to political parties [italics added] and organized social groups, and a shift toward the commercial structures and practices of neutral professionalism [italics added] that are characteristic of the Liberal system (2004, p. 301).

From this statement can be inferred that also in France and in the Netherlands, political parties can no longer take the traditional loyalties of newspapers for granted. For example, during our period of research, the French and Dutch social democratic parties can rely on the loyalty of *Le Monde* and *de Volkskrant* no more than British Labour can rely on *The Guardian*. It must be added that, as part of Dutch pillarisation, it took the Dutch press a bit longer to break its political ties in the 1960s and 1970s. Second, the quotation refers to the level of professionalism in journalism, associated with commercialisation. This is another country feature that has been mentioned as relevant to agenda building and should be held constant. Only in the Polarised Pluralist model is professionalism expected to be low, and thus only in the case of France might it be a problem. However, as indicated in the quotation, there has recently been a trend towards increased professionalisation or commercialisation in these countries as well. Although the dual broadcasting system of the United Kingdom (1954) predates the introduction of commercial television in France (1984) and the Netherlands (1989) by thirty years or more (De Vreese, 2003; European Journalism Centre, 2006), we may expect the difference between the countries to have already become much smaller during our period of research. The national newspapers in the three countries are in private hands. All three countries currently have independent, deregulated and competitive news markets; the latter in contrast to Italy for example, where former Prime Minister Berlusconi owns three private TV stations, has political supporters run two out of the three public broadcasting stations RAI and has proven to use this influence as he sees fit.

Third, countries in the Polarised Pluralist model and the Democratic Corporatist model are characterised by strong state intervention in the media system. Hallin and Mancini immediately make a distinction between the type of state intervention in the Democratic Corporatist countries and the type in the Polarised Pluralist countries: in the former countries, including the Netherlands, it is not used to curtail the autonomy of the media, quite the opposite, whereas in the latter it often is. Does France then not meet the criterion of a free press? Yes it does, as France is singled out by Hallin and Mancini as a Polarised Pluralist country in which the political majority has no effective control over the media. In the context of public broadcasting, Hallin and Mancini state that compared with Gaullist France: "France moved significantly away from government control with the formation of the Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel (CSA) in 1989" (2004, p. 106). Although press subsidies are very high in France, they are intended for economically marginal papers and journalists to promote political diversity in the media.
Methodology

69

spectrum, not to restrict the freedom of the press. In this sense, France is rather Democratic Corporatist.

Hence, it is argued that Hallin and Mancini’s classification of countries in combination with their own cautionary remarks that the countries, especially France, in some respects resemble one of the other models more closely, is important support for the present focus on the UK, the Netherlands and France as modernised European member states, in a most different systems design. Agenda building will be tested for three European member states, which have historically maintained very diverging relations with the EU, but which are all stable and well-functioning representative democracies, where freedom of the press is highly valued, which have market-oriented economies and believe in a healthy mixture of the socialist and capitalist ideologies that also underpin the European Union.

One last essential element, which completes the cross-national design, is that European authority is operationalised in such a way that the three national agenda-building processes experience a similar EU input (see second lowest box in figure 4.1). All three countries have agreed that the EU has authority within issue domains that belong to pillar one of the EU, and to a lesser extent within those that belong to pillars two and three (see section 4.1.2). Hence, within the three-pillar structure, all countries are subject to the same judicial provisions. Therefore, by looking for European influence in pillar-one issue domains, a constant EU incentive is imposed on the three national systems. If and how this constant incentive – in spite of the dissimilar backgrounds of the three countries as sketched by Hallin and Mancini – eventually leads to similar agenda-building results is for this study to find out (see lowest box in figure 4.1).

4.1.2 Issues

Again for the sake of improving the ability to generalise the results of this study, a test of the hypotheses should not only be based on more than one country, but also on more than one issue domain. Four different issues were selected, which are expected to bring about their own policy-news interactions. Furthermore, to be able to discriminate between agenda-building dynamics within a European context and within a national context, on account of hypothesis 4, the selection of these four issues was based on the extent to which the decision-making power has been transferred to the European level. The intuitive underlying assumption of this formal distinction between issues is that European influence manifests itself nowhere better than in issue domains where the EU has effective power. This assumption is consistent with the argument of European public-sphere researchers that Europeanisation of the public sphere primarily occurs in EU policy domains, which is where the researcher should look for such trends (Adam, 2007; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004).
The democratic deficit closer to home

Two of the issues are typical examples of issues that fall within the monopoly of European decision making: agriculture and the environment. At the other end of the scale, the issue of drugs is still fully controlled by the nation state. A fourth issue is situated between the national and supranational level: immigration (e.g., Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Schimmelfennig & Rittberger, 2006). To demonstrate the rational behind this classification, a digression on the organisation of EU decision making follows next.

The three-pillar structure of the European Union was introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992.1 The Maastricht Treaty extended the Community’s competence to cover a wide range of issues in areas such as justice, foreign policy and social affairs. However, many of these issues were deemed too sensitive to render full control to the supranational institutions. Therefore, the Maastricht Treaty introduced the three-pillar structure to allow for supranational decision making on some issues (pillar one), while securing intergovernmental decision making when member states are not prepared to fully give up national influence (pillars two and three).

Pillar one is central to the political structure of the EU, also called the Community pillar. The agreements of the different European Communities, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, 1952), Euratom (1957) and the European Community (EC, 1967), are combined in the Community pillar. Decision making in pillar one is mainly organised along the lines of supranationalism. The supranational institutions, such as the European Commission and the European Parliament, act independently from the member states and have the right to introduce legislation at their own initiative. Not all member states need to agree with a decision for it to enter into force. The Commission proposes, the Council of Ministers decides by qualified majority and the EP ‘co-decides’. These supranational procedures of pillar one apply to a collection of policy domains, subdivided in (1) the Single Market, the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital across the member states, (2) fiscal and monetary matters: the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), (3) trade and competition, and last but not least (4) agriculture (Common Agricultural Policy, ‘CAP’) and the environment. Note that the EP is not formally involved in decisions about the CAP (no co-decision, only the Council decides) (e.g., Dinan, 2005; Laffan & Mazey, 2006).

1 The British time series start as early as 1988, at a time that the three-pillar structure had not yet been introduced. However, this should not pose a problem to the British comparison of the issues during those first four years, since the three-pillar structure of 1992 primarily made formal what had already been the practice in 1988. Gradually, during the research period, Europe’s grip may have tightened over the pillar-one issues, widening the gap between issues subject to EU versus national authority. Nevertheless, also in the earlier years the difference between these issues can be expected to be sufficiently notable for it to be useful to the present issue design.
Decision making in pillars two and three is based on intergovernmental cooperation. Member states must be unanimously in favour of a policy proposition, meaning that each country maintains strong control over the introduction of new legislation. Majority decisions are allowed for some issues, but only when they follow earlier unanimous decisions on the same subject. The European institutions are of minor importance, although pillar three does allow the Council to take action for the purpose of harmonisation of legislation across the member states. Also, parliament has an advisory role in pillar three, which it lacks in pillar two. Pillar two consists of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Pillar three includes matters in the area of policing and justice (ibid.).

On a scale from strong to weak political influence of the European Union on national legislation, the ordering of the issues moves from pillar one through pillar three to pillar two, and evidently at the far end all issues that do not belong to any of the pillars. Since the issues agriculture and the environment are incorporated in pillar one of the EU, it may be expected that if European integration indeed weakens the agenda-building power of national parliaments, these are the appropriate domains to look for such evidence.

Immigration is incorporated in pillar three (policing and justice) since the late 1990s. Some steps towards a common policy have been taken. The Schengen agreement in 1985 has lifted border controls between the participating countries and harmonised stricter checks on the outer borders as well as the visa criteria. Here, the UK opted out (Schimmelfennig and Rittberger, 2006). The member states are themselves responsible for the degree of rigidity with which asylum applications are judged or for the welfare provisions that applicants are offered. As an issue that is mostly dealt with on an intergovernmental level, with some authority for the Council and the European Court of Justice, it is situated somewhat in between national and European decision making. Immigration is therefore considered an issue ‘in transition’. The national parliamentary agenda should have weakened, but not to the same extent as the parliamentary agenda of pillar-one issues.

The final issue, drugs, is still dealt with on a national level. It has not been included in any of the three pillars; no regulation or framework exists at the EU level. The national executive has complete monopoly. To illustrate, the Netherlands was free to experiment with heroine distribution on medical prescription in 1999, just as the United Kingdom was free to reclassify cannabis from a class B to a class C drug in 2001. It is therefore expected that the national parliamentary agenda on drugs, the domestic-level issue in this study, has not lost as much ground compared with the parliamentary agendas of the other issues.
4.1.3 Political agenda

Parliamentary debates served to match the political agenda. However, there is no such thing as the political agenda. There are many different political actors with different types of agendas. The focus can be on institutional political actors such as parliament or government, but also on non-institutional political actors such as political parties and interest groups (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Since the interest of this study is primarily to assess the mutual dependence between national state authorities and national media, as well as changes herein, amongst others as a result of changes in formal state autonomy, the choice was quickly reduced to the institutional agenda of parliament or the institutional agenda of government.

Much can be said for both, if the decision were to be based purely on grounds of the ability to exert political power. However, the relationship between parliament and the media is considered of particular interest here, because of the similarity of their raisons d’être. Both are expected to act as guardians of national democracy. The essential means that allows them to do so is information. The risk of the media having the better of parliament is more imminent than the media stepping in the shoes of the executive and directing actual government action. Since MPs are officially elected and journalists are not, a focus on the balance of power between these two actors provides an interesting insight in contemporary democracy; after all, we know that the interest of citizens is not the only thing that drives the media.

Another choice one is faced with in an agenda-building design regards the choice for symbolic or substantive agendas. Symbolic agendas include all political forums intended for the communication or deliberation of political viewpoints, of which congressional hearings in a US context and parliamentary debates in a European context are most common, whereas substantive agendas include actual policy measures. In their thorough review of the agenda-building literature, Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006) argue that solely monitoring the number of bills that have been introduced, would underestimate media power, since a focus on the final stage of the political process would make it sheer impossible to retrace whether the media have at any point been involved in the process towards actual legislation. On the other hand, they are especially critical of a focus on the symbolic agenda, which in their opinion represents little more than an agenda of political rhetoric with no necessary consequence for policy, which would succumb much too easily to media pressure. Media influence on the political agenda would then be overestimated (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

However, to reinforce this claim, Walgrave and Van Aelst turn to examples that cannot be considered exemplary of all symbolic agendas. They argue that a public speech or a press release of the US president provides a weak indication of the presidential agenda, since it is specifically targeted at the media. Political communication designed to gain the approval of the media and the public would automatically take into account media preferences. They cer-
tainly have an important point when it comes to public speeches, press conferences, press releases and so on. Nevertheless, they wrongly elevate these occurrences of public communication to the same level as parliamentary debates or congressional hearings. In opposition to their statement regarding symbolic agendas that “(reaching) the media is the message”, debates in parliament are an inherent and central instrument of parliamentary performance. Their primary audience is not the media, not even citizens, but other politicians including members of government. Of course, the debates are open to the public, but they are not primarily designed for the purpose of winning public resonance, but for winning political support by conveying party opinion to competing parties as well as to the government. Permission for government action is granted if a majority of MPs is convinced during a debate. Amendments to law proposals are defended during a debate. Proposals by parties themselves are discussed during a debate. Government members must account for their decisions before a scrutinising parliament during a debate. Indirectly, the purpose of any political activity is winning public approval, but nevertheless it cannot be denied that the duties of parliament are essential to the political system, and it is largely during parliamentary debates that these duties are fulfilled. It is no coincidence that the term parliament is derived from the French word parler (to talk).

Parliament finds itself at the heart of democracy in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Although the one-party majority in the British parliament is of the same political colour as government and antagonism is limited, and although parliamentary decisions are not binding, the British executive cannot afford to ignore or disrespect parliament. The British executive dominates policy making, but is faced with a thoroughly controlling parliament. Both in the domestic and the European arena, the ultimate tool of legislative influence is to threaten the executive with public embarrassment (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Carter, 2001; Maurer, 2002). The strength of the Dutch multi-party parliament is in its legally binding legislative competence. The Dutch ministers depend on legislative approval and legislative confidence, although the consensus-based tradition and coalition politics prevent frequent frontal confrontations between the executive and the legislature (Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002). Although the Dutch parliament largely dispenses of the same formal powers at the EU level, its lack of interest in the EU has made it turn out a very passive player (Boerboom, 2004; Hoetjes, 2001). De Gaulle’s constitutional reform in 1958 has drastically curtailed the legislative powers of the French parliament. The French president and the prime minister, who may or may not share political colours, share executive power and have sheer unlimited policy-making freedom. The rationalised French parliament is regarded as a useful source of expertise and of public opinion. Although the political involvement of French MPs is actually stronger in the European arena, critical scrutiny of the executive and decision-making influence is still hardly part of the deal (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Szukala
& Rozenberg, 2001). This is the first of the reasons why France serves as an additional case alongside the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, both of which make up the core of this agenda-building study. See chapter 5 for details on the legislative competence in the three countries.

Following agenda-building studies by Bartels (1999), Baumgartner and Jones (1997), Edwards III and Wood (1999) and Soroka (2002), political discussions in parliament (or the US congress in these studies) rather than policy initiatives should show in this study when politicians are alerted and interests are raised. They indicate whether issues are being considered for political action.

4.1.4 Media agenda
Much less academic disagreement has been expressed about what type of data is indicative of the media agenda. Newspapers are a common source of data, but sometimes also news broadcasts are used. The argument that television is a much more important medium than the press nowadays, is an often-heard one. This argument is especially relevant for studies about media effects and public opinion, such as agenda setting. A study aiming at media effects on politics depends less on the reach of a medium than on the reputation it enjoys. Contrary to the public, politicians keep an eye on both elite and more popular media outlets. Moreover, the correspondence between the issues covered in television news and the issues covered by the press, as well as the correspondence among newspapers, is extremely high (Kleinnijenhuis, 2003). Also, more than once have studies found newspapers to have the strongest agenda-setting effect on TV news (Golan, 2006; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2003; McCombs & Min, 2006). It should therefore not make a great difference whether the media agenda is derived from the agenda of broadcasters or of the press.

Data on the media agenda were derived from articles from three newspapers in each of the countries. All three may be rated among the quality press. The ‘yellow press’ was excluded for reasons of comparability. Although there are some important examples in the United Kingdom, notably The Sun, they do not exist in the Netherlands or in France. There are more easily accessible newspapers that aim at a mass audience, but their content should still be considered as fairly serious news coverage. Moreover, the reasoning regarding television news applies here as well: agenda-building research is not aimed at media effects on the audience.

In the United Kingdom, in the Netherlands as well as in France, three newspapers of record were selected, including Sunday editions. All have high national circulation, although not necessarily the highest circulation. The three dailies per country diverge with respect to their political outlook (e.g., Hallin & Mancini, 2004). See table 4.1 for the selected titles as well as their political colours and circulations, ordered from the most right-wing to the most left-wing papers per country.
Table 4.1: Newspapers with editorial line, circulation and source per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Editorial line</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>liberal conservative</td>
<td>625,584</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sunday Times</td>
<td>idem</td>
<td>1,162,538</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Independent</td>
<td>progressive, liberal democratic</td>
<td>213,820</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent on Sunday</td>
<td>idem</td>
<td>225,200</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>progressive, social democratic</td>
<td>331,447</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC Handelsblad</td>
<td>liberal conservative</td>
<td>248,504</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>popular, central right</td>
<td>272,826</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Volkskrant</td>
<td>progressive, social democratic</td>
<td>295,244</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Figaro</td>
<td>liberal conservative</td>
<td>325,289</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Monde</td>
<td>progressive, central left</td>
<td>320,704</td>
<td>Lexis Nexis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libération</td>
<td>libertarian social democratic</td>
<td>136,945</td>
<td>CD-ROM (&lt;-1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lexis Nexis (1999&gt;)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The numbers represent the average daily circulation restricted to the British, Dutch and French territories respectively. The totals include the average daily circulation of exclusively the national newspapers. The British numbers are based on data from early 2006, available through the website of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) (www.abc.org.uk). The Dutch numbers represent the total average of 2005, available through the website of Cebuco (www.oplagen-dagbladen.nl/). The French numbers also represent the total average of 2005 and are available from the website of the Office de Justification de la diffusion (OJD) (www.ojd.com/fr/).

---

4.1.5 Research period

Longitudinal designs have the advantage over one-shot measures that the conclusions rely not merely on the caprices of the day. Using time-series data to test hypothesis 1 (who influences whom?) and hypothesis 4 (media power is stronger in EU issue domains than in national issue domains) allows for an assessment of agenda building as a ongoing process, rather than as an accidental state of affairs, which increases the robustness of the results. Furthermore, an important part of this study is about trends, about shifts in the balance of power through time (hypothesis 3) and about convergence between the agendas of European countries (hypothesis 5 and 6), which necessitates comparisons through time. The question then was which period the data should encompass.

A first consideration was of a practical nature. A large-scale automated content analysis is faced with practical difficulties, which limit the freedom to choose the ideal time frame. The design depended on the availability of digital archives. Not all data sources are equally modernised in that respect. This notably affected the possibility to go back in time, while ruling out
some sources altogether. This aspect was particularly problematic in the case of the availability of the French debates, which inevitable limits the time series that could be used to reconstruct the French agenda-building process. Besides the fact that the French parliament is less powerful than its British and Dutch counterparts, the limited length of the French time series is the second reason why France is considered an extra case on top of the UK and the Netherlands, rather than a central case in the analysis. A second consideration was of a much more substantive nature. The period of research should coincide with the developments in society described in the theoretical chapters, to enable uncovering the subsequent trends towards mediatisation and agenda convergence. Hence, the trend towards an interpretative style of journalism as well as the transfer of state authority to the European Union had to be perceptible in the years covered by the data.

Let us start with the question when interpretative journalism became the rule rather than the exception in each of the three countries. Although commercial media outlets were introduced in the United Kingdom as early as the 1950s, the pragmatic journalistic attitude towards politicians only really became common practice in the early 1980s. This decade saw the realignment between British voters and party politics. The global possibilities as a result of the ICT-improvements also only really exploded during the 1990s. The professionalisation of political communication was still developing during the mid-1990s (Hodess, Tedesco & Kaid, 2000). Because of the close relations with the United States and Britain’s long-standing adherence to the principles of a market economy, the term forerunner applies to the United Kingdom more than to any other European country. This is certainly true for the professionalisation of political communication and journalism. Whereas the interpretative style forced its way into British journalism since the 1980s, it took another decade approximately for the first signs of a comparable trend to become apparent in Dutch journalism, due to the heritage of pillarisation and the late arrival of media competition (e.g., Brants & Van Kempen, 2002; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Likewise, interpretative reporting did not effectively settle in France until the late 1980s/early 1990s. Strong literary influences in the French press account for the fact that it continues to lean towards contextualisation and substantive though opinionated news coverage. Efficiency and sensationalism found their way into journalism only when declining state subsidies and commercial media initiated the battle for the readers during the late 1980s (Chalaby, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Besides the trend towards interpretative journalism, the period of research should encompass a trend towards increased EU decision-making authority. Importantly, the 1990s witnessed key events in the history of European integration. The Maastricht Treaty or the Treaty of the European Union, signed in 1992 and enforced on November 1 1993, replaced the denomination ‘European Economic Community’ with ‘European Union’. This
change of name was to communicate the treaty’s most important achievement, which was to extend the initial economic objective of a common market to political integration. The three-pillar structure was introduced (see section 4.1.2). Also, the decision on the introduction of a common currency, the Euro, was taken (Dinan, 2005; Laffan & Mazey, 2006).

The Treaty of Amsterdam, signed in 1997 and operative since May 1 1999, represents another noteworthy step in the integration process. It was drafted as an amendment to the previous treaties, not as a substitute. Among its most important objectives is securing the fundamental rights of citizens. Noteworthy is also the inclusion of the Social Charter in the treaty, which guaranteed the rights of workers. It was signed by the United Kingdom as well, which up until now did not wish to participate in a common policy on social matters. A final example of the importance of this treaty to the integration process, is the enhancement of the competences of the European Parliament, in an attempt to fight the democratic deficit of the Union (Dinan, 2005; Laffan & Mazey, 2006).

The Treaty of Maastricht and the Treaty of Amsterdam are two fundamental treaties as far as the surrender of national competences to the European Union. Two events, which merely affect a single EU development but are nevertheless worth mentioning, are the Treaty of Nice, signed in 2001 and enacted on the 1st of February 2003, which provided for the enlargement of the European Union with twelve Eastern European member states, and the official introduction of the Euro in 2002. After some decades of stagnation (Voerman, 2005), the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium thus represent a crucial period for integration, both in terms of political integration and in terms of the European legislation directly affecting civil life. One treaty is not included in this time frame: the Single European Act, signed in 1986 and enacted in 1987. It was the first to modify the founding Treaties of Paris (1951) and of Rome (1957), but it was mostly limited to the creation of a single market (Dinan, 2005; Laffan & Mazey, 2006).

Summarising the above, the timing of interpretative journalism would prescribe the period of research to cover the late 1980s and the 1990s in the case of the United Kingdom and the 1990s in the cases of the Netherlands and France. The timing of the European key events would prescribe a period encompassing the 1990s and the turn of the millennium. Taking into account the technical availability of the data, of which the political archives imposed the greatest restriction, British data were collected from November 1988 up to the end of 2003. The start of the Times and the Guardian was equated with the date of the first available parliamentary debate. The Independent and Independent on Sunday were available from 1989 and 1990 onwards respectively. Section 4.2.1.4, which elaborates upon the precise calculation of the scores for attention, will discuss how the scores were corrected for this non-simultaneous start of the different British newspapers. The first available Dutch debate dates from October 1 1995. Again this date was used
as the starting point for the collection of all Dutch newspapers. December 31 2003 also marks the end of the Dutch time frame. Although these time series were five years shorter than the British series, they still enclosed the Amsterdam Treaty, the Treaty of Nice and the introduction of the Euro. It has already been mentioned that the availability of French parliamentary debates posed a problem. The first debate dates from October 1998 and the latest from December 2003. The articles were selected to match this time frame. The series thus only covered five years, which is long enough for an agenda-building analysis as such, but may be problematic from a comparative and historical point of view. Any interpretative practices in French journalism are already well established in 1998. Furthermore, the analysis cannot account for any changes in agenda building that may have resulted from the two fundamental European treaties, the Treaty of Maastricht and the Treaty of Amsterdam.

4.2 Operationalisation

The content analysis employed in the agenda-building part of this study may be understood as a thematic content analysis (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis & Van Atteveldt, 2006), also referred to as a descriptive content analysis (Wester, 2006, chap. 1). Contrary to a relational analysis, a thematic analysis is directed at describing textual data in terms of the objects of interests, rather than at determining how different objects are related to each other. Characteristic of this study’s approach to content analysis is that it used computer assistance to record textual occurrences of predetermined words, which indicate the objects of interest. Such a thematic automated content analysis corresponds to what Krippendorff (2004, chap. 12) refers to as a dictionary approach to content analysis.

According to Fred Wester (2006) the central feature of any content analysis is (translated by author): “looking for indicators by means of a recording instrument, in which the objects of interest and the corresponding room for interpretation have to a certain extent been fixed” (2006, p. 19). In the case of automated content analysis, fixing the room for interpretation is a point of special attention. In order to maximise the semantic validity of the recordings (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 13), the theoretical concepts must be translated into precise categories of semantically related words that correspond as accurately as possible to actual occurrences within the textual data. Krippendorff defines semantic validity as follows: “the degree to which the analytical categories of texts correspond to the meanings these texts have for particular readers or the roles they play within a chosen context” (2004, p. 323).

Content analysis that uses human coders, guided by a codebook, to interpret the meaning of texts and assign word occurrences to theoretical concepts, relies much less on exhaustive lists of synonyms that may refer to the targeted semantic concept. With a limited set of coding rules, human interpretation is able to judge the semantic value of a textual expression,
although the degree of accurateness varies from coder to coder. Because of the large numbers of documents in this study, it will be clear that the possibility of manual content analysis is excluded. Computers lack the ability to interpret and judge for themselves. They merely execute commands. Every performance that is desired of the computer must be explicitly stated in unambiguous rules. Every possible textual variant of the concept of interest, whether synonym or hyponym, must be inventoried and specified.

Apart from the advantage that large amounts of data can be processed, which is a prerequisite for cross-national comparative and longitudinal agenda-building research, an additional advantage of automated content analysis over human coding is that the often problematic inter-coder reliability is no longer an issue. Computers never get tired or bored and computer judgements have a consistency of 100% (Namenwirth & Weber, 1987). The operationalisation of the central concepts, the procedure for document retrieval, the coding procedure, the research instrument (a collection of keywords and disambiguation rules) and its validation, will be discussed next.

4.2.1 Procedure

The model of agenda building includes one central concept: the agenda. An agenda was conceptualised as the amount of attention that is paid to an issue within one time unit, irrespective of whether the parliamentary agenda (debates) or the media agenda (articles) was measured, and irrespective of which of the four issues was targeted. In turn, attention was made operative as the number of textual occurrences of any issue-specific keyword. The amount of attention was established per article or debate that deals with any of the four issues.

In this thematic automated content analysis we were interested in determining how a document, an article or a debate, should be described in terms of the amount of attention that it devotes to the objects agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration. In order to arrive at a score for issue attention per document, four steps had to be taken. The first step in the procedure logically consisted of document retrieval. Because a computer was used to process the data, the documents necessarily had to be gathered from digital databases. A selection of search terms was defined and fed into the digital databases. This procedure will be discussed in section 4.2.1.1. In the second step, documents were identified as either relevant or irrelevant to the research objective. This validating procedure regarding the relevance of documents is discussed in section 4.2.1.2. The irrelevant documents were excluded from further analysis. The third step concerned the recording of the actual attention paid to issues in the retrieved documents. A score was assigned to a document based on the frequency of issue-specific keywords. In order to do so, a wordlist – or a dictionary in Krippendorff’s terminology – with detailed keywords and disambiguation rules for each issue was drafted and validated. This wordlist will be discussed in section
4.2.1.3. As the fourth and final step, a score for issue attention was calculated for the relevant documents, discussed in section 4.2.1.4.

To make these steps possible within the framework of an automated content analysis, custom-made software was developed by Van Atteveldt.2 This software was used to transform the raw digital documents to a uniform input format (XML), to search all documents in the database for the presence of these keywords, and to count the hits provided that they occur in the correct semantic contexts (for another application of a similar content analysis, see Ruigrok & Van Atteveldt, 2007). Let us now take three steps back and discuss them one by one.

4.2.1.1 Step 1: retrieving the documents
The first step was to select debates and articles from the selected newspapers, in the selected countries, during the selected period of research, which discuss one of the four issues. All newspapers were available from the Lexis Nexis database. The articles from Libération that appeared before 2000 were available from the CD-ROM Libération Les archives published by CEDROM-SNI. From 2000 onwards the articles were again available from Lexis Nexis (see table 4.1). Initially, for each of the four issues a limited list of broad issue-specific search terms was drafted. The newspaper articles were selected by feeding these search terms into the search engine of Lexis Nexis or of the Libération CD-ROM. With a full-text search, only those articles that contained one of the search terms in the text as a whole were picked.

The websites of the parliaments are the best source available for parliamentary debates. The British debates were downloaded from the Internet site of Hansard, the official report of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The French debates were downloaded from the website of the French parliament.3 However, the search engines of these websites leave much to be desired for a researcher who is interested in all debates held over a period of five, eight or fifteen years. For practical reasons, the British and French debates were therefore integrally retrieved, irrespective of the issues discussed. The Dutch debates were ordered from the Dutch publishing house for government documentation SDU Publishers. These debates were therefore selected according to a classification system of SDU, which is based on policy

2 Wouter van Atteveldt is currently engaged as a PhD-student at the Dept. of Artificial Intelligence and Dept. of Communication Science of the VU Amsterdam. For computational or other technical specifics of the automated content analysis, please see http://www.cs.vu.nl/~wva.
3 The British debates were downloaded from: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmhansrd.htm. The French debates of the eleventh legislature (until 2002) were downloaded from: www.assembleenationale.fr/11/debats/. Those from the twelfth legislature (from 2002 onwards) were downloaded from: www.assembleenationale.fr/12/debats/.
domains. Implications of the different retrieval strategy for the Dutch data, are discussed in footnote 7 on page 71. In order to establish the relevance of the debates of all countries, and in order to obtain comparable political and media data, the debates were checked afterwards in a full-text search for the presence of the same broad search terms as the ones that were used to select the newspaper articles.

Although it is not uncommon for researchers to base their analysis directly upon the number of hits for a few search terms generated by the search engine of Lexis Nexis for example, in this study it is important not to confuse these search terms for document retrieval with the detailed keywords that will be discussed in the following section. The keywords (in combination with disambiguation rules) composed the true recording instrument of issue attention, whereas the search terms were merely a first selection mechanism through which the relevance of the documents to the four issues of interest were roughly defined.

4.2.1.2 Step 2: validating the selection of documents
The second step was concerned with creating a corpus, which only included documents that actually pertain to one of the issues in this research: agriculture, the environment, drugs or immigration. This is a matter of semantic validity at the document level. Using broad search terms with little restriction to select the debates and the articles has the advantage of enhancing the recall of the selection: the ratio between the documents with actual semantic relevance to any of the four issues and the total amount of possible relevant articles out there, which would have been picked up by a perfectly unambiguous list of search terms (higher recall implies a smaller error of omission or type 2 error). However, there is always a trade-off between recall and precision. Precision is the ratio between the number of justly selected documents and the total amount of documents selected. The less specific or restricted the search terms, the more ambiguous they remain, the lower the precision: the higher the chance of including documents without relevance to the issues of interest (which corresponds to a higher error of commission or type 1 error). Hence, the level of precision was the main problem with the current selection of documents: it is likely that the broad search terms retrieved too many irrelevant documents. Therefore, two groups of disambiguation rules were applied to the corpus of selected documents to establish semantic validity at the document level. At this early stage of the content analysis, the article in the case of media data and the debate in the case of parliamentary data represented the context unit (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 5).

First, a random sample of the debates and articles included in the database was individually (and manually) examined to see whether their subjects indeed pertained to one of the four issues. The software dtSearch allowed walking through the documents one by one. The requested search
terms were highlighted on the computer screen and presented in their textual context. This textual context immediately showed the relevance of the document by pointing out the semantic validity of the highlighted search term: does the search term have the correct meaning in the context of this document. As a result, the four lists of search terms with which the documents were initially downloaded, were interactively refined by adding extra restrictions to the terms that appeared too broad or too ambiguous, in order to exclude the documents that referred to wrong semantic contexts from the analysis. For example, a central keyword for the drug issue is unsurprisingly the word ‘drugs’. However, we were neither interested in publications about the efficacy or side effects of new medicines, nor about the stock-market quotation of the pharmaceutical industry. The first disambiguation rule was formulated by listing all the initial search terms with Boolean connectors, and extending them with extra restricting keywords that the manual validity test proved necessary. To illustrate, the original search terms for ‘drugs’ were repeated and extended with a range of words pertaining to various semantic domains of the word ‘drugs’ other than ‘narcotics’ in combination with the Boolean connector ‘not’ (see Krippendorff, 2004, p. 280, and the next section for examples of Boolean operators). After this rule had been applied to the database, a sample of the remaining documents was inspected until an acceptable level of precision was achieved.

Second, only in the case of the media data a second rule of disambiguation proved necessary, in order to guarantee semantic validity at the document level. The aforementioned visual inspection of the documents showed that many of the irrelevant articles were published in the sports and entertainment sections of the newspapers, for example. One can easily imagine that film or book reviews include words that refer to asylum seekers, farmers, junkies or environmental disasters. However such forms of fiction seldom accurately reflect current political discussions, and were therefore undesirable types of media coverage to this study. These rules were not applied to the parliamentary debates, since every discussion that is scheduled there, is deliberate and meant for political debate; there is no film or sports section during parliamentary discussions.

Table 4.2: Size of the final corpus for content analysis per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>FR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary debates (days)</td>
<td>2,349</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper articles</td>
<td>251,942</td>
<td>166,419</td>
<td>52,642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once these two disambiguation rules designed for the document level were applied and irrelevant documents were filtered out, the corpus counted a total number of 251,942 British (covering fifteen years), 166,419 Dutch
Methodology

(covering eight years) and 52,642 French newspaper articles (covering five years). Since debates do not naturally consist of comparable sections, the number of days on which one of the issues was discussed is a more meaningful unit: 2,349 days of British debates, 332 days of Dutch debates and 558 days of French debates were included.4

4.2.1.3 Step 3: recording attention & validation

The most important question in step 3 of the content analysis was how to arrive at a valid semantic representation of the issues of interest in the form of a wordlist (e.g., Krippendorff, 2004, chap 13). A semantic representation of each issue domain was created, known as ontology in the world of semantics (e.g., Calvanese et al., 2005; Minsky, 1975; Smith, 1995; Van Atteveldt, Kleinnijenhuis, Oegema & Slobach, 2006). This ontology has the form of an elaborate tree of keywords. Although it may appear as though the construction of such a wordlist is a technical matter as we walk through the individual steps and elements, it is really nothing but a representation of a priori knowledge about the issue of interest. Each issue domain was defined by thematic subdomains, which together were meant to be mutually exclusive and cover the issue of interest. These subdomains functioned as indicators of the issues and were thus identified with a keyword or a combination of keywords (multi-word units) themselves. Whether the indicators were represented by a single word or by a multi-word unit, we will refer to them as keywords from here onwards. These subdomains could often be divided into more specific themes and keywords. Consequently, the wordlist of each issue was made up of synonyms, for example both ‘drugs’, ‘narcotics’ and ‘controlled substances’ or both ‘herbicide’ and ‘weeds killer’, as well as hyponyms, for example ‘windmills’ and ‘biomass’ as subcategories of ‘sustainable energy’ or ‘Pakistani’ as subcategory of ‘immigrant’. Hence, the research instru-

4 The difference between the number of British and French debates versus the Dutch debates, is due to the fact that SDU only selected debates in which an issue was the primary subject, whereas British and French debates were selected with the Lexis Nexis search engine when one of the search terms was mentioned. The British and French debates include more peripheral hits, which we could have excluded, thereby reducing their number. The first filter on document relevance, manually establishing the relevance of a sample of debates, resulted in a more restricted set of search terms. Problems resulting from a dissimilar selection method were largely obviated by this filter, since British and French debates that initially answered too loosely to the selection criteria were excluded. Any remaining lack of correspondence between the debates in the different countries made little difference to the results, since the score for attention is not a dichotomous variable – either there is attention to an issue in a document or there is not – but increases with the number of hits per article. Hence, British and French debates with only peripheral issue relevance – only one or two hits – hardly contribute to the overall scores with which the agenda-building models are estimated.
The democratic deficit closer to home

The research instrument equipped with an extensive collection of keywords per issue that was as exhaustive as possible was not ready for use yet. It has been emphasised earlier that automated content analysis cannot rely on any inferential capacity on the part of the computer. It does not know how to distinguish between keyword occurrences in different semantic contexts. A hit counts as a hit, and since words frequently have ambiguous meanings, a hit may very well be a faulty hit for the purpose of this study. For example, it does not distinguish between ‘pill’ in the context of ‘narcotics’, which should be registered as a hit, and ‘pill’ in the context of ‘birth control’, which should be neglected. A wordlist can only be considered a valid ontology, when the keywords are semantically disambiguated. The problem of word ambiguity is one of the main challenges of computerised content analysis, and has received wide attention among scholars of computational linguistics or artificial intelligence (e.g., Hassell, Aleman-Meza & Arpinar, 2006; Ide & Veronis, 1998; Kilgarriff & Palmer, 2000; Yarowsky, 2000).

Hence, in order to avoid including incorrect occurrences in the scores of attention, clear-cut coding instructions were fed into the computer by

Table 4.3: Number of keywords per issue per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Drugs</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The British, Dutch and French instruments of automated content analysis are available from the author upon request. The lengthy dimensions of these wordlists prevented us from publishing them in this book.

5 The British, Dutch and French instruments of automated content analysis are available from the author upon request. The lengthy dimensions of these wordlists prevented us from publishing them in this book.
extending the initial wordlist with disambiguation rules. The keywords were individually linked to disambiguation rules, which prescribed that a keyword had to occur simultaneously with one or more other words (from the same semantic context) or could not occur with specific other words (from different semantic contexts) in the defined context unit. A keyword hit was only included in the final score if the criteria of its disambiguation rule were met. These rules were formulated with Boolean operators. Examples in natural language are: ‘keyword not within 5 words of word x’, ‘keyword and (word x or word y)’. To illustrate, genetic* w/2 modif* (various spellings of ‘genetic modification’, including ‘genetically modified’), greenhouse effect? (‘?’ allows for one extra character), controlled substance?, application? w/5 asylum, are examples of entries in the wordlist, assigned to the issues agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration respectively. Depending on the exact formulation of the disambiguation rule associated with a keyword, the context unit was a varying window of text within a newspaper article or debate. The context unit to which the disambiguation rule applied was either the document as a whole (‘not’, ‘and’, ‘or’), or a ramped window such as the sentence (‘not w/20’, ‘and w/5’), or the paragraph (‘not w/30’, ‘and w/50’).

The semantic validity of the combinations of keywords and disambiguation rules in the wordlist was optimised by visually inspecting which keywords were counted as hits in a random selection of documents, and which relevant other words were not. As in the validation procedure at the document level (step 2), documents were retrieved from the database and individually inspected in dtSearch. The disambiguated keywords appeared highlighted on the computer screen. If words were wrongfully identified as relevant to any of the issues, the problem could easily be diagnosed from the surrounding context, and the disambiguation rules could be refined accordingly. It quickly became apparent that a few inadequately disambiguated keywords were responsible for around 80% of the unwanted hits. Also, other words appearing in the text surrounding the highlighted keywords gave an impression of whether certain thematic subdomains of an issue were entirely overlooked by the wordlist. If this appeared to be the case, new keywords with disambiguation rules were added to the research instrument. Hence, in an interactive process the wordlists were checked, refined, checked and refined, until an acceptable balance was found between the errors of commission and omission: between the number of wrongfully included hits and the number of relevant but neglected hits.

Both the detailed elaboration of the wordlists and the operationalisation of attention contributed to the accuracy of the present method of content analysis. A lengthy list of keywords is less important if the researcher measures issue attention by counting the number of articles or debates devoted to the issue. Although this is common practice in agenda-building research, it is less accurate than measuring attention by counting individual keyword
The democratic deficit closer to home

hit as was done here. If a document is selected based on the occurrence of a keyword in the title, there is a serious chance of missing out on relevant discussions that happen to not mention the keyword in the title. If a document is selected based on the single occurrence of a keyword somewhere in the text’s body, no distinction is made between a discussion that zooms in on the topic of interest and a discussion that merely mentions the topic in the margins. Issue attention is then both easily under- and overestimated.

4.2.1.4 Step 4: calculating the scores for attention

How were relevant keyword hits in relevant documents transformed into scores for attention ready for further analysis? The recording unit (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 5) was the location of words or of word combinations, which might turn out to be keywords or not. Not all locations were considered to be equally important. Some keyword hits were assigned a greater weight than others. In the case of newspapers a distinction was made between hits in the headline plus the leader, and hits in the body of an article, whereby the former received a greater weight than the latter. The score of attention was made up of the sum of the number of hits in an article’s body multiplied by 1, and the number of hits in the headline or leader multiplied by 2. This decision was based on the assumption that a keyword in a headline or leader indicates special commitment to the issue. Such a hit should have a greater impact on the score than a hit in the sidelines. Due to the lack of comparable structure in the debates, every hit was treated equally. The score of attention in the case of parliamentary debates was calculated by taking the sum of keyword hits within one debate.

To deal with the non-simultaneous start of the three British newspapers, as was indicated in section 4.1.5, a weight of 1.5 was appointed to media hits in years with two newspapers, in order to prevent an artificial increase in the amount of publications. Likewise, hits for the Times and the Independent were multiplied with 6/7 as soon as their Sunday editions were introduced, to tone down an artificial increase of articles due to one extra weekday. The Dutch and French newspapers start at the same point in time, and no Sunday editions have been introduced, which means that no additional transformations needed to be made.

An agenda is not measured at the level of one article or debate. If one wants to know the intensity of the discussion about the BSE crisis, it is meaningless to pick out one newspaper article among many and decide whether many or few words were spent on the subject within that single article. The agenda of one discussant (here either parliament or the media) is a phenomenon through time. It refers to the total package of contributions and should include all publications of the actor of interest, during a day, a week, a month or a year. The frequencies of keyword hits, weighted for item importance, were aggregated per time unit into separate scores of issue attention on the media agenda (articles) and on the parliamentary agenda.
(debates). The combination ‘document x time unit’ was the unit of analysis. The media and parliamentary scores were then ready to be compared from one time unit to the next. At this point the phase of content analysis had finished and the phase of statistical analysis set in, which is the subject of discussion in section 4.3.

4.3 Methods for data analysis

The final methodological stage of this study, the stage of analysis, is an extensive one. This section includes all the technical steps that proved indispensable to arrive from the raw output of the content analysis: the scores for issue attention, at the final specification of the agenda-building model, which was used to test the hypotheses. In this section, the reader runs a fair risk of drowning in a swamp of statistical analyses. Therefore, an overview of all statistical tests performed and discussed in this chapter, along with their aims and consequences, is presented in table 4.4 as a manual for the reader. We will quickly walk through the structure and subjects of section 4.3, with the help of the first two columns of table 4.4.

The first column indicates the structure of the coming sections. A distinction is made between diagnostic tests and the final test of the hypotheses. The diagnostic tests are subsequently divided between tests on features of the single variables (the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda) and tests on features of the relationship between these variables. The second column indicates the exact problems that were tackled with the specific tests, as well as the section number in which they are discussed. Why not just proceed with the statistical analysis of the agenda-building models straight away? Because multivariate regression models, especially of time-series data, are susceptible to several pitfalls. The diagnostic tests gather indispensable information for a correct and an optimal specification of the final agenda-building models. In order to avoid seriously biased estimations of the causal relationships between the parliamentary and media agendas, fundamental assumptions about the data had to be respected.

As column one indicates, some of these assumptions apply to features of the separate variables: the assumptions of normality and stationarity; some of these assumptions apply to the modelled relationship between the endogenous and exogenous variables: the assumptions of no autocorrelation and no heteroscedasticity in the regression residuals. Before an analysis on a series of interdependent observations in time could proceed, it had to be identified whether the data displayed a violation of these four assumptions and which measures were necessary to minimise their impact on the final models for hypothesis testing.

Diagnostic statistics were not only used to identify whether the data met the conditions of multivariate analysis, but also to gather the last pieces of missing information for the optimal specification of the agenda-building model. Two questions regarding the relationship between the endogenous
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of test</th>
<th>Leading question</th>
<th>Pitfall to circumvent</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostics: features of variables</td>
<td>Do the variables have a normal distribution?</td>
<td>'Parametric' significance tests assume a multivariate normal distribution. Risk of meaningless tests.</td>
<td>Box-Cox test</td>
<td>Logarithmic, quadratic or no transformation of the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the time series stationary?</td>
<td>Trends or random walks in time series violate the assumption of independent measurements; overestimation of the strength of relationships.</td>
<td>Augmented Dickey-Fuller test</td>
<td>Difference the data in case of trends etc.; opt for a vector error correction model (VECM) rather than a VAR-like model in the case of non-stationary variables that are co-integrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostics: features of relationships</td>
<td>What is the time span of agenda-building influence?</td>
<td>A too short time span renders agenda building undetectable, due to a large variation in response times: all diodes of shocks and responses appear as unique. A too long time span will render causality undetectable since causes and effects show up within the same time unit.</td>
<td>1) Vector autoregression models of weekly time series, neglecting instantaneous influence, to identify the optimal time unit. 2) Schwarz Bayesian Information Criterion of VAR models with preferred time unit, to identify optimal lag length.</td>
<td>Choose the periodicity (weeks or months) plus the number of previous lags to be included in the final models that allows for a direct answer to the research questions of agenda building, without having to bother with details about the precise time dynamic of the influence process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there residual serial autocorrelation?</td>
<td>Statistical tests will become inefficient in case of residual serial autocorrelation.</td>
<td>Breusch-Godfrey test comparing residuals of the weekly and monthly VAR models.</td>
<td>Prefer the data (weeks or months) that exhibit least serial autocorrelation; if serial autocorrelation is unavoidable, then opt for ARMA (autoregressive moving average) models, instead of simple autoregressive (AR) models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there residual heteroscedasticity?</td>
<td>Statistical tests will become inefficient in case of autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity.</td>
<td>Engle's ARCH test comparing residuals of the weekly and monthly VAR models.</td>
<td>Prefer the data (weeks or months) that exhibit least ARCH. If ARCH is unavoidable, then opt for Engle's ARCH models, instead of simple autoregressive (AR) models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does long-term causality exist between the agendas?</td>
<td>Causal relationships in the short run (accounting for instantaneous influence) are less plausible, but not impossible when a complete lack of cumulative influence (instantaneous influence excluded) indicates that both agendas are unrelated in the long run.</td>
<td>Granger causality tests, neglecting instantaneous influence, which account for cumulative influence over the course of a year.</td>
<td>Preliminary indications about the hypotheses concerning agenda building in the short run. Is causality likely? Who is likely to be the strongest agenda builder based on cumulative influence in the long run?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis testing</td>
<td>How are the final agenda-building models to be specified?</td>
<td>Potential pitfalls have been circumvented by previous diagnostic tests.</td>
<td>Structural equation models, accounting for reciprocal, instantaneous and seasonal influence</td>
<td>Accept or reject agenda-building hypotheses (see chapter 7 for results).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and exogenous variables (the media agenda and parliamentary agenda assume both roles) remained. First, what is the time span of agenda-building influence? This question was answered with vector autoregression models. These models indicated the time unit that should be chosen to optimally model the mutual flows of agenda-building influence between parliament and the media, as well as the number of previous time lags that should be taken into account. In other words, with what delay does an issue on the media agenda end up on the parliamentary agenda and vice versa? Second, does empirical evidence support the plausibility of the causality that was theoretically argued to exist between the parliamentary and the media agendas in this study? There would have been no point in testing which agenda is the stronger of the two with a model that turned out misspecified because it erroneously assumed a causal relationship between both agendas in the first place. This question was answered with Granger causality tests. These tests simultaneously gave an impression of the long-term balance of power between the agendas, as will duly be explained.

Once the seriousness of the violations was known and the appropriate measures were taken, and once the optimal time dynamic to capture the flows of agenda-building influence as well as their plausibility were know, we could leave the stage of diagnostics and move on to the actual tests of the hypotheses (section 4.3.2). The hypotheses of the balance of agenda-building power were assessed with structural equation models. The discussion of the analysis finishes with a final test to make sure that the agenda-building influences between parliament and the media, as indicated by the structural equation models, could be trusted to be real relationships, rather than spurious correlations due to the omission of real-word cues in the models.

4.3.1 Modelling strategy: diagnostics
In the current section several statistical techniques will be introduced, which were either used to diagnose potential problems in the data or to diagnose the existence and delay of causality, as was announced in table 4.4. The tests that applied to features of the single variables (normality and stationarity) will be addressed first. The remaining tests applied to the relationship between the variables. Because tests on the regression residuals necessarily follow the actual estimation of a regression model, the vector autoregression models, which indicated the time dynamics between the agendas, will be discussed prior to the tests on residual autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity. This diagnostical stage finished with the tests on Granger causality. The statistical procedures in this section should thus be understood to be part of a preparatory phase in the run-up to hypothesis testing, which was completed by means of structural equation modelling. All results of the diagnostic tests are presented in this chapter, immediately following the respective tests.
4.3.1.1 Do the variables have normal distributions?
Many powerful statistical tests rely on the assumption that the variables follow a normal probability distribution. If the variables are not normally distributed, a transformation of the data is called for. Nevertheless, limited violations of the normality criteria may still result in reliable estimations, since in general these tools are fairly robust (e.g., Pennings, Keman & Klein-nijenhuis, 2006, p. 98). A Box-Cox test is a very useful tool to diagnose which would be the optimal transformation to render the two variables, political agenda and media agenda, as close to normality as possible. The Box-Cox transformation is defined as $T(y) = (y^\lambda - 1) / \lambda$ if $\lambda \neq 0$, and as $T(y) = \ln(y)$ if $\lambda = 0$. The $\lambda$-statistic indicates the optimal transformation.

However, there were twenty-four time series for two agendas, four issues and three countries. Each different set of data would generate a different $\lambda$-statistic for the optimal transformation. This would undermine the parsimony and comparability of the agenda-building models. If the data of each agenda were transformed in a different manner, how was one to understand the meaning of each different agenda-building model? Therefore, a uniform transformation was strived for, which represented the optimal solution for the time series as a whole and resulted in a satisfying level of normality in the greatest number of time series.

One of the common solutions to handle skewed data is taking logs. The logic behind a transformation with a log to the base 2 is, for example, that twice as much news coverage would only lead to an increase in attention on the media agenda with one unit. The Box-Cox test was performed to reveal whether a log transformation ($\lambda = 0$) offered a satisfying solution in this case as well, or whether working with the raw data ($\lambda = 1$) or with a square-root transformation ($\lambda = 0.5$) would result in probability distributions closer to normality.

The distribution of the data on the media agenda and the political agenda in both countries appeared to be skewed: a few months of extreme attention for an issue are accompanied by many months of virtually no attention. The assumption of normality was violated. A transformation of the data was needed to attenuate this skewness. The Box-Cox tests revealed that a log transformation, which is commonly used to tackle non-normality, would reduce the skewness of the variables too much. These tests showed that the optimal $\lambda$ is $\lambda = 0.40$, $\lambda = 0.37$, and $\lambda = 0.37$ for the political agenda in the UK, the Netherlands, and France respectively, and $\lambda = 0.02$, $\lambda = 0.12$, and $\lambda = 0.02$ for the media agenda in these countries. Especially in the case of the political agenda, there is a large gap between these figures and a log transformation that assumes that $\lambda = 0$.

Moreover, a log transformation considers the difference between only one article and no article as equally important as a news wave that doubles the amount of attention when attention is already high. The influence of outliers on statistical tests is decreased in favour of more moderate or routine
attention. This means that taking logs would reformulate the agenda-building question as the question of whether politicians and journalists are silent at the same time. Log transformations lead to higher effect parameters of autoregressive lags of a year (political silence due to parliamentary holidays), but to weaker effect parameters for simultaneous hypes on the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda. Since the primary objective of this study was to estimate the short-term crossover relations, it was preferred to adjust the data as little as possible: if effects are to be attenuated, then let it be the autoregressive \textit{intra}-agenda effects, which are expected to be stronger anyway, rather than the crossover \textit{inter}-agenda (or agenda-building) effects.

For example, the correlation coefficient of the parliamentary agenda in Britain with the parliamentary agenda of one year earlier equals $r = 0.57$. This correlation increases with an elementary square-root transformation (which is equivalent $\lambda = 0.5$) to $r = 0.73$, with an optimal Box-Cox transformation ($\lambda = 0.40$) to $r = 0.76$ and with a log transformation ($\lambda = 0$) to $r = 0.82$ ($N = 728$). The instantaneous correlation coefficient between the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda, which amounts to $r = 0.40$, decreases rather than increases as a result of the same transformations: down to $r = 0.24$ with the square-root transformation ($\lambda = 0.5$), down to $r = 0.20$ with the optimal Box-Cox transformation ($\lambda = 0.40$ and $\lambda = 0.02$ for the political and media agendas respectively) and down to $r = 0.11$ with the log transformation ($\lambda = 0$). In the cases of both the autoregressive correlation and the crossover correlation the square-root transformation comes closest to the results of the optimal Box-Cox transformation.

To illustrate, figure 4.2 displays the probability distributions for the British political agenda without any transformation ($\lambda = 1$), with the optimal Box-Cox transformation ($\lambda = 0.4$), with a log\textsuperscript{2} transformation and finally with a square-root transformation ($\lambda = 0.5$). An inspection of these histograms indicates that the distribution after a square-root transformation is more similar to the Box-Cox distribution than either the distributions of the raw data or the logged data.

Compared with the raw data the estimation of the autoregressive parameters will still be higher, while the estimation of the crossover parameter will be lower. However, compared with the log transformation the underestimation of the crossover parameter is much more reduced. We opted for the same square-root transformation ($\lambda = 0.5$) of the political agenda and the media agenda, which resulted in almost normal distributions: the correlation between the optimal and the square-root transformations is: $r = 0.99$, $r = 0.99$, and $r = 0.99$ for the British, Dutch and French political agendas respectively, and $r = 0.97$, $r = 0.99$, and $r = 0.98$ for the British, Dutch and French media agendas.
4.3.1.2 Are the time series stationary?
In designs involving longitudinal or time-series data the researcher is faced with another question that needs to be addressed in advance in order to avoid unreliable results. Before any regression-based technique for model estimation can be performed, it must be assured that the univariate time series are stationary. Time series are said to be stationary when their statistical properties, or probability distributions, are invariant over time. More specifically, time series are stationary when they meet the criteria of a constant mean, a constant variance and a constant covariance (for example, the

---

6 Another way of dealing with J-shaped probability distributions often associated with count data, such as in figure 4.2, is using Poisson regression. We will not opt for Poisson regression, since there are no Poisson regression techniques for multivariate analysis available with the same qualities regarding the assessment of reciprocal influence as structural equation modelling.
covariance between $y_{t-11}$ and $y_{t-8}$ must be equal to the covariance between $y_{t-7}$ and $y_{t-4}$, because of equal distance between the observations). This is required for an unbiased estimation of the parameters of the data, since it ascertains that the properties of an observation at a certain point in time are equal to the properties of observations at any other point in time (e.g., Lütkepohl & Krätzig, 2004, chap. 2).

Put differently, it is about making sure that the series do not manifest a persistent trend, which is caused by their own history, but may be erroneously attributed to an exogenous variable. Pure deterministic trends are rare. Such series decrease or increase with a constant value each time unit. One might think of the development of the human age: on each birthday we are officially one year older. Stochastic trends, known as the ‘random walk’ and the ‘random walk with drift’, are more likely to occur. In a random walk, the current value depends on its previous value plus a random shock ($y_t = \beta_1 y_{t-1} + \epsilon_t$).

The data-generating process does not forget its own past, and its development through time is explained by an accumulation of shocks. In a random walk with drift a constant is added to the equation. The current value depends on its previous value plus a constant and a random shock ($y_t = \beta_0 + y_{t-1} + \epsilon_t$). Here, the memory of the random walk series is even enhanced by the deterministic impact of the constant. The values are amplified at each next time point. It looks as though the series are drifting away. Series are stationary as long as $-1 < \beta_1 < 1$ in $y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 y_{t-1} + \epsilon_t$, which implies that the process will forget its own past sooner or later (depending on whether the value of $\beta_1$ is closer to zero or closer to one respectively) (ibid.).

Neglecting non-stationarity involves a high risk of finding a statistically significant relationship between variables that is really a spurious one: the exogenous and endogenous variables may be entirely independent from each other. A common remedy in case of non-stationarity is to difference the time series: $y - y_{t-1} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 y_{t-1} - y_{t-1} + \epsilon_t$, so that only a time-independent constant and the random component remains in the equation: $\Delta y_t = \beta_0 + \epsilon_t$. Depending on the extent to which the data are integrated (have a memory), they may also be fractionally differenced (e.g., Clarke & Lebo, 2003). Non-stationary series are said to contain a unit root. Augmented Dickey-Fuller unit-root tests were performed to test whether the media agenda and the political agenda of each of the four issues in each of the three countries were stationary or whether a transformation of the data was required prior to the estimation of the parameters of the agenda-building models.
Table 4.5: Stationarity of weekly and monthly time series (Augmented Dickey-Fuller test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Parliamentary agenda</th>
<th>Media agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>week</td>
<td>month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>-9.40**</td>
<td>-9.94**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significant test-statistics lower than the critical values indicate stationary processes: the null hypothesis that the time series contain a unit root may be rejected. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01. Weeks (eight lags): Critical values (5%/1%): -2.86/-3.43 (UK); -2.87/-3.45 (NL), and -2.88/-3.46 (FR). N_{UK} = 789; N_{NL} = 431; N_{FR} = 274; Months (one lag): Critical values (5%/1%): -2.89/-3.48 (UK); -2.89/-3.51 (NL), and -2.92/-3.57 (FR). N_{UK} = 182; N_{NL} = 99; N_{FR} = 63. The cells contain the ADF-test statistic in levels, with a constant and no trend. Unit-root tests were performed with STATA 8.0.

Because the final choice between a weekly and monthly time unit was made with vector autoregression models (see the next section), which diagnosed the actual interaction speed of MPs and journalists, the Dickey-Fuller tests were performed on both the weekly and monthly time series. In twenty-three out of the twenty-four weekly series (with eight time lags) the null hypothesis of a unit root in the agendas was rejected at the 1% level of significance, except the Dutch media agenda of the issue agriculture (see table 4.5). At the 5% significance level the null hypothesis was rejected for all series. With monthly data (one time lag) the null hypothesis of a unit root in the agendas was again consistently rejected at the 1% level of significance, except for the Dutch media agenda of the issue agriculture and the French environmental media agenda. Again, the null hypothesis was rejected for all time series at the 5% level.

Therefore, whichever time unit was eventually chosen, it was unnecessary to difference the data to render them stationary. A further conclusion is that there was no need to apply vector error correction models (VECM). VECM is performed when two non-stationary processes are interrelated in the long run, but this relationship is disturbed due to their greatly varying means, variance or covariance: despite their correlation, the series may be drifting apart. In other words, VECM assumes that the level of a variable does not only depend on its previous level, but also on former shifts that have resulted in the previous level. VECM corrects their errors and forces the series to return to their equilibrium. However, since our agendas represent stationary data, VAR models rather than VECM were appropriate to obtain an informed opinion about the specification of the structural equation models.
4.3.1.3 What is the time span of influence?

It is a thorny question which time unit to choose to optimally assess the mutual influence between the two agendas. Should the interactions between the agendas of the media and of politicians be modelled with daily, weekly, monthly or even yearly data? Sometimes it will take politicians and journalists only a few seconds to react to each other (answering a question in a live broadcast with a sound bite), but sometimes a few hours (a press release), a day (a newspaper), a few weeks (interpellations), a few months (the summer recess), or even years (a new party programme) are required. Since politicians and journalists interact on a daily basis, it may seem natural to use daily data. However, journalists and politicians are not always able to respond to each other in precisely the same time span, due to a variety of constraints, such as weekends, hot news on other issues, fixed parliamentary agendas in the short run, and so on.

Figure 4.3 illustrates the consequences of the choice of the time span for the extent to which statistical models can identify responses as causal influence.

Figure 4.3: Fictitious response times of media to parliament (in days and hours)

If a very short time scale is used (e.g., hours), then a causality test will fail (see section 4.3.1.4 for details on Granger causality), since no two shocks are likely to be followed twice within precisely the same time span (e.g., number of hours) by a response on the other agenda. Too limited time scales will thus result in an unyieldingly large variation in response times. The fictitious example in figure 4.3 demonstrates how the evening paper (1) needs a couple of hours to discuss an MP’s statement about soft drugs (a) that same evening, how the evening TV news (2) responds still later on the same night, whereas the morning paper (3) can report about the same statement no sooner than the next morning, and finally how the Nine ‘O Clock Breakfast News (4) reports on the MP’s follow-up statement on day 2 (b) on the
morning of day 3. If an hour is chosen as the time unit in this particular case, the lack of systematic response times is likely to result in failing causality tests. In contrast, tests based on days, a larger time unit, would twice detect a media response to the parliamentary agenda on the following day (a $\rightarrow$ 3, b $\rightarrow$ 4), hence establishing causality.

A second consequence of a short time scale concerns the time dynamics within one agenda, rather than the causality between different agendas. A short time scale will enhance negative serial autocorrelation: attention in one period will inevitably drop in the following period. The time line of the parliamentary agenda in figure 4.3 can be used to clarify this phenomenon. If causality tests are based on hourly time units, it is evident that the attention of the MP for the issue of soft drugs at around ten o’clock in the morning on day 1 (a) is followed by hours of no attention at all. Whereas the fact that the MP does not continue speaking for hours on end does by no means imply that he has suddenly lost interest in the matter – but perhaps simply that ‘question time’ in parliament has ended – the presence of negative serial autocorrelation would nevertheless be interpreted as such. The problem of serial autocorrelation is largely obviated if days are chosen as time units. Then, the MP’s attention for soft drugs on day 1 (a) would be followed by more attention on day 2 when he makes his second statement (b). It is only on day 3, when the MP indeed decides to concern himself with different issues than soft drugs, that the lack of attention for soft drugs would be rightly interpreted as such. Details on serial autocorrelation in the parliamentary and media agendas will be presented in the next section.

Hence, the time unit used to test causality should not be too small. However, if a very long time scale is used (e.g., the geological time scale), then a causality test will fail as well. This time it is caused by the fact that all responses will fall within the same time span as the initial shocks. From here onwards, this phenomenon will be referred to as instantaneous influence. Although causality between the parliamentary and the media agendas may very well be present, it may not always be recognised from the data. As figure 4.3 shows, the evening paper (1) and the evening TV news (2) manage to respond to the MP’s initial statement (a) within one and the same day. In this case, only causality tests based on hours would succeed in picking up these quick reactions as causal influence, since the reactions occur several time units (hours) later than the initial statement.

In short, there is a trade off between using small and large time units, which needs to be considered when modelling time-series dynamics. If one opts for relatively small time units, one should deal with a large variation in response times as well as with negative serial autocorrelation. If one opts for slightly larger time units, one should assure that a statistical model is used that is able to account for instantaneous causality. We will return to the issue of instantaneous causality later in this section and in section 4.3.2.1 on structural equation modelling.
There are sound theoretical arguments to limit the range of possible time units to weekly and monthly units. Newspapers are equipped to cover breaking news on next day’s front-page. The just-mentioned inertia of political institutions such as parliament usually prevents an immediate response. If we were to do justice to the possibilities of media effects on the parliamentary agenda, a daily time unit would be inappropriate. Aggregating the observations to a lengthier time unit than a month would very likely create models that are insensitive to the fine-grained dynamics between the two agendas. These common-sense considerations correspond to empirical results from the small number of time-series analyses devoted to the agenda-building question. Trumbo (1995) chose a time unit of two weeks and found the delay of the effect of the media on the US congress to vary between two weeks and three months. Wood and Peake (1998) and Edwards III and Wood (1999) selected a weekly time unit and demonstrated a decaying media effect on the president and congress from one to ten weeks. Soroko (2002, 2003) opted for a monthly time unit and demonstrated that the delay of the media effects varied between two to six months. Finally, Kleinnijenhuis (2003) draws the conclusion that it takes political parties at least two weeks to react to a media cue. Common sense and empirical evidence thus suggested that either a weekly or a monthly unit would be appropriate to model the media-politics interaction in terms of agenda building. We relied on statistical tests to empirically make the final decision between these two options.

Vector autoregression models (VAR) were performed on the weekly data. In a VAR model each one of the variables, which are assumed to exert some level of influence, is regressed on its prior values, as well as on the prior lags of all other variables in the model. Vector autoregression models have a strong exploratory or inductive function. VAR modellers obviously rely on theory to decide which variables should be included in the equations, but they refrain from specifying at which position those variables should be placed in the equations. Hence, very weak restrictions are imposed on a VAR model. The appropriate number of lags that should be taken into account is empirically determined along the way. Vector autoregression relies on ordinary least squares estimates. VAR analysis does not aim at knowing the effect or the statistical significance of an individual coefficient. Rather, the joint contribution of all coefficients of a single or a cluster of variables to the prediction of the endogenous variable is assessed. One reason is that the multitude of previous and successive time lags incorporated in the models, often displays multicollinearity. Consequently, the explanatory power of the each separate time lag is not disentangled and the efficiency of the estimates decreases, which means that the variance of the estimator increases (e.g., Pennings et al., 2006, chap. 6). The main question is whether the inclusion of variables improves or deteriorates the explanation of the endogenous variable (Freeman, Williams & Lin, 1989; Lütkepohl & Krätzig, 2004, chap. 3).
Considering the above, applying VAR models to the data may not have accurately informed us about the exact distribution of power between both agendas, but it was very helpful in indicating the underlying time structure. It pointed out the time lags at which the parliamentary agenda improves the explanation of the media agenda as well as the time lags at which the media agenda improves the explanation of the parliamentary agenda. If a chaotic pattern of multiple significant time lags of several weeks, stretching out over one to more months, emerged from the weekly models, monthly models were preferable. If, on the other hand, a pattern of significant influences that fall neatly within a period of one or two weeks, what emerged from the weekly series, the weekly models were preferable. In the VAR models the media and the political agendas were included as dependent variables and their prior values as independent variables. In these weekly models, lags of one to twelve weeks were incorporated. To account for a potential yearly cycle of journalistic and especially parliamentary activities, lags over 52 weeks were taken into account. Yearly attention cycles in the political agenda might result from the yearly rhythm of parliamentary activities (summer recess, Christmas recess, yearly budget discussions, and so on).

The models with lags of one to twelve weeks and yearly lags of 48 to 56 weeks, exhibited a quite chaotic pattern of significant lagged mutual influences. But these models also demonstrated that most significant influences are located within a time span of eight weeks, and in a zone from 50 to 54 weeks (see tables B.1 to B.3 in appendix B for the results of the VAR analyses). The former indicated that the journalist-MP interactions mostly develop on a month-to-month basis. The latter indicated that a yearly attention pattern on both agendas indeed exists, due to holidays and the vested rhythm of the parliamentary year (e.g., speeches of the throne). Hence, for reasons of parsimony (i.e. a more restricted number of relevant time lags or predictors in the agenda-building models), a monthly time unit seemed most appropriate.

However, choosing months as the unit of analysis implied that short-term (weekly) effects would appear as instantaneous influence. Although instantaneous, or ‘synchronous’, causal influence may seem an odd concept at first glance, it is founded on the same causal idea as lagged causality, i.e. that a cause \( A(t-1) \) is accompanied above chance by an effect \( B(t) \). Instantaneous causation means that the effect of \( A(t-1) \) on \( B(t) \) is mediated by \( A(t) \). To put it differently, whereas lagged causality entails that the correlation between \( A(t-2) \) and \( B(t) \) vanishes when \( A(t-1) \) is held constant, instantaneous causality should be assumed when the correlation between \( A(t-1) \) and \( B(t) \) vanishes when \( A(t) \) is held constant (e.g., Finkel, 1995). Note that in our present case instantaneous influence is influence that stems from within the current month \( t \), which in other words covers up to the previous four weeks approximately. A lag of one month \( t-1 \) thus represents influence originating from anywhere between one and two months ago, which equals about four to eight weeks ago.
The distribution of significant cross-lagged influences in the aforementioned VAR models already gave us a preliminary idea that the number of lags to incorporate in the final models should not reach much further back than two months (t and t-1). Schwarz’s Bayesian Information Criterion (SBIC) on monthly VAR models confirmed this impression that cross-lagged influence fades out after two months in all but three cases (see table 4.6). SBIC reports the maximum number of lags at which the VAR analysis still spots significant effects. According to SBIC one lag had to be taken into account in addition to instantaneous influence (t and t-1).

Table 4.6: Optimal number of lags in months (lags 1 to 11) according to SBIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>FR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media → parliament</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament → media</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. SBIC does not account for instantaneous influence (as it is based on VAR analyses). Therefore, SBIC = 0 can mean two things: either there is no influence between the agendas of parliament and the media, or there is instantaneous influence.

SBIC indicated the optimal lag length for the British media agenda of drugs, as well as for the Dutch and French media agendas of the environment to be three months (t, t-1 and t-2). However, additional regression analyses showed that lagged effects originating from the third month (t-2) become insignificant when controlling for instantaneous crossover influence (t) and cross-lagged influence of the previous month (t-1).

4.3.1.3.1 Is there residual serial autocorrelation?
Before the final decision to work with monthly data was made, the weekly and monthly VAR models were compared with regard to the statistical performance of the regression residuals. Following the VAR analyses, two tests on the regression residuals were performed (discussed in the present section

7 The reported SBIC is based on VAR models from which the strong yearly autoregressive influence of lag t-12 was extracted, so as to obtain more specific results for the short-term dynamics. Otherwise the SBIC might have consistently reported an optimal lag length of 12, which would not have added anything to what is already known. The yearly influence is incorporated in the final models anyway.
and the next section) to detect two problems that are common in multivariate regressions such as time-series analysis. The first is the Breusch-Godfrey test on residual serial autocorrelation. If the residuals are autocorrelated, the dependent variable manifests a perseverance that cannot be explained by the independent variables alone. There is a serious chance that the model is misspecified. Due to the dependence of the residuals on previous residuals, there are in fact less independent observation points within the time series than one might assume based on the number of time points that build the data set. The incorrect estimations will have a continued effect on future estimations. Residual serial autocorrelation decreases the efficiency of the parameter estimations.

It appeared that the preference for monthly data rather than weekly data based on the results of the VAR models was easily supported by the Breusch-Godfrey test. The Breusch-Godfrey test on remaining serial autocorrelation was performed on weekly as well as monthly data with the same number of lags: one lag (one week or one month) and a yearly seasonal lag (52 weeks or 12 months). Thus, the performance of the specification that was indicated by the VAR analysis (monthly data with one and twelve lags) was compared with a similar specification based on weekly data. We opted for a similar specification of the weekly model, because the power of serial autocorrelation tests decreases when the number of regressors is increased.

With weekly data, a negative serial autocorrelation in the residual variance often remains (see table 4.7), despite the positive autoregression coefficients in the VAR models. Thus, the errors follow a zigzag trend (as previously illustrated in figure 4.3 in section 4.3.1.3). For the UK a negative serial residual correlation is present for all issues on the media agenda and for all issues on the political agenda. For the Netherlands a negative serial residual correlation shows up in the media agenda for agriculture and drugs and in the political agenda for agriculture and the environment. The French media data show a negative coefficient once, i.e. agriculture. The French political data show negative residual correlations in the case of the environment and drugs. Significant negative autocorrelated residuals in a VAR model indicate that, in the short run, attention often diverges more from attention in the previous week than would be expected from the average dependence of this week’s attention on the attention in the previous week. However, this is precisely what could be expected from the assumption that the possibilities for politicians and media to react to one another and to give a follow-up to one’s own issue agenda are constrained due to fixed agendas and other more urgent issues.

8 See Vliegenthart (2007) for an example of how to test causality between the political and the media agendas, while accounting for negative serial autocorrelation. We chose not to model, but to avoid the problem of negative serial autocorrelation as much as possible for reasons discussed in the next section.
Table 4.7: Residual serial autocorrelation in weekly and monthly VAR models (Breusch-Godfrey test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Parliamentary agenda</th>
<th>Media agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK week</td>
<td>UK month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Breusch-Godfrey statistics of ‘0’ indicate a lack of residual serial autocorrelation; ‘1’ indicates positive autocorrelation (if dwstat<2); ‘-1’ indicates negative autocorrelation (if dwstat>2).

In the residual variance from the VAR models based on monthly data for the UK one significant positive serial autocorrelation coefficient (agriculture on the political agenda) and one negative coefficient (the environment on the media agenda) remain. The number of significant coefficients drops from eight to two. The Dutch data only has one negative serial autocorrelation coefficient left for the environment on the media agenda. Their number declines from four to one. In the French case, serial residual correlation is only present in the case of the media data of the environment: a decline from three to one. So far, monthly time series displayed the most favourable features for statistical testing. Before making the final decision, one last test on the residuals was performed, which is the subject of the next section.

4.3.1.3.2 Is there residual heteroscedasticity?

The second problem that may emerge from the VAR models is potential autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity in the residuals (ARCH). This will be tackled with Engle’s ARCH test, developed by 2003 Nobel Prize Winner Robert Engle. Heteroscedasticity implies that the variance of the residuals is not constant across all points in time. It is larger for some values of the independent variable than for other values. Whereas residual serial autocorrelation refers to the fact that the present level of a variable depends on its previous level, heteroscedasticity refers to the fact that the present volatility of the variable depends on its previous volatility. Stock quotations are a typical example of time series with large heteroscedasticity. After long periods of stability, stock quotations may suddenly fluctuate heavily, for example as a result of some international political crisis, after which they gradually settle down. Heteroscedasticity in the residuals also decreases the efficiency of parameter estimates.

The residuals of both the weekly and monthly VAR models were tested on remaining heteroscedasticity (Engle’s ARCH-test). The earlier preference for monthly data, based on the location of the significant time lags as shown in
the VAR models and the performance of the residuals regarding serial autocorrelation, was once more supported by the Engle’s ARCH tests. As table 4.8 shows, heteroscedasticity is certainly present in the weekly data. ARCH occurs in the British weekly data for agriculture on the political agenda and on the media agenda for all issues except immigration. In the weekly models of the Netherlands, ARCH shows up on the political agenda for all issues except immigration and on the media agenda for all issues with the exception of the environment. The French data are disturbed by ARCH only once: immigration on the political agenda.

Autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity means that follow-up attention for an issue in the weeks to come is more variable and volatile than one would expect on the basis of a simple extrapolation of the volatility of attention in the current week. Again, this can be logically derived from the constraints on following one’s own agenda and those of others due to fixed agendas and suddenly emerging topics. Attention is often more capricious than one would expect if one assumes uninhibited possibilities for reacting: reactions are easily postponed.

Table 4.8: Residual heteroscedasticity in weekly and monthly VAR models (Engle’s ARCH test)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Parliamentary agenda</th>
<th>Media agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK week</td>
<td>NL month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 0 0</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>0 1 1 1 0 0</td>
<td>0 1 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>0 0 1 0 0 0</td>
<td>1 0 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 0 1</td>
<td>1 1 1 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Engle’s ARCH statistics of ‘0’ indicate a lack of heteroscedasticity in the residuals; ‘1’ indicates residual heteroscedasticity.

With monthly data, autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity only remains in the British models in the case of the issue environment on both agendas. The number of time series with heteroscedasticity thus drops from four to two when exchanging weekly data for monthly data. In the Dutch data ARCH completely disappears on both agendas, dramatically reducing the number of ARCH occurrences from six to zero. There is no difference in the amount of ARCH between the French weekly and monthly models: it occurs once in the case of the parliamentary agenda of immigration.

The Breusch-Godfrey test in the previous section and the Engle’s ARCH test showed that there is both less residual serial autocorrelation and less autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity in the monthly data. Hence, not only did the VAR models indicate that the true influences between the
media and parliament are located within a time span of up to two months, the regression residuals of the monthly models display much less, even very few, statistical violations. We assumed that the three violations of heteroscedasticity that remained, would not seriously disturb the final estimations of the agenda-building models. This is because the increasing variance of the estimates over time may cause the estimates to be less efficient, but they remain unbiased. Consequently the estimates will still be correct on average.

Instead of choosing the time unit that is statistically best suited for time-series analysis, we might have opted for models that are able to model the complex time structures of an agenda resulting from serial autocorrelation or heteroscedasticity, such as ARIMA, VARMA or VECM models (e.g., Vliegenthart, 2007). We chose not to do so, because this would distract from the main research objective, which is to assess the reciprocal influences between the agenda of parliament and the agenda of the media. In view of the research question we considered it uninteresting to describe the precise volatility of attention on one agenda, even more so because attention is a volatile rather than continuous variable by definition. Consequently, the choice was made to avoid the problems of residual serial autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity, rather than to study them, by choosing a larger, but nevertheless theoretically relevant time unit: months. As has been mentioned in section 4.3.1.3 the choice for a larger time unit comes at the cost of instantaneous influence. This issue will be dealt with in section 4.3.2.1.

With the present diagnostical results, the choice for a monthly time unit in the final agenda-building models could safely be made.

4.3.1.4 Is there long-term causality?
The common-sense assumption that politicians and journalists might exert an influence on each other’s agenda is based on the philosophically quite troublesome notion of causality. If \( x \) causes \( y \), then \( x \) should at least precede \( y \). However, the reverse of this statement (\( \text{post hoc ergo propter hoc} \), after this therefore because of this), is a well-known fallacy. The popular concept of Granger causality, named after 2003 Nobel Prize winner Clive W.J. Granger, is based on the test whether the cause indeed systematically, rather than accidentally, precedes the effect. Vector autoregression models, and other regression-based models, are no hard guarantee that any observed effects are really causal effects. There is always an a priori assumption of causality involved (e.g., Ni et al., 1990). To see whether it is plausible at all to assume causality in the agenda-building models, the most frequently used version of causality tests, to wit Granger causality tests, were applied to the monthly data. However, since Granger causality tests account for \( \text{reciprocal} \) causation and \( \text{cumulative} \) causation, but not for \( \text{instantaneous} \) causation, the assumptions of these tests do not precisely match the data at hand, as will be seen below.
Time-series data representing the parliamentary agenda are said to ‘Granger-cause’ the media agenda if knowledge of the parliamentary agenda at prior points in time helps to improve the best forecast of the media agenda that is possible on the basis of knowledge of the media agenda itself at prior points in time (Granger, 1969). The latter condition is a tricky one. If the political parties pay attention to immigration each afternoon, and news articles on immigration are offered by the morning newspapers on each of the following mornings, then still the parliamentary agenda does not Granger-cause the media agenda, since yesterday’s media agenda alone would suffice to forecast today’s media agenda. However, when politicians would speak about immigration at irregular time intervals, whereas the media would consistently report on immigration only shortly after these political statements, Granger causality from the parliamentary agenda to the media agenda is present. It may take some time to realise that the concept of Granger causality, which relies on the idea that shocks in one time series should be followed above chance by responses in another time series, does not exclude the possibility of reciprocal causation. In fairly long time series, the fact that random shocks in one time series are followed above chance by responses in another time series, does not exclude the possibility that shocks at other points in time in the latter series are followed above chance by responses in the first series.

A Granger causality test gives a rough analysis of the cumulative causal influence of shocks in the perpetrating variable. The results represent the accumulation of smaller causal influences at multiple unspecified previous time lags. A Granger causality test neglects instantaneous causation, however. In the agenda-building models to be tested, instantaneous causality was not to be neglected, because media and parliament influence each other within one month, as was indicated by the VAR models in a previous section. Consequently a large share of the influences occurs within the first month at lag t. The technique of analysis with which to test our agenda-building hypotheses did not only have to be capable of taking the potential reciprocity between the agendas, but also this instantaneous flow of influence into account.

Structural equation models were used, because they are very suited to meet both requirements of reciprocity and instantaneity, whereas Granger causality tests are not apt to detect instantaneous flows of influence. The structural equation model accurately estimates reciprocal flows of influence at only those time lags that were specified a priori by the researcher. So, the structural equation models demonstrate the interaction between journalists and MPs in the heat of the battle, within the short-term time frame that is theoretically thought to matter (see the following section for details on structural equation models).
Nevertheless, a Granger causality test is an interesting diagnostic instrument to complement the structural equation models. The Granger causality tests add the long-term and incremental flows of influence between the two watchdogs of democracy. Imagine that the Granger causality tests would consistently reveal that a cumulative causal impact of the parliamentary agenda on the media agenda is absent, then instantaneous causality in the short run remains possible, although less easily conceivable from a common-sense point of view. Imagine, on the other hand, that the parliamentary agenda would appear all-powerful in the short run. This result would warrant the conclusion that parliament is the dominant agenda builder. However, if the Granger causality tests showed that a flow of influence exists from the media agenda to the parliamentary agenda in the long run after all, the previous conclusion would not be rejected, but the additional conclusion that parliament is untouched or indifferent to the media would be. The results in this section should thus be interpreted as preliminary indications of the long-term balance of power between parliament and the media, which either attenuate or reinforce the results of final agenda-building models.

A Granger causality test, which determines whether irregular shocks in the political agenda are followed consistently by responses in the media agenda, and the other way around, was available from Boston College Department of Economics (Joly, 2002). To account for seasonal effects, lags from one month to at least twelve months were taken into account. To increase the asymptotic qualities of this test, slightly more than the theoretically warranted twelve lags were incorporated in the monthly models, i.e. 13 lags (e.g., Lütkepohl & Krätzig, 2004, p. 148-150). This choice resulted in Granger causality tests with 13 degrees of freedom. It is possible to use a $\chi^2$-statistic or a $F$-statistic when reporting the results of the test. A $\chi^2$-statistic is only reliable with sufficient data points. Since the $F$-statistic is both more robust and more conservative, we opted for the $F$-statistic to be on the safe side (e.g., McCarville & Nnadozie, 2006).

The Granger causality tests confirmed the assumption that there is a mutual causal relationship between the parliamentary and the media agendas (see table 4.9). A significant $F$-statistic indicates that the null hypothesis of no causality may be rejected, and thus that one agenda is indeed responsible for changes in attention on the agenda of the other. It is therefore correct to assume what common sense had us believe all along, namely that the paths of journalists and MPs occasionally cross in their monthly activities.
A long-term relationship between parliament and the press is most developed in the UK, whereas it is hardly present in the Netherlands. Reviewing the results per issue, they are most consistent in the case of agriculture: in all three countries the media lead the parliamentary agenda. With regard to the environment, causality is only present in the UK, running from parliament to the press (but only significant at the 10% level). Again only the British results show causality in the case of drugs. This time, there appear to be reciprocal flows of influence, although the levels of significance favour parliamentary dominance. Finally, immigration shows a long-term dominance of both the British and the French press (the latter significant at the 10% level).

We would like to recall what has been argued earlier. These results merely show that the history of one variable has some predictive power over the future of the other in the course of a year, and give no information about the immediate balance of power, the strength of influence or the time dynamic. We will return to the Granger causality results after the hypothesis tests, in order to complete the picture of the balance of agenda-building power where additional understanding is needed.

### 4.3.2 Modelling strategy: testing the hypotheses

At this point any problems within the time-series data were detected and smoothed out as much as possible. Furthermore, the vector autoregression models and the Granger causality test indicated both the plausibility and the timing of the causal relationship that are hypothesised between the parliamentary and the media agendas. Importantly, the VAR models have also indicated which temporal unit best approximates the time it takes for both agendas to influence each other. Now, the considerations will be examined why we did not stick to the VAR models but turned to structural equation models (SEM) during the final round, when the actual paths of influence through time and across issues were estimated. Also, the specific methodo-
4 Methodology

4.3.2.1 Structural equation modelling

Let us immediately acknowledge the frequently heard disadvantage of structural equation models, namely that they require a priori theoretical assumptions about which independent variables exactly to include. This means that the duration of both the autoregressive and cross-lagged influences on the dependent variable must be known in advance (e.g., Freeman et al., 1989; Wood and Peake, 1998). This theoretical knowledge is unnecessary if one applies VAR models, since an endless range of time lags is included and it is left to these models to decide which ones matter. To deal with this difficulty, to arrive at an optimal specification of the ultimate structural equation models, VAR models were relied on as diagnostics about the appropriate lag length and the appropriate number of lags to incorporate (e.g., Lütkepohl & Krätzig, 2004, chap. 5). Why then are SEM models to be preferred over VAR models?

First, because comparisons between agenda-building models for different nations, issues and periods were required to test the hypotheses, the separate models had to be parsimonious, with a small number of parameters per model. SEM models with only those variables included that are expected to add to the explanation, are much more parsimonious than the more inductive VAR models with large numbers of parameters to fit the peculiarities of the data for different nations, issues and periods. A VAR model with a large amount of coefficient estimates for prior shocks at various time lags is hard to interpret from a theoretical point of view (Lütkepohl & Krätzig, 2004). VAR models are especially suited when exploratory power is required. Exploring the effects of each individual observation in history is of no importance to the central questions of this study: which agenda is dominant over the other? Moreover, no conclusions about single coefficients should be drawn from vector autoregression, as has been mentioned earlier, but rather about which groups of variables seem of causal importance. Because the VAR models normally include an abundance of potentially interesting variables, the confidence intervals of the estimations are considerably larger (Freeman et al., 1989). The large numbers of independent variables or lags included in the models are likely to be interrelated to a considerable extent. This multicollinearity, the fact that the independent
variables are intertwined, makes it extremely hard to correctly estimate their separate effects, without measurement errors carrying over from one lag onto another. Here, considering the aim of the study and the theoretical straightforwardness of the agenda-building model, we were already quite informed about which variables to include in the model. Moreover, we have taken advantage of the strong inductive points of the VAR models, to complete the missing information about the appropriate time unit as well as about which lags needed to be included in the model to grasp significant autoregressive influence on the present agenda. The advantage of the more parsimonious structural equation approach over vector autoregression is that, provided the model is well specified, it yields more accurate estimates of the relationships between the theoretically interesting variables.

Second, the deductive qualities of the SEM models may give less information about the autoregressive dynamics from one lag to another, but they do allow for a simultaneous estimation of both crossover paths of the assumed reciprocal agenda-building cycle (Maruyama, 1998). In contrast to VAR models, in SEM models the power of one agenda is automatically discounted in the estimation of the other’s influence. The simultaneous estimation of the reciprocal flows of influence is a valuable and indispensable asset of SEM modelling, considering the hypotheses in this study, which make predictions about the relative magnitude of the influence between the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda in one direction in proportion to the influence in the reverse direction.

Third, neither Granger causality tests nor VAR models account for the remaining instantaneous correlation between those parts of the media agenda and the parliamentary agenda that are not explained by their prior values. If monthly data are used, then neither VAR models nor Granger causality tests touch upon the most important question in agenda-building research, i.e. to uncover who is leading whom when journalists and politicians interact instantaneously (within one and the same week, within one and the same interview, or even within one and the same minute). Both Granger causality tests and VAR models are unable to detect instantaneous causality, since their tests of causality are based on the principle that the cause must precede the effect in time. Therefore the cause must have occurred at least one time unit before the effect. If models are based on weekly units and the media take two days to react to parliament, the cause indeed precedes the effect. However, the Granger causality tests and the VAR models will not recognise this flow of influence, since they assume the cause, i.e. parliamentary action, to occur at least one week earlier than the reaction of the media. To account for the instantaneous residual correlation between the media agenda and the parliamentary agenda after controlling for their prior values, a structural equation model was called for.

In section 4.3.1.3 on vector autoregression, the SBIC was reported, which indicated that, independent from the seasonal influences (t-12), cross-lagged
influence on the current agendas goes back no further than one month (t-1). An additional test of Pearson’s correlation additionally showed that (significant) instantaneous correlations between the media and the parliamentary agenda (parliament (t) x media (t)) are always stronger than the cross-lagged correlations in both directions (parliament x media (t-1) and media x parliament (t-1)). But to repeat, VAR models do not allow for instantaneous causation. Therefore, a parsimonious SEM model with seasonal influence (t-12), short-term influence (t-1) and instantaneous causation (t), served as the point of departure:

\[
\text{media (t)} = \beta_1 \text{parliament (t)} + \beta_2 \text{media (t-1)} + \beta_3 \text{media (t-12)} + \beta_4 \text{media (t)} + \beta_5 \text{parliament (t-1)} + \beta_6 \text{parliament (t-12)}
\]

In these equations ‘parliament’ indicates the parliamentary agenda, ‘media’ is the media agenda, ‘(t)’ at present time, ‘(t-1)’ with a lag of one month, ‘(t-12)’ with a lag of twelve months. The program LISREL 8 was used to provide maximum likelihood estimates of the parameters. To test whether the actual variance-covariance matrices could have been expected from the estimated parameters of the model, the Absolute Fit Indices Chi² and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) will be presented, as well as the Comparative Fit Index CFI (e.g., Boomsma, 2000). It should be noted that this pair of equations entailed that the cross-lagged influences of the agendas on each other were completely mediated by the present values of the agendas. If it would have appeared that these equations did not fit the data, a cross-lagged influence of one time unit would have been added to the model according to the modification indices, resulting in one or two extended equations:

\[
\text{media (t)} = \beta_1 \text{parliament (t)} + \beta_2 \text{parliament (t-1)} + \beta_3 \text{media (t-1)} + \beta_4 \text{media (t-12)} + \beta_5 \text{media (t)} + \beta_6 \text{parliament (t-1)} + \beta_7 \text{parliament (t-12)}
\]

Next, influences that appeared insignificant on the basis of their t-values were deleted from the models. It turned out that this modelling strategy always converged in a single model regarding the crossover influences, i.e. instantaneous rather than cross-lagged influence.

In the practice of structural equation modelling, significant relationships are added, which contribute to a good fit of the causal model as a whole, whereas insignificant relationships are removed from the model. When the aim is to test whether specific causal relations exist, this practice is easily
justified. Not only should the hypothesis that a causal relation exists be falsified when its strength is insignificant, but also should the hypothesis be falsified that a causal relation does not exist when its non-existence results in a significant difference between the actual variances/covariances between the variables in the model and the reproduced variances/covariances between these variables on the basis of the estimated causal effects. This procedure should not be confused with an inductive search (‘data mining’) for the model that fits the data most closely. The remaining sections in this chapter specify which subsections of the data underlie the just constructed structural equations models for each separate hypothesis.

4.3.2.2 Overall agenda building
As the title of this section indicates, the first hypothesis (H1), which aims at describing the agenda-building process under the most general possible circumstances, should be tested with all data available in this study (see chapter 2). To test whether the overall agenda-building process involves mutual flows of influence between the parliamentary and the media agendas, a SEM model was estimated with pooled time-series data of all four issues during the entire research period for each country. Since the hypothesis does not predict a difference or change from one situation to another, no comparison between SEM models was involved. Thus, to test whether reciprocal agenda-building influence between parliament and the media exists, it sufficed to estimate the parameters of one model per country.

4.3.2.3 Distinguishing between routine & election times
To demonstrate whether the balance of agenda-building power is more favourable to the parliamentary agenda during election times than during routine times on account of hypothesis 2 (see section 2.5), the overall agenda-building model, which included all issues during the complete research period in order to test hypothesis 1, was split in two separate models based on different sets of months. The first set included the months in which national elections were held, plus the preceding five months running up to the election months. The agenda-building dynamics of each election was thus tested with six months of data. The second set included the months following the election months, plus all remaining months in non-election years.

Within the confines of the research period British general elections were held in April 1992, May 1997 and June 2001. The British election model was thus based on three times six months of time-series data (for four issues), which was tested against the non-election model that enclosed the remaining months. In the Netherlands, general elections were held in May 1998, May 2002 and January 2003. The Dutch election model also encompassed three times six months. The only French legislative election that falls within the period of research occurred in June 2002. The selected six months leading up the legislative election coincidentally also encompassed the French
presidential election, which was held in April and May 2002 (first and second round). In case that either the parliamentary agenda appears stronger or the media agenda appears weaker in the election model than in the non-election model, and these differences between the two models prove statistically significant, hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

4.3.2.4 Allowing time to make a difference
To observe any shifts in the balance of power between both agendas through time (hypothesis 3 in chapter 3), the data were subdivided to create and compare different agenda-building models for different periods in time. The Dutch series were split into two equal parts. The longer British data were split into three parts, of which the two most recent periods were equal to the Dutch periods. November 1988 up to and including September 1995 was defined as period 1 in the case of the British data, which is the only country for which these early years were available. October 1995 up to and including October 1999 was defined as period 1 for the Dutch data and period 2 for the British data. November 1999 up to and including December 2003 was defined as period 2 in the Dutch case and period 3 in the British case (see table 4.10). Note that in order to test hypotheses 5 and 6 on agenda convergence between countries, Dutch period 1 was matched with British period 2, and Dutch period 2 is matched with British period 3.

Since the French time series were significantly shorter than both the British and Dutch series, it would not have been useful to apply the same subdivision; the first period would include dramatically fewer observations than the second period, which was undesirable in the time-series analysis of agenda building. Contrary to the inevitable difference in observations between the election and non-election models, such a difference was not necessary in this case. It was therefore decided to split the French period in half when testing hypothesis 3, irrespective of the British and Dutch time frames.

Table 4.10: Division of the time series for longitudinal comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>NL</th>
<th>FR convergence</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>FR agenda building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov '88 – Sep '95</td>
<td>period 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Oct '98 – Apr '01</td>
<td>period 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct '95 – Oct '99</td>
<td>period 2</td>
<td>period 1</td>
<td>period 1</td>
<td>May '01- Dec '03</td>
<td>period 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov '99 – Dec '03</td>
<td>period 3</td>
<td>period 2</td>
<td>period 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In the test of agenda convergence, period 1 inevitably starts in October 1998 and ends in October 1999, similar to the end dates of period 1 in the Netherlands and period 2 in the UK.

However, the hypotheses on agenda convergence among European countries required the time series of the three countries to be equally divided. The breaking point between the French periods 1 and 2 was therefore matched to the British and Dutch breaking points. Table 4.10 presents details on how
the time series were divided into separate periods, in order to test the time-
dependent hypotheses 3, 5 and 6.

Finally, in order to test whether politics and the news in Europe have
indeed come to share their priorities, which is formulated in hypothesis 5
about parliaments and in hypothesis 6 about media (see section 3.5.5), the
instantaneous correlations between the British, Dutch and French political
agendas and media agendas in two periods were compared. The correlation
between two agendas indicates the extent to which much or little attention
to any of the four issues at any point in time on one agenda in one country,
matches the amount of attention to the same issue at the same time on the
same agenda in the other country. A significant increase of the correlation
coefficient from one period to another between one pair of countries con-
firms the hypothesis of converging agendas.

4.3.2.5 Allowing the EU to make a difference

In the earlier description of the issue selection (section 4.1.2), the logic of how
this study distinguished between agenda building in a national context and
a EU context already became apparent. Different models were constructed
for four different issues or policy areas in which different agenda-building
dynamics are expected, as a result of varying levels of ‘Europeanness’ of
these issues (hypothesis 4). The most objective indicator was relied upon
to determine the Europeanness of the issue. The extent to which the Euro-
pean Union may have an influence on the course of events appearing on
the national parliamentary or media agendas, is assumed to flow from its
formal decision-making authority within the specific policy area, as has
been officially written down in the various treaties signed by EU member
states. If hypothesis 4 is true (see section 3.5), the knowledge that the deci-
sion on some topic of interest will be negotiated at the European level, can
be expected to serve as a primary incentive for the media to attribute higher
news value to news sources that are active at this level. Likewise, if the
national MPs know that such a decision is officially beyond their legisla-
tive powers, it is legitimate to assume that MPs are more inclined to cease
their efforts to launch a discussion on the issue. The formal level of decision-
making authority was a logical point of departure.

Since agenda building in itself is not necessarily concerned with the
formal distribution of power among the participants, but might just as well
be a consequence of the perception of the importance of actors, a second
indicator of the European dimension of the four issues imposed itself. For-
eign heads of state might express their opinion on national draft legislation
while referring to prevailing European preferences. National politicians
may refer to neighbouring countries to find inspiration on the best solution
for a particular universal problem. The point is that in the European Union
the member states tend to closely watch developments in partner states and
even to interfere without having any part in the decision-making process.
Methodology

The media may pick up on these cross-border influence attempts and accordingly open their agenda to alternative sources. In part two of the book, it was assessed whether the distribution of agenda-building power can be predicted from the strong or weak role that European actors actually play in the issue events. It was independently determined for each issue, whether formally a pillar-one, a pillar-three or no-pillar issue, to what extent European actors appeared on the scene in the news stories. The relevance and involvement of European actors in actual discussions may not coincide with their formal level of authority according to the three-pillar structure that underlay the initial agenda-building design of this study. The details and results of this analysis will be presented in chapter 8. The score for attention to European actors in the news (visibility) was measured according to the same procedures as the score for attention to issues on the parliamentary and media agendas.

4.3.2.6 Checking for spuriousness due to real-world cues

One modelling consideration remained to be addressed. One should not neglect variables that may cause a spurious correlation between the endogenous variables. Every agenda-building researcher must consider the potential impact of real-world cues (RWC) on the concerns of both politicians and journalists. The assumption that real-world cues influence the public agenda is widely accepted. Consequently, media effects on the public agenda are found to be larger when the public has little direct personal experience (e.g., Lang & Lang, 1981; Lee, 2004; Soroka, 2002; Weimann & Brosius, 1994; Zucker, 1978). Effects of real-world cues on the media agenda have also been observed (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005). Nevertheless, despite the fact that it is nothing but fair to expect that a good journalist is after the facts and will generally succeed in getting them, the belief that news content can be trusted to present a faithful picture of reality is heavily contested (Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Funkhouser, 1973; Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995). Likewise, it is a politician's job to know the facts and act whenever the facts signal a problem.

The question of this part of the study was not whether or to what extent RWC influences the media and the parliamentary agendas, but whether the agenda-setting influence of RWC cancels out the flows of influence between the media and parliamentary agendas. Does the initially observed agenda-building relationship between the media and parliament turn out to be a spurious correlation, which should be attributed to the fact that both agendas respond to real-world cues?

In the current design that covers four issues, one is faced with a wide range of possible real-world cues. For instance, an RWC for agriculture may concern export figures, the number of BSE cases, the national budget allocated to agriculture, EU subsidy expenditures, or the size of the butter mountain. Ideally, but hardly feasible, one would control for every single
one of them. Although different indicators might be thought of in the area of immigration as well, more than in the three other policy domains there is one specific type of real-world data available that touches at the heart of what immigration is about, i.e. the number of potential immigrants actually knocking on the door. Supposing that both the media and parliament readily respond to real-world indicators, even if these RWCs would relate only vaguely or partially to a policy area, then the number of asylum applications can certainly be expected to make a central contribution to their reaction in the area of immigration. For it is the size of the influx of asylum seekers relative to a country’s admission capacity, that puts the pressure on or lifts the pressure off the national immigration policy. It is also the size of the influx of asylum seekers relative to public opinion that determines the amount of political pressure on policy makers. The number of asylum applications influences whether the issue of immigration is politicised, consequently determining whether immigration turns into a hot issue on the media agenda or parliamentary agenda.

Therefore, admittedly as a preliminary indication of the probability that our estimated parliament-media interactions are nothing but methodological artefacts, we checked for immigration whether the number of asylum applications spurred both the media agenda and the parliamentary agenda, thereby exposing the original agenda-building estimates as spurious influence. Since British figures before January 1991 and French figures before January 1999 were not available, a baseline model was created by rerunning the immigration model for this shorter period (two years and two months shorter than the original British time series, and three months shorter than the original French time series). The estimates of this baseline model were then compared with the estimates of the model that included asylum applications. The series of Dutch applications matched the original research period. Hence, the original Dutch immigration model could be used as baseline model.

9 The British asylum figures were kindly delivered by the British Home Office Research Development Statistics (RDS). We are obliged to Rens Vliegenthart and Hajo Boomgaarden for sharing the Dutch figures, which were retrieved from the Dutch Central Statistics Office (CBS). The French figures are available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu.
Chapter Five Country descriptions

The trend towards stronger media agenda-building power is expected to emerge as a general phenomenon among modern European democracies. Remember that the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France were especially selected for their divergent relations towards the European Union, in line with the criteria of a most different systems design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970). Idiosyncrasies of the examined countries, especially their political, public and media attitudes towards European integration, are particularly relevant for an understanding of any country-level differences, which will undoubtedly be found across the different hypothesised agenda-building models. The following sections will portray the British, Dutch and French historical political relations with the European union. This is followed by an outline of the prevailing media attitudes towards the EU, as well as of the performance and ambition of the House of Commons, the Tweede Kamer and the Assemblée Nationale in European policy making.

5.1 United Kingdom

5.1.1 The disruptive force of Europe
The United Kingdom has a turbulent history with the European Union. The special relationship with the United States, its position within the Common Wealth, as well as the difficulties of accepting that the era of Empire belongs to the past, explain Britain’s trouble with committing itself to a body of continental countries with such different views from its own. Successive British governments have simultaneously adopted an attitude of attraction and rejection. Whenever rapprochement was sought, the motives were of a purely pragmatic nature. Historical and political considerations on European unification account for the strong British reluctance before and also after British accession in 1973 (Geddes, 2004).

Nevertheless, since the 1960s both Conservative and Labour governments have been charmed by the idea of a liberalised European market. At the same time, they saw the economies of the six members of the European Community flourish. The governments MacMillan, Wilson and Heath then realised that the United Kingdom should no longer be on the sidelines (Allen, 2005; Geddes, 2004). By then the Community had laid down strict conditions that candidate states should meet in order to be admitted, the acquis communautaire. The United Kingdom was left with the choice to swallow it all, including many unfavourable measures, or to remain excluded. Some particularly heavy financial encumbrances were imposed, which caused major resentment and continue to do so.

The ideal of a liberalised market has always been the pro-European driving force behind the UK’s policy towards Europe. The British saw the realisa-
tion of their ‘Thatcherite’ principles at the European level as a step towards a more British version of a European Community (ibid.). Other European member states were less in favour of such a deregulated Anglo-Saxon model for the European Community, and preferred a more historical, political or ideological perspective to look upon the future of the EU. Consequently, the United Kingdom has often been watched with suspicion by the continent. In this respect the different understandings of the Single European Act of 1986 is exemplary, as this Act was an aim in itself for the British Conservative government, while it was considered a means towards an end, towards deeper economic, political and even social integration for others, among which France and Germany. It became Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s personal ambition to fight these spill-over effects from the SEA as well as Britain’s disproportionate financial contributions to the EC: an ambition that resulted in the budget rebate in 1984.

Especially France expressed its frustration with Britain’s European aspirations on frequent occasions. Britain’s first attempts to enter the Community were vetoed by the French head of state De Gaulle. He saw the United Kingdom as the advocate of the United States and feared that Europe would get entangled in the web of American hegemony. It was only when he was succeeded by President Pompidou that France no longer stood in the way of Prime Minister Heath’s efforts to be admitted. These international confrontations may help explain the progressively hostile attitude within the Conservative Party from the mid-1980s onwards. The conditions for British participation would continue to be debated, within parties, between parties and across borders.

On top of these cross-border disputes, British membership has also been strongly contested from within. Divisions over the European project have even been more typical of British politics within parties than between parties. The issue of European integration has been a source of incessant battling, especially within the Conservative Party (Cross & Golding, 1997; Evans & Butt, 2007; Geddes, 2004). Prime Minister John Major can be seen as Thatcher’s inheritor. When negotiating the Maastricht Treaty, he pushed through some fundamental conditions: UK’s opt-out from the Social Chapter, Britain’s right to decide whether it would introduce the single currency, the principle of subsidiarity and the intergovernmental pillars of cooperation instead of supranationalism regarding foreign, defence and interior policy. With this deal, Major managed to ease the bitterest disputes over Europe within the party, at least until after the national elections of 1992. Neither Labour nor the Conservatives dared to focus their campaigns on Europe, since both were divided on the matter.

After their electoral victory, the problems for the Conservatives resurfaced, resulting in their defeat in the 1997 and 2001 elections. In 1992, the pound sterling was ejected from the Exchange Rate Mechanism, which ripped the reputation of Conservative competence to pieces. The Euroscep-
tic Conservatives, strong adherents of Thatcher’s legacy, pushed their luck and made the question whether to sign the Maastricht Treaty an issue of public discussion. However, the British public did not care for Europe then, and still hardly cares for it now. The Eurosceptic rebels were not just to be found among backbenchers, but throughout government. The 1990s were essentially years of mudslinging between Tory Europhiles and Eurosceptics. The party was defeated at its own expense, rather than at the instigation of the opposition. All Major’s efforts were spent on domestic damage control, with the result that the UK lacked a clear policy towards and within the European Union altogether (Geddes, 2004).

A prime minister set on strengthening the ties with the European Union returned to the United Kingdom with Tony Blair in 1997. Not only did he wish to see stronger leadership of Britain within the Union, but also to make a case for Europe in Britain. Still, the Labour Party has had its fair share of opposition to the European project among its own people. Like the Conservatives, Labour feared a shift to a supranational Community, which would endanger national sovereignty and Britain’s freedom of movement. Whereas the number of advocates of membership within Labour had increased, the party was still heavily divided during the 1970s and 1980s (ibid.).

In 1984 the Labour Party went through a process of modernisation, shifted to the centre, and manifested increased approval of European membership. The Socialists no longer accused the European Community of being a ‘capitalist club’ that could not care less about the interests of the working man, as they had in the early days. The ‘third way’ politics of the British Socialists comprise recognition of the global market benefits, of the UK’s leading role in realising it at a European level, and of kinship with the European social democratic ideology. From the 1990s onwards Europe has ceased to cause major frictions within the British government (ibid.).

However, there are still issues that have yet to be resolved. In spite of Tony Blair’s efforts to arouse popular support for the Euro, consensus has not been reached by far, as is demonstrated by the continuous quarrelling between Prime Minister Blair and his Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown. The United Kingdom was one of only three member states not to introduce the Euro in the ‘Europe of Fifteen’. The UK found itself confirmed in its monetary position by an unremittingly growing economy, while continental Europe went through years of recession from the late 1990s onwards. The pound sterling is still largely seen as a symbol of British sovereignty and the British way of life. Britain’s vision of Europe is still one of intergovernmentalism rather than one of supranationalism. Britain’s commitment is still largely inspired by economic pragmatism (ibid.). Despite the more solid position within the EU with New Labour calling the shots, it does not prevent Euroscepticism or at least Euroreluctance from thriving across all layers of society, among citizens, in parliament and in the media (e.g., Evans & Butt, 2007; Geddes, 2004).
When trying to understand the British political climate vis-à-vis the European Union, one should first turn to the political system. The first-past-the-post electoral system encourages polarised views. In a two-party system and a one-party government, no compromises need to be made. There is no threat from third parties; there is no need to move in the direction of other parties, thus no need to express moderate or centrist views. Despite the strong executive power in the United Kingdom and the decreased legislative power of parliament, for the public eye the important battles are fought in parliament. In order to avert parties from falling apart, several referenda have been proposed to cover up the disputes and to overcome deadlocks. This has led to wider involvement of the public in the debate on European participation. As a result of the fact that the European debate was no longer exclusive to the parliamentary arena, the political initiative, the primary definition of a problem, was swept away from the party leaders. Opinion leadership was now shared between them and journalists. Especially when the UK was at a loss for political leadership at the time when John Major needed all his energy to keep the Conservative Party and the government together, politicians feared the increased influence of the press on public attitudes and even took into account newspaper preferences (Cross & Golding, 1997; Geddes, 2004).

Concluding, although Europe has traditionally never really been a matter of vehement controversy in European countries like the Netherlands or even France, it has caused deep divides in British politics from early on. Likewise, the British press has been much more divided on the issue than anywhere else (Baisnée, 2000). Newspapers have proven to be very outspoken on the subject of British participation in the European project, as will be discussed next.

5.1.2 Brussels & British news reporting
Two types of journalists are active in Brussels. First, there are the ones practising ‘institutional’ journalism. They tend to be pro-European and are so keen on being part of the Euroscene that they place less emphasis on scrutinising and interpreting the institutions and events. They were the first group to arrive in Brussels. For them personal casual relations between journalists and sources have proven to be equally important in Brussels as in national settings. The second type practises a more ‘investigative’, critical kind of journalism. They hold no pre-established ideological stance towards the European project. They are not on the look-out for friendly relations with the European ‘in-crowd’, keep a professional distance to their sources, and are therefore less restrained to dig up scoops, scandals and the like. This critical group of newcomers has politicised European reporting (Baisnée, 2000).

The British, who were initiated relatively late into the Brussels’ way of life, are largely incorporated in the second group. Not only are they newer to the field, their home offices keep them posted for a maximum of four to
five years, out of fear that they should become too socialised and thereby lose their critical stance. Whereas they do hold a scrutinising distance, their short introduction in European politics and its technicalities make it hard for them to understand underlying implications of decisions and to interpret events for their publics at home. Compared with French reporting, the British are very closely tied to their home editors. These home offices are strongly politically coloured. A considerable level of partisanship has survived in the British press up to this day, whereas this has become much more faint in France or the Netherlands in the past half century. This partisanship pushes the correspondent to cover politics at this supranational level in line with the preferences of their newspapers (ibid.). Home offices in London pull the strings. They value and frame news from the EU in the light of the severe domestic controversies on the issue. Whereas news about the EU is printed on the foreign pages in France, it is most often assigned to the home section in the UK (ibid.). High national prominence of EU stories combined with a knowledge of EU affairs that is generally less thorough, may explain the explosion of opinionated storytelling on the EU in the British press.

During the 1970s and 1980s newspaper support for the EU was on the rise in the United Kingdom, in view of the benefits that the single market could bring. The 1990s saw a sharp increase in Euroscepticism, both among the (Conservative) political elite and the media, especially noticeable in the more right-wing tabloids and broadsheets among which The Sun and The Times. When reporting on European matters, this Euroscepticism and critical investigative culture of many British media have often resulted in hostility, even xenophobia, towards the Union and its institutions (Cross & Golding, 1997). The journalists engage in an active search for scandals and quarrels between member states and within the institutions (Geddes, 2004), even bringing them so far as to invent and twist facts. A popular Euromyth among both broadsheets and tabloids is the depiction of the EU as the ‘continental’ bully, which, driven by jealousy, is out to get Britain and the British way of life and to humiliate it. It will not stop until Britain is on its knees begging for mercy. Incidents of fraud in Brussels are made out to look like structural features of the in itself inefficient money-wasting European institutions. The ‘F-word’ was occasionally spotted in the headlines of the tabloid press to denote the plagues of Federalism. The exceptionally aggressive coverage of European issues by the British press even drove the European Commission to create a ‘rapid reply service’ in London in 1992. The Commission hoped it could provide journalists with sufficient information to put in perspective the bulk of one-sided or twisted stories. However, the British press continued to have its own objectives. The BSE crisis in 1996 and more specifically the European ban on British beef induced a new wave of Euromythology and Europhobia in the British press (Cross & Golding, 1997; Semetko, De Vreese & Peter, 2000).
Studies come to contradictory results regarding the amount of EU coverage in the British media. Trenz (2004) and Pfetsch (2005) find limited attention in comparison to other countries, whereas Cross & Golding (1997) observe that the introduction of European sections in many broadsheets have resulted in a large volume of news and information about the EU. The topics covered in the broadsheets are by and large of a political, defence and especially economic order. During the 1990s a large majority focussed on the question whether the single currency should replace the pound sterling. Stories on cultural issues are much harder to find, which tallies with the concerns of the political elite (Cross & Golding, 1997; Trenz, 2004). The media reflect the pragmatism, the cost-benefit calculations of the political discussion (Geddes, 2004). Overall, compared with the European average less EU stories in the British press are written from a European perspective, whereas more stories are written from a domestic point of view (Pfetsch, 2005).

By now it will be clear that the average tone of the EU stories in the British press is among the most negative in Europe. A cross-national comparative content analysis of news coverage in EU member states and Switzerland confirms that British EU coverage is indeed more negative than elsewhere (e.g., Pfetsch, 2005). The remainder of this section will give a quick idea of the views that the prominent British newspapers *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent* held regarding the European Monetary Union in 1995 and 1996, as an illustration of their general outlook towards the EU. *The Times* assumes a clear-cut position. President Jacques Santer of the European Commission is said to be incompetent and dishonest, while the entire idea of the EMU is utterly unrealistic and dangerous. France and Germany were soon to find out. The pro-Labour broadsheet *The Guardian* is known to view the EU from a less nationalist, more moderate perspective, although it also applies pragmatic criteria to judge the degree to which Britain should get itself involved in the EU. *The Guardian* encourages British participation in the Euro, although it approaches the conditions of the introduction and the timetable for its realisation with a considerable amount of caution. The paper promotes a referendum on the issue in order to reconcile the people and the politicians on this issue of major national importance. *The Independent*, the self-proclaimed non-partisan paper, cannot avoid transmitting its own preferences, which are generally progressive and pro-European. It shares its left-wing outlook with *The Guardian*. Like *The Guardian*, *The Independent* also expresses its belief in the potential benefits of the Euro, while looking upon the timing with strong reservations (Cross & Golding, 1997).

### 5.1.3 Brussels & British parliamentary scrutiny

The formation of the British parliament and government are based on a plurality election system in which the winner takes it all. The government consists of members of a single party, which also represents the majority in parliament. In practice, there is little separation of power and little antago-
nism between cabinet and parliament. Policy making is almost completely monopolised by the executive. The pressure that individual MPs can put on the government is considerably larger when it relies on a smaller majority in parliament, of which the parliaments elected in 1974 and 1992 are examples. The daily agenda of the House of Commons is also formally controlled by the main business of the executive (Andeweg & Nijzink, 1995; Döring, 1995). However, this monopoly is subtler in practice. There are several arrangements for parliamentary initiative. For example, apart from the right to apply for an emergency adjournment debate, which is seldom granted, and the free choice of topics during the fixed number of ‘Opposition days’, the Early Day Motion allows one or more MPs, who were selected by ballot in the Speaker’s office, to discuss the topic of their choosing (Wiberg, 1995). Moreover, the government is pressing for time and needs to get its business through parliament. Any deliberate obstruction to the executive timetable may cause quite an embarrassment, which explains why government is likely to take the wishes of parliament into account (Döring, 1995). It is the job of the House of Commons to control government. But then it does so passionately. It is a highly esteemed institution, both among the British citizens and British ministers, the latter of which dread being called before the House to explain their actions. In the light of the marginal effect of parliament on actual policy making, the tactic of public embarrassment is parliament’s favoured and most effective tool to force the executive to respect parliamentary procedures and to guarantee transparency (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Carter, 2001).

The activities and tactics of the House of Commons to optimise its involvement in European politics are strongly rooted in the domestic legislature-executive relations. The British governments, irrespective of their political colour and support for Europe, have always encouraged stronger oversight of both Houses in European decision making. As a result, the British scrutiny system has been among the best-developed systems in Europe from early on. Ironically, considering the degree of Euroscepticism at all political levels, it even counts among the most ‘Europeanised’ systems in Europe. Obviously, this is thanks to the importance associated to the EU, rather than to support for the EU. Already in 1974 the European Scrutiny Committee (ESC) received a control function beyond domestic parliamentary scrutiny procedures. Whereas parliament is allowed control over secondary legislation: ex-post scrutiny, the ESC is included in the pre-legislative stage of EU policy making. The European Standing Committees, created in 1989, are to ensure that there is enough room to debate the proposals that the ESC marks as relevant.

The most noticeable reforms in favour of parliamentary scrutiny of European affairs were introduced by the Labour government in 1998. Parliament is now allowed to sift documents, give its opinion and consent to documents, debate, inquire, publish reports and provide the British public
with information. These activities are directed at two types of control: influencing the content of legislation before it is decided upon in the Council of Ministers, and holding government accountable (Carter, 2001). In practice, the effective impact of the former is clearly subordinate to the latter. The parliamentary scrutiny reserve, constraining government from agreeing with proposals in the Council of Ministers before parliament has considered them, is extended from the first pillar (Community pillar) to pillars two (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and three (Justice and Home Affairs) under the Labour government. The House is subsequently given access to all EU documents, accompanied with explanatory memoranda from government, indicating the legislative importance of the document and the governmental position. In contrast to the access of necessary information, the timing of the access has been and still is a matter of concern and the six-week scrutiny period prescribed in the PNP is seldom achieved. Contacts between the ESC and relevant committees of the European Parliament are well developed (Carter, 2001; Maurer, 2002). Recently, the ESC’s relations with Whitehall have also taken off in a positive direction. The Committee is now generally respected for its professional and unbiased handling of EU matters. This is different for the European Standing Committees, since their effectiveness is to date a great disappointment due to a high level of non-attendance (Carter, 2001).

Despite parliament’s elaborate European activities, its decisions are not binding. Ultimately, government only invites parliament to contribute to European negotiations when it enhances its bargaining position. If it does not, it is inclined to ignore parliament, for a dominant executive such as the British government would not allow to see its hands tied in international negotiations. Moreover, the traditionally loyal British parliamentary majority itself hardly ever finds it profitable to override the power of their governmental representatives. It rather grants them the necessary leeway to defend the British interest at the EU level. Consequently the House of Commons does not invest as much in telling government what to do prior to negotiations, as it does in holding it accountable afterwards (in the ESC) and threatening it with public embarrassment (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Carter, 2001).

5.2 The Netherlands

5.2.1 Consensus all the way to Brussels
In line with the reputation of Dutch policy making in general, the position of the Netherlands towards European integration in the past decades can best be described as supportive and progressive though pragmatic, but most of all consensus-based. From the accession in the 1950s until the 1990s, every Dutch government, whether of a left or right signature, aimed at intensifying the ties among the European member states from the perspective of economic prosperity. The Netherlands has always been a trading nation,
Country descriptions

and was well aware that it relied on good relations with its neighbours, on an internal market and therefore on a breakdown of trade barriers. Fear of losing national identity or political autonomy were never the main considerations for the Netherlands to be a drag on political integration. However, the idea of further integration in the realm of foreign and defence policy did encounter Dutch objections (e.g., De Graaff, 2003; Pijpers, 2005). The ideal Dutch scenario for Europe consisted of economic and monetary integration organised along supranational principles.

The Netherlands is one of the six founding member states that signed the Treaty of Paris as early as 1951, which established the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), as well as the Treaties of Rome in 1957, which extended the ECSC with the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom. It was also heavily involved in the preparations for the organisation of the EEC, since it was the Dutch Secretary of Foreign Affairs Beyen who in 1954 proposed to extend European cooperation to the economy. As one of only six member states the Netherlands had acquired a particularly influential position, if one considers its size. How was there to be any political disagreement on participation, when strong countries such as France and Germany were to take into account whatever opinion the Netherlands might hold? Its relative position was initially even strengthened by taking advantage of the shaky relations between the French and German power blocks. However, this situation could not go on forever, as the Netherlands was to find out with the accession of nine countries, most important of which the United Kingdom (De Graaff, 2003).

The fact that the Netherlands has been a strong supporter of European integration, even to the extent that it applauded supranational institutions, would suggest that tensions between the Netherlands and other member states regarding ideas on the future of the European Community have been negligible. In general this is true. Nevertheless, some points should be mentioned, either concerning Dutch vigilance towards others or concerning frustrations of others with the Dutch behaviour. The strong preference for supranational European institutions has first and foremost been inspired by the Dutch determination to limit the power of France and Germany, especially when these countries made efforts to combine forces. Intergovernmental decision making would depend too much on the negotiating position of the heads of state and put the smaller states at a disadvantage. Furthermore, the Netherlands has always valued intensive relations with the United States, and here it found an ally in the United Kingdom. For this reason, as well as out of fear of limiting its own international role, the Netherlands has rejected the – especially French – ambition of increased integration within the domains of defence and foreign policy until 1999 (e.g., Pijpers, 2005).

Interestingly, the Netherlands made a huge exception to this principle once, which is also one of the few occasions on which the Dutch themselves...
The democratic deficit closer to home

were faced with outright rejection. The Dutch presidency in 1991 proposed to create the supranational European Political Union, alongside the European Monetary Union (EMU), in order to restrict the competences of the Council of the European Union (dominated by the French, German and British heads of state). The Netherlands was inexorably put in its place when the proposal was practically unanimously rejected on ‘Black Monday’ (De Graaff, 2003; Voerman, 2005). Another cause for friction stems from the national budgetary policies. Since the existence of the EMU in 1999 the Dutch government has manifested itself as the best behaved and most self-disciplined of all. It is the loudest advocate of strict budgetary measures and requires the member states to live up to the agreements of the stability pact. This rigid attitude has not yielded a lot of sympathy from its neighbours. Of course the list of irritations would be considerably longer if policy-specific debates would be added, which do not necessarily affect the shared view on the future of Europe. For example, the Dutch are notorious for their tolerant policy and unconventional methods concerning soft and hard drugs (e.g., Pijpers, 2005). This has provoked serious clashes on several occasions between the Dutch and the other members, most notably the French.

Contrary to the British domestic situation, European integration has never been a cause for major divisions between parties, let alone within parties. From mainstream right to mainstream left there has been consensus that further integration towards a federalist Europe is essentially a good thing. The enthusiasm with which parties were devoted to speeding the process did vary from decade to decade. As a result of the anti-supranationalist and anti-UK whims of President De Gaulle, the Dutch parties were discouraged and the European spirit was tempered from the 1960s onwards, reinforced by the oil-crisis of the 1970s, until the late 1980s when new treaties got Europe back on track (Voerman, 2005). As a rule of thumb, if there is nothing to disagree about, there is nothing to talk about. Hence in general, European politics hardly appeared on the Dutch political agenda. Members of parliament did not take their job of scrutinising the European policy of their consecutive governments very seriously, scared of by the complexity and technicalities (Boerboom, 2004). As a consequence, the Dutch executives have had full scope during European negotiations and made a habit of taking the most extreme stance. Fully aware that other member states would never go along with these propositions, they could return home either patting themselves on the back, or blaming others in case of failure. Whatever the outcome, the Dutch parliament and population would mainly refrain from giving them a hard time (De Graaff, 2003). Until recently, the Dutch have always been among the most EU-supportive populations of all founding member states (Pijpers, 2005; Thomassen, 2005).

As will also be discussed further on, one should note that the situation changed considerably in the 1990s, when at the executive level, at the party level as well as among the population, sounds of dissatisfaction with
the Dutch position within the European Union accumulated. The Socialist Party (SP) situated at the left end of the Dutch party scale, obtained a seat in parliament in 1994, and has been a convinced critic of the market-driven EU. The Conservative Liberals of the VVD, especially their front man Bolkestein, although fundamentally still in favour of European integration, started to knit their brows as well. They started to seriously question the balance between the financial contribution of the Netherlands and what it received in return in terms of both finances and influence (e.g., Bakker, 1997; Pijpers, 2005; Voerman, 2005). Furthermore, as soon as integration in the area of home affairs and justice (pillar three) is put on the European agenda, a majority in the Dutch parliament suddenly would prefer to slow things down. Objections to the transfer of high politics to the EU level have been rare, but this was different when the domestic policies concerning drugs, euthanasia or other matters of ideological nature were at stake in more recent years. An explanation may be found in the long Dutch tradition of binding groups together in a socio-ideologically pillarised society. These particular policies are the cherished outcomes of negotiating and compromise seeking and should not be jeopardised by outside interference (Pijpers, 2005). Still, up until the late 1990s the Dutch participation in the European project did not cost anyone a night’s sleep.

Not only has the Dutch attitude towards the EU changed during the 1990s, but also the actual Dutch EU policy. It has become less consistent, less idealistic, but instead much more pragmatic. An illustration of this pragmatic lack of idealism is the hesitation of Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers (1982-1994) to support the endeavour of the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to reunite Germany and make an attempt at conciliation with East and Central European countries, fearing a too central role of Germany in the EU. From this moment on, incidental alliances are deemed more important, while the importance of supranationalism has declined. Several explanations can be brought up, of which two will be mentioned. First, the Netherlands turned from net receiver into net contributor in 1992. Second, the expansion of the Union has reinforced the concern about the influence of the smaller member states within the EU, boosting the pugnacity of the Dutch government (De Graaff, 2003). At the same time, the Netherlands is no longer the exemplary member state, since nowadays it too neglects to timely implement EU directives, and has had to be reprimanded by the European Commission on several occasions (Boerboom, 2004).

On a domestic level, the Dutch government is faced with an increasingly dissatisfied population. In line with overall domestic political trends, which are marked by accusations that politics is out of touch with the wishes of the people and by the emergence of populism in politics, personified by Pim Fortuyn, people complain about the expensive Euro and the elitist nature of the EU (Pijpers, 2005; Thomassen, 2005). The most striking illustration is the Dutch ‘no vote’ in a national referendum about the European Constitution.
in June 2005. It is hard to disentangle the possible explanations for the Dutch opposition to the EU Constitution. Were the Dutch primarily punishing the incumbent centre-right government who promoted the Constitution, or have real anti-EU sentiments developed? Unease at the speed with which European integration is taking off, at the expansion towards the East and the resulting influx of cheap labour from Poland, and at the possibility of a Turkish membership certainly played a central role (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis, Takens, & Van Atteveldt, 2006). The rest of Europe was baffled at the ostensible suddenness of this motion of no-confidence from a country that has represented consensus, diplomacy, support and tolerance for so long.

As will be clear by now, the issue of European integration has never really entered the public debate until the turn of the century. This is easily explained by the Dutch political system based on coalition formation, in which a certain level of compromise is inevitable, as well as the Dutch tradition of incessant dialogue aimed at consensus. The EU only played a role on the executive agenda. In a vicious circle the media and parliament prevent each other from putting it on the agenda, due to a lack of understanding and a lack of news value on both sides. In line with the distribution of opinions in parliament, critical tendencies are notably found in the more right-wing liberal press (*NRC Handelsblad*), or in more recent times, in the more popular press trying to link up with people’s anxieties about the speed and intensity of the integration (*De Telegraaf*). Still, lack of EU news is what best characterises the Dutch information climate.

### 5.2.2 Brussels & Dutch news reporting

As a founding member state of the European union, the Dutch were part of the Brussels’ press corps since the earliest hours. As we now know, the early correspondents felt part of the construction of a united Europe and felt a responsibility to sell Europe to their home publics. The Dutch Brussels-based correspondents are best qualified as the institutional type. In the spirit of Dutch policy makers, the European project was never fundamentally questioned, certainly not by journalists from within the European microcosm.

However, Dutch correspondents should not be referred to as the most obvious example of the institutional Europhile style of reporting. The entanglement between correspondents and the civil servants, which in some cases has evolved to an alarming extent, was not too manifest among the Dutch delegation. It is not hard to imagine how a journalist who is paid by the European Commission for one publication, is slightly held back to write a critical review of this institution on a next occasion. The same goes for the many journalists who act as ghost-writers for European MPs. Traditionally, Dutch correspondents do not engage in these activities, although they occasionally do write for journals published by the European Parliament to earn something on the side (Dohmen, 1999). Obviously this phenomenon
becomes less and less common with the overall trend towards more critical reporting. Whereas Dutch journalists covered domestic politics with distance and respect, which we earlier called the sacerdotal approach, during the 1990s their approach became more critical and pro-active, or pragmatic (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; De Vreese, 2003). This rather recent shift in the definition of political journalism was transposed to the European domain, in which a purely institutional style of reporting was exchanged for a mixture of institutional and investigative reporting in the 1990s, coinciding with the rise of critical voices within politics and society.

The EU-friendly disposition of the Dutch correspondents cannot prevent a merely modest interest in European affairs at the home desks. The absence of the EU on both the political and the media agendas is most typical of the Netherlands (De Vreese, 2003; Pfetsch, 2005). Few newspapers or broadcasts have a separate section devoted to European news, which means that EU stories are evaluated against conventional news values and often lose out to other stories (De Vreese, 2003). The technicality, lack of transparency and lack of personalities are considered huge obstacles by home editors. Additionally, the immediate relevance of the EU to the lives of Dutch citizens is systematically underestimated both by parliamentarians and by the media. Only during a Dutch EU presidency will home editors get all keyed up and send home-based journalists to Brussels for the duration of the presidency. According to the Brussels’ veterans these journalists have little knowledge of the political puppets and procedures (Bevers, 2000). The number of correspondents with a permanent appointment in Brussels is limited (Dohmen, 1999). Of course the lack of polarised opinion at home is again part of the explanation, since conflict triggers news (e.g., Adam, 2007; De Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003a).

Although the attitude of Dutch reporters towards the EU has become more pragmatic and consequently more critical, as was discussed earlier, the tone of coverage never got as hostile as in the United Kingdom. Neither has it been as uncritical as the coverage of French newspapers. Compared with the other two cases in this research, the Netherlands is typically middle-of-the-road. Studies on the Dutch coverage of the European Union reach different conclusions with regard to the evaluation of European institutions. These differences may very well be explained by the fact that one focuses on television news (De Vreese, 2003), whereas the other relies on a combination of the quality and tabloid press (Pfetsch, 2005). Since the press is what we are concerned with in this study, we will stick to the results of the latter. The Dutch press publishes the highest proportion of neutral stories or stories with arguments both pro and contra of the six member states investigated by Barbara Pfetsch. Among the stories with a bias, the stories that are supportive of the EU largely outweigh the negative accounts. As in most countries, EU stories are often domestically focussed, but the number of stories from a European perspective is still considerably smaller compared
with the average coverage in other countries (De Vreese, 2003; Pfetsch, 2005). Most European stories can be found in the factual economic pages, as the economic dimension of EU developments has always yielded the most attention in the Netherlands.

5.2.3 Brussels & Dutch parliamentary scrutiny

In the Dutch multi-party system, the members of parliament are appointed according to the principle of proportional representation. The largest party has the privilege of inviting other parties to participate in a coalition government. The executive relies on the confidence of the legislature and the prime minister is politically responsible towards the legislature. Parliament’s task is twofold: to legislate and to control. In general, government prepares a legislative proposal, presents it to parliament, which then decides upon it. Parliament may also draft proposals itself. In contrast to the British and French parliaments, the decisions of the Dutch Tweede Kamer about legislation and its implementation are binding. Parliament holds government to account, to such an extent that it can send ministers home by votes of no-confidence. Theoretically, motions of no-confidence may be submitted by the British and French parliaments as well, but these are purely rhetorical since party discipline practically always prevents them from being executed. In contrast, Dutch ministers or whole cabinets have actually had to resign on several occasions (to illustrate, 2006 saw two rounds of resignations of ministers on top of the two fallen cabinets Balkenende in 2002 and 2006). Consequently, ministers are obliged to correctly and exhaustively inform the MPs (Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002). The Dutch parliament stands out by two additional instruments, which enhance its independence from the executive: it is the only parliament in Europe that has full control over its own daily agenda (Andeweg & Nijzink, 1995; Döring, 1995), and there is no such thing as a list of forbidden topics regarding the questions posed to members of government (Wiberg, 1995).

The performance of the Dutch legislature in the national arena is less significant than its powerful formal position might suggest. Its organisational weakness, in terms of resources, personnel, research, gives the executive a head start in the development of legislation. To regain some of the lost initiative, parliament strongly focuses on its publicity profile, by using the high-key instrument of the parliamentary inquiry into political involvement in dramatic events, or by confronting ministers with media scoops. Coalition politics present another problem for party fractions. Agreement between coalition parties is necessary at the government level, and dualism should ideally guarantee their independence at the parliament level. However, this Dutch consociational policy making and the tradition of compromising often prevent overt confrontations between coalition parties and government. A related problem is the practice of a new government to determine an official coalition agreement (regeerakkoord). Parliamentary discussions
about policy proposals included in the coalition agreement hardly stand a chance and are easily dismissed by government (Hoetjes, 2001).

In European politics, the formal power of the Dutch parliament is relatively strong compared with the European average, as it is in the national arena. Parliament can legally mandate government prior to decisions in the Council. It decides on the implementation of European Law. It may use the parliamentary scrutiny reserve, although this only applies to the third pillar (CJHA). Parliament must approve European Treaties before they can enter into force. It can always call a minister to account for his actions. Because of ministers’ dependence on parliamentary approval, it is in their own interest to take the job of supplying parliament with the necessary information very seriously. In general the information, including explanatory memoranda, arrives at the General Committee for EU Affairs (installed in 1994 as a horizontal committee, which links the EU to all specialised parliamentary committees) sufficiently in advance. However, since 1953 the Dutch constitution has attributed supremacy to European law over national law (Article 92). This implies that legal competence has been delegated from parliament to the EU and European law directly applies to Dutch citizens without intervention of the Dutch Second Chamber. Consequently the formal competence of the Dutch parliament is not equally encompassing in the European and domestic domains. Nevertheless, the Dutch parliament has among the most powerful rights in European policy making (Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002).

Compared with several parliaments, which lack such formal authority, such as those of the UK and even France, it does not by far live up to the expectations that flow from such opportunities. Several reasons can be mentioned. First, as a result of the lack of EU polarisation in national politics, the Dutch parliament does not seek to attack its coalition government. Consequently, the room for manoeuvre of the Dutch executive is hardly restricted. Parliament is often confronted with the policy outcomes after the negotiations and is simply told by government that this is what Europe wants (Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002). Justice and Home Affairs is an exception in this regard. Parliament is much more proactive with regard to pillar-three matters, because of their formal right to consent (Boerboom, 2004). Second, the organisational shortcomings at the domestic level are even more explicit on the European level. The importance of formal and informal contacts between MPs and MEPs has long been underestimated. If contact is sought, the initiative mostly originates from Brussels. The meetings of COSAC are generally considered a waste of time. The General Committee for EU Affairs is held in low esteem among colleague MPs (Boerboom, 2004; Hoetjes, 2001).

Third, the abovementioned weaknesses of parliamentary performance in EU matters fundamentally originate from a deep-rooted lack of interest in Europe. Of course this is also closely related to the lack of polarisation regarding the EU. The amount of parliamentary attention to EU politics is
out of touch with the increase in importance of European policy making, as though MPs are attempting to ignore their declining authority (Boerboom, 2004). Dutch MPs prefer to play the national game, which guarantees a certain amount of media exposure. Only at times that domestic opinion happens to be divided over a European issue or the media have picked up a European item, there is some willingness to put it on the parliamentary agenda. But in general, little electoral success can be gained by adopting a European profile. As a consequence, the European speciality is not highly valued within the party hierarchy and a bad choice for any MP who wishes to climb the party ladder. Apart from a small and hard working circle of General Committee members and EU-minded MPs, the lack of interest and attention is not without consequences for the proliferation of EU knowledge among Dutch MPs.

The Second Chamber lacks a long-term and strategic vision for the Dutch EU policy and unnecessarily contributes to executive supremacy in EU politics. Although it was actively involved in and supported (a federal) Europe in the early 1950s, indifference characterises the parliamentary generations from 1960s onwards. Since the start of 2000 there have been cautious signs of an awakening parliament, which starts to face the importance of the EU and its loss of control (Boerboom, 2004; Hoetjes, 2001).

5.3 France

5.3.1 Europe’s best friend & worst enemy
The age-old French desire for international ‘grandeur’ is at the heart of France’s early endorsement of the European project in the 1950s as much as it is the rational behind its difficulties to play by the Community rules. De Gaulle was well aware, be it grudgingly, that European integration was a necessity to safeguard the position of France in the ranking of world powers, as well as to protect its territory from future foreign threats. In stark contrast with the economic objectives of United Kingdom and the Netherlands, France’s grounds for surrendering significant parts of its autonomy are entirely political. Integration within the domain of foreign and defence policy would create a European power block able to provide an alternative to American hegemony (Drake, 2005; Elgie & Griggs, 2000). Steps towards harmonisation of the economic and especially social policies have met much more French opposition throughout the years. France’s willingness to limit its national sovereignty may be more easily understood if one considers the confidence that the leaders of the Fifth Republic have had in France’s innate leadership qualities (e.g., Van Noije & Hijmans, 2005). Europe was to be created in the image of France, making the European Community a powerful extension of its sphere of influence and a vehicle to promote its domestic interests. These objectives entail the requisite that the EU institutions are intergovernmental, which enhances the power of the executive of the larger
member states, hence of the Elysée. French nationalism has remained manifestly present; European cooperation is sacrificed as soon as the leadership of France is questioned or its objectives are crossed (Drake, 2005; Van Noije & Hijmans, 2005).

France is one of the six member states that have joined the European cause from the beginning, participating in the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community and Euratom. The part that France played in the intellectual process underlying the creation of these bodies of European cooperation has been considerable. Two of the most prominent men who are considered as the fathers of Europe, are French. It was Robert Schuman, French secretary of foreign affairs, who presented plans to unite the coal and steel industries of Europe to his European colleagues in 1950. The Schuman declaration, which resulted in the ECSC, was largely designed by the French economist and politician Jean Monnet, who was also the man behind the creation of Euratom. Schuman was elected the first president of the European Parliament (1958-1960). Monnet was the first president of the High Authority of the ECSC (1952-1954). When drawing up these proposals for intensified cooperation, Monnet had two dangers in mind. Germany was recovering successfully from two world wars, even quicker than France. France thought it best to reach out to Germany in order to prevent history repeating itself. Furthermore, the first signs of the Cold War were already tangible, creating a new threat of instability on European territory. Germany needed to be pulled to the west before it could be pulled to the east. In later years, France heavily invested in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, discarded by other member states until it was established as the second pillar in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992. A unified Europe would protect its territory from new aggressions through reconciliation with Germany.

France in Europe is a country on a mission. Convinced of its visionary qualities and famed for its chauvinism, it is hardly surprising that France has come into collision with other member states during negotiations on the future of Europe. The most obvious EU partner that should be discussed in this context is the United Kingdom. Most exemplary is the repetitive blocking of British accession to the European Community by President De Gaulle. As an economically strong and large country the UK would be a strong competitor to French European leadership. More fundamentally, anti-Americanism has always been one of the central pillars of French foreign policy, whereas the UK is the United States’ strongest ally (Geddes, 2004). Also the British Anglo-Saxon model of liberal economies has been a thorn in the flesh of the protectionist French state, which has strongly rejected globalisation for its corrupting effects on national societies. Not only has France antagonised the United Kingdom in this respect, but also many other member states, which believe in healthy Atlantic relations and liberalisation. Nevertheless, in the course of recent decades France has had
to become accustomed to the inevitability of open markets and has learned
to acknowledge the benefits (Elgie & Griggs, 2000).

Then there is Germany, the other European country of great signifi-
cance as far as France is concerned. Intensive cooperation with Germany
is a means to an end as well as an end in itself. For long, France has singled
out Germany as the only serious negotiating partner with whom agreement
needed to be sought before new plans could be presented to the other Euro-
pean partners. France was well aware that the position of Germany within
the EU would become ever more important as a result of German unifi-
cation and the renewed Drang nach Osten. The Franco-German axis of power has
remained strong for many years, especially under the pro-European leader-
ship of François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl during the 1980s. However, as
German confidence in its own national strength grew and Germany openly
challenged the founding Pact of Parity by demanding more voting weights
in the European institutions during the negotiations of the Treaty of Nice in
2000, the relationship showed cracks. From this point on, German coopera-
tion no longer went without saying. Still, Germany and France fi ght joint
battles now and again, such as their protest against the war in Iraq or their
disobedience regarding EU’s Growth and Stability Pact (Drake, 2005).

More generally, France is very skilled in provoking the anger of the
smaller member states, by its refusal to treat them as equal negotiating
partners. France rarely consults them in the initial stages of a new pro-
posal. What is more, it does not care much about consensus, but it is rather
interested in presenting a prestigious idea as a way forward for the whole
of Europe. The French style is to spring such a plan as a fait accompli on the
member states, which are then forced to take it or leave it. As a consequence,
French proposals are awaited with a fair degree of scepticism beforehand.
Part of the same style, and a logical consequence of its preference for inter-
governmentalism over supranationalism, is the habit of the French leaders
to exclude the EU institutions as much as possible, in favour of the executive
power of Paris. This is another way of limiting the power of small states,
whose position is strengthened through the European Commission and sec-
retary general of the Council, and another way of rubbing them the wrong
way (Costa & Daloz, 2005). The fact that it has the worst record of timely
implementation of EU directives of all member states is very telling of the
bumpy relations between France, the institutions and the member states
(Mangenot, 2005). Of course, there have also been plenty of confrontations
on a more concrete policy level. To name a few, France has undiplomatically
attacked the Netherlands on its drug policy in the 1990s and continues to
defy a number of countries who wish to see the subsidies to European farm-
ers abolished, besides the well-known differences of opinion on the issues of
transatlantic relations or globalisation. In short, France is a very controver-
sial, but nevertheless a very respected member state.
This section on France’s foreign idiosyncrasies should end on a positive note. From the 1990s onwards, there are indications that France starts to realise that it needs to change its tune, as powerful countries such as the UK and Germany are challenging its position as intellectual leader of the EU. Furthermore, France must take into account the dispositions of an increasingly sceptical population. It has discovered the advantages of a more consensual approach within the EU’s negotiating networks, or rather, it can no longer afford not to invest in healthy relations. France is gradually adopting a more transparent approach towards its negotiating partners, including the smaller ones (Costa & Daloz, 2005).

European integration can be held responsible for equally contradictory political relationships domestically as internationally. If one takes the chaotic pattern of splits and alliances in the French party system at face value, one would believe the EU to have had an incredible polarising impact. However, the French electorate is less impressed by these events and knows that these grand gestures are likely to be nothing more than the personal tactics of a presidential candidate and his supporters to get closer to l’Élysée. In order to put the disputes within and between parties in perspective it is important to note in advance that party politics is not terribly highly esteemed within French society. The Third and Fourth Republics are believed to have fallen prey to irresponsible behaviour on the part of parties, which consistently confused the public interest with self-interest. De Gaulle was quick to drastically reduce party power as well as parliamentary power in exchange for an almost all-powerful executive in the 1958 constitution of the Fifth Republic. However, the questionable reputation of parties has lingered on. Furthermore, the fact that French politics has increasingly revolved around the presidential office has personalised party politics, often elevating individual ambitions above ideology (Elgie & Griggs, 2000). Parties are created, parties break up and parties form alliances with great regularity. Seemingly deep-rooted convictions wither away for the sake of coalition formation. Radicals link up with mainstream parties whenever a government position comes within reach. The same dynamics have proven true on the issue of European integration (Elgie & Griggs, 2000; Flood, 2005).

During the Fifth Republic there have been eight overtly Eurosceptic parties (Flood, 2005). This section will give a brief overview of the major domestic divisions over European integration, without pretending to be exhaustive on parties or party positions. French Euroscepticism has run across the traditional French left-right divisions. Eurosceptic left-wing and right-wing parties share the criticism of the EU that is often heard throughout Europe: not democratic, not transparent, too technocratic and too money consuming. Both the left and the right add to this list the typically French complaint of an economic policy that is too liberal and too dependent on the US. However, the ideology underlying this Euroscepticism on the left and the right is fundamentally different.
On the left, the Communist Party (PCF) and the Greens have severe problems with EU’s capitalism and liberalism, which are seen as a catalyst for globalisation and threaten the weakest in society (Flood, 2005). The Socialists (PS) have been favourable of European integration ever since the early 1980s. France has had a president with a very European profile in the person of Socialist François Mitterrand (1981-1995) (e.g., Van Noije & Hijmans, 2005). Nevertheless, the Maastricht Treaty proved too controversial and caused internal problems within the Socialist Party, resulting in the creation of the Eurosceptic and republican MDC under Jean-Pierre Chevénement in 1993 (Elgie & Griggs, 2000). The two-ballot majority system heavily relies on the formation of left and right coalitions. Although the Greens have taken a more supportive stance towards the EU and the number of Eurosceptic lists has dropped for tactical reasons in the past decade, the issue of integration has still prevented a strong unified power block on the left. This became apparent when the left was elected to share executive power with President Jacques Chirac during the period of cohabitation (1997-2002).

On the right, the picture is even more scattered. The biggest fear of Eurosceptics is the loss of national sovereignty and national identity. They also oppose the heavy financial duties imposed by the EU. Apart from personal aspirations, the EU is one of the few objects of dispute between and within parties of the mainstream right. It was again the Maastricht Treaty that meant the end of the joint list of the EU-critical Gaullists of the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) and the pro-EU liberal Christian Democrats of the Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF) in 1999. Furthermore, in 1994 it caused severe disagreements in the RPR of Jacques Chirac, eventually creating the even more Eurosceptic Rassemblement pour la France (RPF) of Charles Pasqua and Phillipe de Villiers in 1999. The central right UDF, created to support former President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, has had to endure separations of anti-EU fractions in 1994 and in 1998. In sum, even the most powerful parties on the right fell victim to numerous break-ups. Only the UDF has presented itself as a consistent pro-European element. However, it appears that a new chapter has begun with the creation of the Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle (UMP) around Jacques Chirac in 2002, uniting many parties of the mainstream right. The European agenda of this party seems to reflect the evolution of Chirac’s personal preferences, which have changed from hostility in the 1970s and 1980s into support during his presidential years (1995-present) (Van Noije & Hijmans, 2005). In the 21st century, while the ultra-right Front National (FN) and Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) continue on a nationalistic course, the left and the new Gaullist right seem to feel increasingly comfortable within the European Union.

The perspective of the French population adds another dimension to the already paradoxical relationship between France and the European Union. The French people united around their heads of state during the course of
European integration. The EU is ultimately viewed as a positive thing from the point of view of both France’s place in the world and economic modernisation. Eurobarometer data show that popular support for European membership has always been higher than the European average, until the early 1990s (Startin, 2005). French support reached an all-time high during the late 1980s, inspired by the international fame of Jacques Delors as president of the European Commission as well as by expectations of economic prosperity as a result of the 1986 Single European Act. However, the French reacted to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 as many other European populations had: critically (Flood, 2005). With only 51% of the votes, a referendum resulted in a slight victory for those in favour of the treaty. Whereas party opposition gradually eased at the turn of the century, the traditional public support went downhill from 1990 onwards, never to be restored. In the decade after the Maastricht Treaty the integration process gained such momentum, with the Treaty of Amsterdam, enlargement towards the East, the introduction of the Euro, and the creation of a European Constitution, that many people across Europe had a difficult time adjusting, or rather were increasingly unwilling to adjust. In the first years of the 21st century, a majority of the French is still in favour of the overall idea of European integration, but resistance due to uncertainty about the direction it has taken, has got hold of them. Although feelings of outright hostility were limited to one eighth of the population, some 25% felt indifferent or even distrustful towards the European Union by 2002, which was eventually expressed in 55% of the voters saying no to the EU Constitution in 2005 (Flood, 2005). As in the Netherlands, an important explanation for the rejection of the EU Constitution lies in the fear of losing employment to the new EU citizens from Eastern countries. The French made no mystery of their concerns as they directed their anger at EU commissioner Bolkestein who introduced the new services directive, which soon became the Frankenstein directive in good French. The enthusiasm of the 1980s changed into sceptical detachment in the 1990s. In this context the ease with which both political parties and voters accepted the introduction of the Euro is remarkable (Flood, 2005; Startin, 2005). The indifference rather than hostility of the French explains the fact that the EU as an issue has never managed to mobilise the French at elections, neither national nor European. Whereas several political fractions considered the issue worthy of a split within the party, such new explicitly Eurosceptical profiles have proven unprofitable in terms of votes. The EU just does not occur on the list of priorities of the French people.

5.3.2 Brussels & French news reporting

When discussing the European Union and the British media, it was argued that journalism in Brussels can be divided into two fundamentally different styles: institutional journalism and investigative journalism. This division corresponds to a division into Europhiles and Eurosceptics, or early and late
The democratic deficit closer to home

correspondents. It may also be argued that the division typically corresponds to the distinction between French and British correspondents. Whereas the British correspondents, at one end of the scale, are known to be very critical and distant towards the European institutions, and the Dutch take up a moderately supportive intermediate position, this section will argue that the style of French correspondents in Brussels may be understood as the far opposite of the British style in every respect.

French journalists were among the very first to settle in Brussels. They embody the institutional style of reporting. The word ‘Europhile’ seems to have been invented for the cohort of early French correspondents. They thought it their job to enhance support for European integration by enhancing understanding of its workings. It must be said that the French correspondents that showed up later in time demonstrated a more critical approach, as part of a general trend among European correspondents, which was particularly accelerated by the ‘Cresson scandal’, which led to the resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999 (Dohmen, 1999). Nevertheless, the connections between the first and the later arrivals have always been very tight. The first generation took on the task of initiating newcomers into the world of ‘Eurocracy’, thereby transmitting their definition of the profession and securing a largely pro-EU and institutional attitude among French correspondents throughout the years (Baisnée, 2000).

The early French correspondents are renowned and respected both among European civil servants and among their foreign colleagues. This is a result of their total dedication to the European cause, often for more than thirty years. They started their European careers by writing for specialised European media outlets, such as Agra Europe and Europolitique, as early as the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s they moved on to highly respected French dailies. This has provided them with meticulous in-depth knowledge of the Community’s procedures and policy dossiers, as well as with extensive contacts with the EU officials. No other group within the Brussels’ press corps can measure up to their resources (Baisnée, 2005). The drawback of the age-old relationships among journalists and between journalists and European officials is that such an old-boys network lacks mutual competition and inevitably undermines the objective distance needed for professional reporting (Baisnée, 2000; De Vreese, 2003).

The home desks in Paris appreciate the high level of socialisation of the correspondents in the Euroscene. The chief editors were the ones who chose not to replace them in all those years and to make full use of their technical expertise. In contrast to the British counterparts, the French home desks tend to interfere less with the specific content of news items as brought to them from Brussels. They understand that European stories are complicated stories and accept the preference of their correspondents for technical details. The correspondents are granted considerable freedom in judging the relevance of a story and in judging whether a national or a European angle is
best suited. However, this does not mean that the correspondents in Brussels are not having trouble getting their stories published. As in most European countries, French media are faced with commercial demands (Chalaby, 2004). EU stories are forced to compete with all international stories that end up on the foreign desk each day. The high level of indifference among the readers, in combination with a high level of technical complexity in the stories, incites the majority of news outlets to place the European Union fairly low on their news agendas. The lack of serious politicisation of European matters in national executive politics causes even the French quality press to dread the average story from Brussels, despite the home desks’ benevolent disposition towards the European Union. The introduction of a special European page in 2002 by Le Monde is exceptional in this context (Baisnée, 2005). Overall, compared with the coverage in other member states, attention for the European Union in the French media in the past decade has still been above average (Pfetsch, 2005; Trenz, 2004).

The focus of EU reporting in the French dailies reflects the fair degree of independence between Brussels correspondents and their editors. Journalists are much less forced to translate European events into national frames of reference than their British counterparts. The fact that EU stories are printed on the foreign pages rather than on the home pages is a first indication of the French tendency to prefer a European rather than a national perspective (Baisnée, 2000). Qualitative content analysis of the French press shows that compared with the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, less EU stories with a domestic scope and more EU stories with an entirely European scope are published. Also more common in France are essentially national stories to which a deliberate European twist is added (Trenz, 2004).

As can be expected from the historical profile of French correspondents in Brussels, analysis of the tone of EU coverage in both French quality papers and tabloids paints an unambiguous picture of outright support. The French press hardly publishes stories in which the EU is negatively evaluated. Besides a small number of neutral stories, it publishes an overwhelming amount of positive stories (Pfetsch, 2005). The level of support inevitably varies across the newspapers. The politically progressive newspapers Le Monde and La Libération may be counted among the most supportive of European integration, whereas Le Figaro, a more conservative daily, is in favour of further integration, but often puts up a fight when issues such as the lack of transparency or French sovereignty are concerned. According to an opinion poll issued by Le Figaro, its own right-wing readership accounted for most of the opposition against European enlargement. The French media underwent an evolution similar to that of the French citizenry. An ideological rhetoric of longing for a strong and united Europe was replaced by a business-like rhetoric of necessity. All newspapers continue to communicate a common conviction, which is best illustrated by a quotation from Le Nouvel Observateur: “It is not that France is turning away from Europe. The French
The democratic deficit closer to home

may cry out against Europe, but they would scream even more loudly if it was taken away from them” (Cabeoche, 1997).

The earlier claim that France is the exact opposite of the United Kingdom in its interpretation of EU membership is clearly underlined by such media facts. France chooses a European focus where the UK chooses a domestic focus. The French press is among the most supportive of all European media (with Italy), whereas the British press is the most negative. One last dimension of EU coverage that exemplifies the French style as opposed to the British style, concerns the subject choice of EU print copy. Whereas British and also Dutch papers are largely focused on economic advantages and drawbacks, political stories dominate the newspapers in France. Especially issues relating to employment and social affairs are considered of the highest importance (Trenz, 2004). Across all layers of society the French seem to agree on where the significance of the EU for France lies: in its ideological foundations.

5.3.3 Brussels & French parliamentary scrutiny

The political system of this constitutional republic is a hybrid of a presidential and a parliamentary system. The French multi-party system relies on the formation of either large left-wing or right-wing blocks. The French head of state is directly elected by the people in a two-ballot majority system. In two-ballot legislative elections, the prime minister, the cabinet and parliament are appointed. Consequently, it is not rare for the president and the prime minister/cabinet to represent opposing political colours. The government is answerable to parliament, but the power of the French president and the prime minister was extended at the expense of parliament in the Fifth Republic (1958), creating a parlement rationalisé. The French parliament is much more subordinated to the executive than the British and Dutch parliaments. Whereas the French constitution allows the executive to overrule a disobedient parliament on a number of occasions (Elgie & Griggs, 2000; Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001), this would be highly unusual in the United Kingdom and out of the question in the Netherlands. Admittedly, the French MPs have many of the instruments to exercise control over their ministers that other European MPs have. They are allowed to pose oral and written questions, and submit motions of no-confidence. However, any criticism emerging from these initiatives is in practice easily cast aside by the executive. The trouble for parliament starts with the fact that the executive sets the priority agenda for parliament, one month in advance except for a single day each month. Considering the number of fixed priorities, which cannot be changed by the assembly, there is not much room left on the agenda (Döring, 1995). Furthermore, it is much harder for French MPs to submit a motion of no-confidence, for it requires 10% of the MPs to request such a motion and 50% of all MPs to support it, whereas in the UK and in the Netherlands a simple majority suffices. The only time a motion of no-confidence
was executed was against the government of Prime Minister Pompidou in 1962. The same strict majority rule applies to normal motions on laws and budgets. Among other powerful weapons that the constitution of the Fifth Republic has put at the disposal of the French executive is the right to legislate without asking parliamentary approval. Parliament legislates merely in areas of exception according to Article 34. Importantly, the government may turn a parliamentary vote on any bill into a question of confidence (Art. 49.3), thereby implicitly forcing parliament to go along with executive proposals. Add to this the fact that the French MPs are in session only less than six months a year, during which they must rely on information from government projects rather than from committee reports (Tsebelis, 1995). In sum, French MPs are neither tenacious scrutinisers, as British MPs are, nor are they powerful legislators, as the Dutch are (Auel & Rittberger, 2006). They form a talking rather than a working parliament.

Paradoxically, the lack of policy-making influence of the French parliament is nowadays less explicit regarding European politics. During the 1990s French MPs start to seriously focus on the European domain to regain some of their lost competences. Membership of the 1979 Delegation for European affairs, which was initially held in low esteem in the Assembly, doubled in 1990. Its supply of governmental information became more systematic as well as its deliberations with the ministers of European affairs. The most important improvements to parliamentary power came about with the introduction of Article 88-4 in the French constitution in 1992. Parliament now has the constitutional right to be informed, to scrutinise and to intervene by tabling resolutions regarding European matters. Whereas the right to table resolutions only pertains to legislative documents about pillar-one (EC) issues at first, from 1999 onwards it also includes all documents concerning pillar-two and three policies. However, parliament still depends on the Council of State and government to decide on the legislative nature of information. The delay for parliamentary examination of the documents has steadily improved. From 1992 onwards, the permanent committees receive EU proposals before, rather than during or after transposition into national law. In 1994 the prime minister grants parliament one month for deciding on adopting a resolution. During that time, the French government refrains from negotiating in the Council of Ministers until parliament has made its position known, according to the parliamentary scrutiny reserve. In 1999, the committees themselves indicated that they receive EU proposals in due time (Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001).

Although the French executive appreciates and takes into account the viewpoints of the MPs, the actual performance of parliament in the European domain is more limited than the creation of the abovementioned prerogatives would suggest. The real impact of parliament largely depends on whether government finds it opportune to include parliament in the policy-making process. To begin with, the French government finds it tactless to
evoke the parliamentary scrutiny reserve during the French presidency, as well as on proposals of strategic significance. Government is even very reluctant to provide information on strategic issues. The more delicate the information, the more difficult it is for parliament to get hold of it. Moreover, contrary to the UK and the Netherlands, French MPs do not receive explanatory governmental notes attached to the official documents, which would help them to sift information and understand the executive position. Most important of all, parliamentary resolutions may be taken into consideration, but they are not binding. Government is currently unwilling to extend the tools of parliament any further. Due to a growing body of legislative implementation deficits, there seems to be a Gaullist backlash in government’s willingness to consult parliament, for the sake of efficiency (Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001).

In practice, the most effective way for parliament to gather the necessary information is the informal way, notably in the committee circuits. Similar to the House of Commons, the Assembly has established quite elaborate informal relations at the European level (Maurer, 2002). Its success depends on personal relationships, personal status of MPs and past practice. The main results of parliamentary efforts are extensive rapports d’information, meant to provide the larger public with informed arguments as well as to inform the government of the parliamentary viewpoints, without determining or attacking the governmental position. Overt criticism is rare, since the parliamentary majority generally agrees with government (not necessarily with the president in case of co-habitation). Especially in external matters, MPs, the prime minister and the president are very capable of covering up political differences, in order to present a unified and decisive France to the European partners, and preserve the position of France in the European hierarchy. Consequently, government readily uses these constructive works of reference as a source of information about the public opinion, while continuing to ignore parliament as a tribune.

This activity of distributing expert knowledge on EU matters reveals parliament’s primary goal: representing the link between the French citizens and the EU by organising and facilitating public debate. But although the electoral system has established strong links between MPs and their constituencies, this public service regarding European politics has not improved the popularity of the MPs, who enjoy a particularly bad reputation in the Fifth Republic. As a result of the fact that the parliamentary profession is hardly valued, as well as of the lack of antagonism between parliament and government, the media do not systematically cover their activities (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001). Concluding, the French parliament sees Europe as an opportunity to reinvent itself, but remains an ambitious workhorse at the mercy of the executive.
Chapter Six  Chronology

Which events and issues have captured the interest of the media and the parliaments of the European countries investigated in this study during the past decade? Which were the events that floated up to the surface and coloured the public sphere in Europe? To obtain a better understanding of the news and of the political discussion during the years of the research period, the events that caused the most noticeable peaks on the agendas will be discussed before jumping to the statistical agenda-building results in chapter 7. Although monitoring the historical chain of events is not close to being a sufficiently refined method to identify either one of the agendas as the cause or the effect, it will give us an impression of the frequency with which the national media and the national parliaments simultaneously display an interest in a political event. Theoretically it goes without saying that similar political topics should come to the attention of journalists and MPs, as they both watch over democracy in their own fashion. Scrutinising the most important peaks on both agendas will tell us if this assumption of shared interests has a basis in reality.

The overlapping priorities are indicative of the extent to which the theoretically assumed attraction to news values of interpretative journalism leaves room on the media agenda for the policy considerations of the parliamentary debates. Conversely, they show whether there is any trace of sensitivity towards news values in the issue selection on the parliamentary agenda, or rather whether such a touch of populism is absent in the way MPs go about their affairs. Apart from the influence of the interpretative style of reporting, European integration was put forward in chapter 3 as a second argument for the strengthened control of the media over the parliamentary agenda. Is there any backing for this second theoretical assumption that the EU matters in some issue domains? Do the media and parliament pick up on the European Union at all or is it still considered hardly more than an abstract political construct? This chronology will provide an answer to the question whether the discussions surrounding the four issues are predominantly European or domestically focused. In chapter 8 we will return to the historical overview in this chapter to see whether it can shed a different light on the observed agenda-building dynamics, by telling us about the actual Europeanness of the issues as compared with Europe's formal decision-making authority.

Table 6.1 gives a first idea of how parliament and the media divide their attention across the four issues. Which issue is most capable of catching their attention and which issue is least capable of doing so? Do parliament and the media apply the same rank order when constructing their lists of issue priorities? Clearly they do not. The media and parliament emphasise different issues in their daily business. Contrary to the lack of correspond-
ence within countries, there is a striking resemblance among the priorities of the British, Dutch and French MPs. To a slightly lesser extent, so is there among the British, Dutch and French media. All parliaments put agriculture on top of their list, followed by the environment, immigration, and drugs respectively. The press from the three countries pay most attention to either agriculture followed by immigration, or to immigration followed by agriculture. Contrary to the MPs, the environment is least of their concerns.

Table 6.1: Attention for issues in parliament and in the media (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parliament</td>
<td>media</td>
<td>parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(N_{\text{hits}}\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>(275172)</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>(657776)</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>(711550)</th>
<th>(89525)</th>
<th>(167358)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Note. The percentages denote the amount of attention paid to the individual issues in proportion to the total amount of attention paid to the four issues together \(N_{\text{hits}}\); weighed number of keyword hits) on each agenda in each country.

Whereas a certain correspondence between both groups of actors is present concerning the importance of agriculture and the lack of importance of drugs, the media care much more about immigration and parliament is much more concerned with environmental matters.

The following sections elaborate upon the key events of one issue in one country at a time. Note that this timeline is not intended to be exhaustive. A selection of the most eye-catching peaks is highlighted. Each section is accompanied by a separate graph that displays the highs and lows of issue attention through time. Figures 6.1 to 6.12 show media attention (top lines) and parliamentary attention (bottom lines) for agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration, in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France respectively. The values on the Y-axis represent the sum of attention, which was measured as the total number of references to the issue in the news and in the debates per month. Remember that these values are weighed scores for attention, according to the location of references in a newspaper article, and that the square roots of the raw scores were used to closer approach normal probability distributions (see chapter 4). The consequence of the square-root transformation is that the differences between highs and lows in the level of issue attention are cushioned, but also that the graphs are more legible. In the next chapter, chapter 7, the agenda-building results will be presented, which describe the statistical relationship between these exact two time series of parliament and the media. The letters above the lines in figures 6.1 to 6.12 highlight the key
events in the debates and the news that will be discussed below in order of occurrence. The many (notably summer) holidays of the parliaments are immediately recognised in the repetitive absence of debates in the graphs. Notwithstanding imminent administrative crises undoubtedly, the Houses remain adjourned during these periods, irrespective of the prominence that new developments are attributed in the media.

6.1 Agriculture

6.1.1 British agriculture

In January 1990 (a) newspapers report on the launch of an official investigation, ordered by the Ministry of Health, into the connection between Variant Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, after growing concern and speculation that already caused a parliamentary peak one month earlier. Subsequently, the press picks up on the political unease between West Germany and the United Kingdom, caused by the German decision to restrict the import of British beef. British Secretary of Agriculture Gummer accuses Germany of protectionism. The uncertainty as to the consequences of infected meat consumption for humans, urges the European Commission to side with Germany and curb the export of beef from the United Kingdom.

Figure 6.1: Attention for agriculture on the British parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

Note. Media: (a) link BSE and vCJD; (f) dispute France-UK about beef ban; (i) CAP. Parliament: (b) EU agricultural subsidies; (e) efforts to lift EU beef ban, food-safety measures. Both: (c) BSE case; (d) public hysteria vCJD, EU ban on British beef; (g) Foot-and-Mouth Disease.
A few months later, in November 1990 (b) parliament’s attention is drawn by EC negotiations about cutting back the agricultural subsidies, which is applauded by the United Kingdom as is any other trend towards abolishing protectionist measures. The intention was to form a united front at the GATT meeting in Uruguay, since these subsidies are known to greatly divide the European member states. For France and other Southern European countries, for example, the complete abolishment of the agricultural subsidies is still unmentionable in 2005. Cut backs of 30% are agreed upon.

In November and December 1992 (c) a peak on both agendas is caused by distress over the unprecedented increase in BSE cases. In the year 1992 the largest number of infected animals is discovered. Hereafter the trend will curb.

March 1996 (d) marks the beginning of public hysteria concerning beef consumption, when Health Secretary Stephen Dorrell officially informs the MPs that the link between BSE and Variant Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease through beef consumption is scientifically established. On March 25 the European Commission decides on an official ban on British beef. A huge amount of cows are to be killed, which again unclenches the discussion about how to limit the financial disaster for British farmers.

Two months later, in May 1996 (e), parliamentary attention is again heavily focused on the diplomatic efforts by the British government to get the EU ban lifted. These have been unsuccessful so far. In this light, the MPs also interrogate Minister of Agriculture Douglas Hogg on the proceedings of the cattle disposal scheme and food-safety measures.

The careful rise in attention on the media agenda in October 1999 (f) is caused by a serious diplomatic conflict between the United Kingdom and France due to France’s persistent refusal to lift the ban on British beef. The European Commission eventually calls France to order.

In February and March 2001 (g) Foot-and-Mouth Disease leaves its traces of destruction across the United Kingdom, which is the first European country to be affected by the animal disease. This crisis causes an unprecedented attention peak on both agendas.

Parliament discusses the Animal Health Bill in November 2001 (h), which is aimed at preventing the spread of contagious animal diseases, notably of BSE and Foot-and-Mouth Disease. Furthermore, Tory MPs criticise the government’s refusal to financially compensate the farmers affected by the Foot-and-Mouth epidemic.

Reform of the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is at the centre of the media agenda in July 2002 (i). Whereas the United Kingdom is one of the foremost supporters of a reform and judges the propositions of Agricultural commissioner Franz Fischler not far-reaching enough, France is set on obstructing plans to restrict the European farm subsidies during the meeting of agricultural ministers on July 15.
6.1.2 Dutch agriculture

The first notable attention peak on both agendas, which start at the end of 1995, occurs in March 1997 (a) and marks the outbreak of swine fever, which costs the lives of 12.5 million pigs.

In November 1997 (b) parliament discusses the ‘Belloli report’ published by the European Commission. This report is heavily critical about the Dutch policy during the swine-fever crisis and proposes to impose a cap on European financial support to the Netherlands. The buying up of pigs by the government was said to have been poorly geared to the sanitary measures. The pig registration system was said not to have been airtight, which cleared the way for fraud with illegal transports. This in turn leads to an indignant Dutch Secretary of Agriculture Van Aartsen, who claims that all governmental actions have been in line with the European directives. This confrontation only causes a minor peak on the media agenda.

Figure 6.2: Attention for agriculture on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

The media in June 1999 (c) have eyes for the Belgian ‘dioxin affair’ only. Belgian chickens were poisoned by fat products in their fodder, which were contaminated with waste oil and dioxins. The European Commission orders the member states to withdraw all chicken products that might have been contaminated from the market. The scandal leads to the resignation of the
Belgian Minister of Agriculture Pinxten and the Minister of Health Colla, less than two weeks before the general elections. The Dutch Ministers of Agriculture and Health, Faber and Borst, also receive fierce criticism for their handling of the affair, but survive the parliamentary interrogation.

In September (in the media) and October 1999 (in parliament) (d) several issues dominate the agendas at once. Secretary of Agriculture Brinkhorst presents his plans for a new manure policy, with which he intends to reduce the amount of phosphate that is released with 14 million kilograms, in order to meet the European Nitrate Directive. The plans come down to a serious reduction of the livestock. By compelling farmers to arrange their own contracts for the disposal of manure, the size of their livestock will reach its natural ceiling. Additionally, farmers are offered to exchange their stables for housing. It is estimated that 6,000 farms will be ruined. The minister is vehemently attacked by farmers and by numerous organisations within society, with the support of churches. Also the European Commission is not univocally convinced. A second issue concerns the discovery of more and more cases of cattle treated with illegal hormones in the southern part of the Netherlands. Parliament demands active measures against the ‘hormone mafia’ operating from Belgium. Finally the British-French dispute about France’s refusal to accept British beef also finds its way to both Dutch news and Dutch parliament.

In March 2001 (f) the whole of Europe holds its breath fearing that British Foot-and-Mouth will jump over from the United Kingdom onto the continent. In the Netherlands, the first contaminated animal is discovered on March 21. Meanwhile, the European Commission deliberates on vaccination.

Three issues explain the peak on the media agenda in June 2002 (g). First there is another European food-poison scandal, this time involving German biological farming. Chickens have been fed with biological wheat that had been contaminated with the carcinogenic pesticide nitrofen. Five hundred German farms are closed down. The European Commission orders an investigation into German mistakes concerning the reporting of the contamination. A second issue is the meeting of the European ministers of foreign affairs in Luxemburg about the conditions of European enlargement. The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden strongly reject financial support to farmers in the ten candidate member states. In contrast, thousands of European farmers protest in Strasbourg against reform of the
CAP. A domestic incident is the third item of interest in the news. The dairy industry is on strike because salary demands are not being met. In protest against this strike that forces them to dump their milk, farmers take it to the streets and demand that unions and employers restart negotiations.

The peak on the parliamentary agenda of November 2002 (h) reflects the introduction of stricter hygiene regulations for small abattoirs, in answer to earlier European demands, after BSE sensitive material had been found at these places several times.

6.1.3 French agriculture
The French time series start in October 1998. In this very first month (a) the parliamentary agenda shows a remarkable level of attention for agricultural affairs, due to a proposed bill by Secretary of Agriculture Louis Le Pensec, which would drastically alter the basis of the French agricultural policy. At the core of the proposal, the Loi d’Orientation Agricole, is an understanding of agricultural activities that integrates economic, social and environmental objectives. State support is no longer automatically allotted, but exchanged for a commitment on the part of the farmers to minimise harm to natural resources, to care for the countryside, to create employment and optimise food safety. The reduction of agricultural subsidies, which was envisaged by the CAP reforms proposed by many northern EU members, does not go ahead.

In February 1999 (b) media’s attention is drawn to the EU negotiations in Brussels about the reform of the CAP. France most loudly opposes the propositions of the Commission to open agriculture to the mechanisms of a liberal market and reduce public aid to farmers. France and Germany represent the two opposing camps in the conflict. Meanwhile, the massive demonstrations organised by the French agricultural syndicates FNSEA and CNJA against the reform of the CAP, receive widespread news coverage.

April 1999 (c) sees the return of the Loi d’Orientation Agricole on the parliamentary agenda. The final version is discussed, primarily in the context of its lack of conforming to the CAP, or rather in the context of the lack of conforming of the CAP to the French agricultural objectives.

Both newspapers and parliament respond to and are part of the explosion of public fear resulting from new French cases of BSE in November 2000 (d). On November 7 a television program shows the mother of a boy who is diagnosed with Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease, which sends a shock through French society. Cattle fodder containing animal waste is banned from the food chain and beef is banned from school canteens.

The news peak of February and March 2001 (e) must be attributed to several events. José Bové, leader of agricultural syndicate Confederation Paysanne, is brought to trial on February 9, for the destruction of genetically modified crops. On February 23 the first cases of Foot-and-Mouth Disease in the United Kingdom are mentioned in the French media. Besides
widespread panic, the outbreak immediately leads to a total embargo on British cattle. On March 13 the first cases of Foot-and-Mouth Disease are diagnosed on French territory. The lack of attention within parliament for the outbreak of Food-and-Mouth Disease, yet another agricultural crisis, is remarkable.

Figure 6.3: Attention for agriculture on the French parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

Note. Media: (b) EU dispute about CAP; (e) trial José Bové, Foot-and-Mouth Disease; (g) French opposition to CAP reform, sentence José Bové. Parliament: (a) & (c) Loi d’Orientation Agricole; (f) welfare benefits BAPSA; (h) annual budget, summer drought. Both: (d) public hysteria BSE and vCJD.

Only a few months after the outbreak of Food-and-Mouth, in November 2001 (f) parliament is concerned with legislation aimed at insuring farmers without a salary against accidents and work-related illness, as well as with legislation aimed at securing a pension for non-paid farmers. The finance of the special budget for agricultural welfare benefits (BAPSA) in the year 2002 is the subject of several parliamentary sessions.

The modest but long-lasting peak on the media agenda covering the months October to December 2002 (g) is largely attributable to European summits in which agreement on the reform of the CAP is sought. In early October, France is again blocking all proposals. France is fearful of the enlargement of the European Union, since all new members would benefit from the CAP at France’s expense. During a meeting in Luxemburg on October 7 and 8, the French Secretary of Finance Francis Mer is the only one to oppose the plans for the reduction of the budget deficits. This adds to the mutual irritations between Paris and Bonn. On October 19, Chancellor Schröder and Pres-
ident Chirac reach a mutual agreement on the financing of the CAP. During the summit of Copenhagen on December 12 and 13, the European heads of state are to make a final decision on EU enlargement. In November, the issue of the financing of EU enlargement and of the CAP causes a slight peak on the parliamentary agenda as well. Besides the turbulences at the EU level, it is again José Bové who gains a high profile in the news, this time due to him being sentenced to ten years of imprisonment on November 9.

Besides the usual debating on next year’s agricultural budget, the French parliament is especially concerned with the catastrophic summer drought in October 2003 (b). Fires have destroyed large tracts of forest near the Mediterranean coast, even causing human casualties.

6.1.4 Agriculture: concluding remarks
The agricultural media and parliamentary agendas in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France reveal a striking similarity in the choice of subjects. This is hardly surprising if one considers the number of veterinary crises that touched each of the three countries. Such crises at the same time appeal to journalists’ taste for drama and human interest and to the political responsibility of the MPs. The crises also underline the European dimension of the issue agriculture, as the European Commission repeatedly steps in and determines or judges the national course of action. Besides the crises, there has been considerable attention for other European-level subjects in all countries, such as the reform of the CAP and EU criticism of national policy choices.

Apart from these similarities, the impression is created that of all six agendas, the parliamentary agenda in France evolves predominantly according to its own schedule, and is less in touch with the concerns that preoccupy the French media agenda as well as the four foreign agendas. Whereas the French media link up with the British and Dutch parliamentary and media agendas by attributing prominent coverage to the European context of the agricultural developments, the French parliament seems to discuss the EU exclusively to evaluate whether national legislation meets European demands.

6.2 The environment
6.2.1 The British environment
In July 1989 (a) many events are simultaneously taking over the discussions in parliament and the media. On a domestic level, the media and parliament discuss plans to privatise electricity and water companies. Furthermore, much political controversy has been provoked by the performance of the Conservative Secretary of State for the Environment Nicolas Ridley. His plans to dismember the government’s countryside protection agencies (NCC and CC) and his row with the Green Party, whose manifesto he denounced as ‘unscientific rubbish based on myth’, thereby increasing the popularity
of the Green Party, made his Tory colleagues want to see him removed from office. On an international level, both the media and parliament are interested in the G7 summit in Paris, during which Prime Minister Thatcher will promote a global programme on coal and oil tax for all consumers.

Figure 6.4: Attention for the environment on the British parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

In May 1992 (b) the press anticipates the earth summit in Rio de Janeiro held on June 1. This is the first conference organised to tackle the concept of sustainable development. It reports on European Commissioner Ripa di Meana’s refusal to attend when all has already been decided and the negotiations are nothing but a farce. He especially criticises US’ negotiating strategies to avoid binding commitments in the combat against global warming. The summit is evaluated in parliament in June. Here, Minister Howard is criticised for not having taken the lead in the negotiations.

The modest peak on the parliamentary agenda in June 1995 (c) can be attributed to another discussion on the privatisation of the water industry (SEPA).

News in December 1997 (d) is devoted to the UN conference on climate change in Kyoto. This international event yields negligible attention in the House of Commons.
In October and November 2000 (e) the southeast of the UK has to contend with severe flooding. The damage amounts to 40 million pounds. Secretary of State of the Environment John Prescott is criticised in the House of Commons and in the news for ignoring the warnings. In November after a new series of flooding, which affects 5000 houses, both agendas turn to the Prince of Wales. He blames the flooding on humanity, which is responsible for global warming. He is sharply criticised in parliament for his statements. While the country is concerned with the flooding, there is some space left on the agendas (especially in the news) for the ponderous international climate talks in The Hague, which aim at implementing the Kyoto protocol. The conference ends without an agreement on the reduction of CO$_2$-emission.

The interest of the British press in August 2002 (f) goes out to two domestic crises. One is the contamination of Scottish tap water with the potentially fatal parasite *cryptosporidium*. The other concerns the wrongful planting of genetically modified seeds carrying an antibiotic-resistance gene, contaminating fourteen crop sites used for governmental trials. Apart from causing governmental embarrassment, the incident deepens public distrust towards GM foods. A substantial part of the media agenda is reserved for the earth summit in Johannesburg, held from August 26 to September 4. The conference is organised around the question of how to fight poverty without damaging the environment.

March 2003 (g) in parliament is marked by an array of environmental policy discussions rather than one dominant event. The primary subject is the Energy White Paper that discusses measures to reduce the carbon-dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050, following the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. In this respect, measures promoting the development of sustainable energy sources figure high on the parliamentary agenda. Furthermore, as a consequence of recent flooding incidents, a debate is launched on flood and coastal defence. Another subject occupying the MPs is a bill preventing unauthorised developments in green belts.

### 6.2.2 The Dutch environment

In October 1996 (a) the Dutch coalition government decides that one of two Dutch nuclear power plants *Dodewaard* will be shut down. This is of interest to both the media and parliament.

In October 1997 (b) parliament is involved in a debate on the expansion of *Schiphol* airport and on whether the airport will be allowed to exceed the sound norms yet another year. In December 1997 (c) the Kyoto climate conference appears on the media agenda only.

Parliamentary attention turns to the formation of a parliamentary committee in October 1998 (d), which is to investigate the aftermath of the crash of an Israeli cargo-plain, on a residential area in Amsterdam in 1992, the Bijlmer disaster. It should shed light on the ongoing rumours about mysterious men in white suits showing up at the scene immediately after the crash.
and the accumulation of unexplained medical complaints. Another prominent subject on the parliamentary agenda is the intention of Secretary of Transport Netelenbos to allow Schiphol airport to expand, on the condition that it does not exceed the European sound norms. There is political disagreement over whether this is at all feasible. Closely related is the proposal to establish an airport in the North Sea as a replacement of Schiphol.

Figure 6.5: Attention for the environment on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

In November 1998 (e) the media still discuss the environmental consequences of a growing Schiphol airport. A second issue is the climate conference in Buenos Aires attended by Environmental Secretary Pronk. The United States is criticised for its announced engagement in large-scale emission trade. However, the US promises to sign the 1997 Kyoto protocol.

Both parliament and the press show interest in the The Hague climate summit in November 2000 (f). Again, the Dutch Secretary of the Environment Jan Pronk is president of the conference. During this period parliament also evaluates several regulations, most important of which are the sanctions to be imposed on Schiphol for still not meeting the sound norms.

The climate conference in Bonn in July 2001 (g), again presided by Dutch Secretary Pronk, could only raise the interest of journalists. This time an
agreement on the implementation of the Kyoto protocol is reached, in spite of the withdrawal of the United States.

In November 2002 (h) parliament primarily deals with the safety of nuclear research reactor Petten. On instigation of the opposition parties and in answer to concerns from society, Environmental Secretary of State Van Geel has agreed to an investigation into the danger of a nuclear explosion.

6.2.3 The French environment

In October 1998 (a) parliamentary attention is almost entirely taken up by the evaluation of the Loi d'Orientation Agricole. This peak on the parliamentary agenda thus largely overlaps with the peak we saw in the previous section on agriculture. This legislation aims at a fundamental revision of France’s agricultural policy, in which the need for environmental protection and landscape maintenance is acknowledged.

It is again the introduction of a bill that is at the heart of parliamentary discussion in November 1999 (b). Government proposes to alter the principles of the anti-pollution tax. The new system of taxation, the TGAP (Taxe Générale sur les Activités POLLuantes), takes into account the actual polluting activities according to the principle of ‘the polluter pays’. In addition, members of parliament stress the necessity of structural preventive measures against natural disasters, as a result of the fatal floods on November 12 in the south of France (Tarn, Aude, Pyrénées). A final subject of parliamentary discussion is ‘the Patriot report’ on hunting.

All is quiet on the environmental front as far as the media agenda is concerned until December 1999 and January 2000 (c). On December 12 the oil tanker Erika is wrecked seventy kilometres from the Britannic coast in extremely heavy weather conditions. Thousands of tons of oil are released into the sea, threatening wildlife and food safety. Nature strikes again on December 26 and 27 when violent storms destroy millions of cubic metres of trees, especially in the Dordogne. As a result of increasingly heavy weather conditions, a public and scientific discussion on global warming unfolds.

November 2000 (d) sees a repetition of the discussion earlier that year as a result of another shipwreck, the Ievoli-Sun, on October 30 in the Channel. This time not only the media, but to a lesser extent also MPs are alarmed. Again the accident can be attributed to heavy storms, which takes four lives in the north of France. The event is discussed in the context of global warming both in the media and in parliament. Media and parliament share another concern this month: the United Nations climate conference in The Hague starting on November 13. A parliamentary debate on the necessity to invest in sustainable energy while reinforcing the position of nuclear energy follows.

The news peak in May and June 2001 (e) is caused by the UN climate conference in Gothenburg on June 14, during which the international community again fails to agree on the Kyoto protocol. In the run up to the conference, and as a result of a EU meeting in Luxemburg, pessimist expec-
tations about the outcome of the Gothenburg round proliferate in the news.

The conference reaches the parliamentary agenda as well, but considering
the average level of attention to environmental issues within parliament
during the period of research one can hardly speak of an attention peak.

The most notable peak on the parliamentary agenda occurs in January
2002 (f). We have seen before that high levels of attention by the French
parliament are often caused by events that are hardly exciting but rather
procedural. This time a water bill is evaluated, which especially aims at
improving the quality of drinking water and extends the domain within
which the principle of ‘the polluter pays’ is applied. A small portion of the
agenda is reserved for a debate on sustainable energy and on the future role
of nuclear energy.

Figure 6.6: Attention for the environment on the French parliamentary and
media agendas (hits)

Again a bill is at the centre of parliamentary attention in March and April
2003 (g). A bill on the prevention of technological and natural disasters is
introduced and evaluated in parliament for days on end. This legislation fol-
lows directly from the increase in violent storms, floods and shipwrecks over
the course of recent years. Furthermore, the genie of global warming is out
of the bottle and another discussion is launched on the necessity to invest
in sustainable sources of energy. The need for alternative solutions to the
The energy problem has become increasingly urgent since the war in Iraq, which has pushed the price of oil to an all-time high. According to MPs, France lags behind in technological knowledge within this domain. Parliamentary questions on sound pollution in the surroundings of airports complete the environmental agenda of parliament in these months.

The news of August 2003 (h) is all about alarming reports about the record heat wave. The heat wave has been mentioned earlier in the context of agriculture as a matter of great concern within parliament. Whereas the MPs primarily focus on the disastrous consequences of the drought to farmers, the newspapers choose a different focus. In the broader context of global warming, they report on the extreme air pollution as an instant result of the high temperatures. They report on the many casualties among the elderly. Most importantly, they focus on the political polemic between government and the Green Party, the latter demanding that the nuclear power plant De Fessenheim is shut down. Because of the high temperatures, the cooling system is working overtime and its safety cannot be guaranteed. Rather than closing it down, government resorts to irrigation of the nuclear plant.

6.2.4 The environment: concluding remarks
Again contrary to France, a considerable amount of shared interest characterises the environmental attention peaks in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. Legislative matters reach the British and Dutch media agendas quite often; perhaps this is enhanced as far as the UK is concerned by the strong presence of conflict and criticism in British politics, for example regarding Minister Ridley or the Prince of Wales. In all three countries several climate summits of the United Nations are alternated with domestic affairs, such as the electricity markets, flooding, nuclear plants or airports.

Although the environmental issue is formally part of European politics, many of the events described above merely display a limited level of European presence. However, the European Union takes up a central position in the UN climate summits. The EU, which wishes to ratify the Kyoto protocol, and the United States, which is blocking all progress, are depicted as the central antagonists during the negotiations. Overall, the media in all countries show a greater tendency to cover the international developments than the parliaments.

The earlier remark about the tendency of the French parliament to take little notice of international events in comparison to the other five agendas, is true in the context of the environment as well, be it to a lesser extent. The French parliament is mostly concerned with working through national legislation, as we now know probably because the executive has planned it that way (see chapter 5), and only finds the UN climate conference in The Hague worthy of extra notice. But it must be said that the French media only add one other international event to this list, which still compares poorly to the British and Dutch media agendas.
6.3 Drugs

6.3.1 British drugs
The summer of 1989 (a) marks the US’ ‘War on Drugs’ in Colombia, which is clearly reflected on both agendas. With the assistance of the United Kingdom and the Colombian government, the US hunts down Pablo Escobar and other drug barons, after the Colombian presidential candidate Luis Galan was murdered. Furthermore, the UK is personally involved in this episode with British servicemen accused of training Colombian hit men. The United States requests the UK to officially investigate this affair. British politicians connect the Colombian drugs networks to British crack and cocaine addicts. They fear a ‘crack explosion’ to blow over from the United States to the UK. Apart from this slight difference in focus, there is also a slight difference in timing. Whereas the parliamentary concerns regarding crack smuggling are widely discussed in June and July 1989, media attention is most notable in September 1989.

The Panama crisis explains the parliamentary peak in December 1989 (b). The United States has launched ‘Operation Just Cause’ on December 20: the invasion of Panama to remove the notorious General Manuel Noriega who is involved in drug trafficking. It was Noriega himself who declared war on the United States earlier on December 15. At this time the House of Commons also discusses the European Community’s Schengen treaty, which has not been signed by the UK, or rather it discusses the fear that open borders will enhance drug trafficking.

Two drug-related storylines dominate news coverage in February 1994 (c). First, as a result of a police investigation known as ‘Operation Jackpot’, forty-five police officers in the north of London are accused of corruption, including the deliberate planting of drugs. Second, Michel Howard, the home secretary, announces plans to increase the maximum fine for possession of cannabis from 500 to 2500 pound sterling. The proposal is heavily criticised by the police and magistrates, eventually persuading Howard to reconsider the plan.

One month later, in March 1994 (d), the discussion in parliament is focused on the combat against drug abuse in British society, in particular on the protection of children. Educating teenagers on the dangers of drug use in schools is considered of vital importance in the general fight against drugs, as well as in the fight against drug-related crime. There is still a considerable level of media attention for the issue of drugs during this month, which can also be largely attributed to a general debate on schoolchildren’s experiences with drugs.

In June 1996 (e) the British parliament again debates strategies for fighting drug abuse. At the core of the discussion is the agreement that the legalisation of soft drugs is not open for discussion. The Netherlands is repeatedly referred to with abhorrence as the distribution centre of Europe and as an example of how not to do it.
The media agenda of August 1997 (f) is largely taken up by a political scandal that is severely damaging to the Scottish Labour Party. The Labour MP Gordon McMaster in the Scottish constituency Paisley commits suicide, leaving a note in which he accuses Labour colleagues of pursuing a smear campaign against him. The Labour Party organises an inquiry into his death, helped by McMaster’s colleague and friend Irene Adams who swears to avenge his death. This incident is part of a greater corruption scandal within the Paisley Labour Party. Labour politicians are accused of assault, drug dealing and even murder. A second prominent news story is the killing of the five-year-old boy Dillon Hull in Bolton. He is shot by a hit man in what is believed to be a drug-related murder. Two other drug shootings follow in the same month. The incidents start a careful discussion on the legalisation of drugs, as a means to prevent drug-related crime.

Soft-drugs policy returns to the parliamentary agenda in July 1999 (g). The discussion is now open to arguments in favour of the legalisation of cannabis, although it is still widely contested. In addition, the medical community launches a campaign for the legalisation of the medical use of cannabis.

The possibility of a reclassification of cannabis from class B to class C finally hits the news in July 2001 (h), whereas only reaching the House of Commons with the official announcement by Home Secretary Blunkett in November 2001 (i).
6.3.2 Dutch drugs

It seems appropriate to start this section by pointing out that drug-related events only rarely made it to the parliamentary agenda, especially compared with the issues agriculture, the environment and immigration. Modest peaks are alternated with long periods of no discussion at all, especially between the years 1997 and 2000.

In April 1996 (a) the conclusions of a parliamentary inquiry (Van Traa) into dubious police investigation methods reach both agendas. Police officers have illegally participated in drug dealing in order to round up the drug networks, which resulted in even larger quantities of drugs being imported. The recommendations in the report result in three days of parliamentary debate. Apart from this domestic political affair, the French Senator Masson attacks the Dutch soft-drugs policy by calling the Netherlands a ‘narco-state’, which dramatically worsens the already tense relations between the Netherlands and France. The French MP Myard even announces a plan in the National Assembly and in the Senate to boycott Dutch flowers, fruit and vegetables. The French government, however, dissociates itself from this suggestion.

November 1996 (b) marks the escalation of the French-Dutch soft-drugs dispute, which gets priority both in the news and in parliament. France presents its plans for a common European drugs policy: L’Action Commune. The Netherlands refuses to have its national approach undermined. It takes a serious diplomatic collision between the French and Dutch permanent EU representatives before the two countries are able to agree on the terms of the proposal.

July 1998 (c) yields many news stories about drugs. There is first and foremost media attention for the political unrest caused by offensive statements about the Dutch drug policy, made by Clinton’s drugs advisor McCaffrey during a tour across seven European countries. Subsequently, the Dutch Foreign Secretary Van Mierlo threatens to refuse him access to the Netherlands. After being reprimanded by Washington, McCaffrey assumes a more diplomatic posture during his visit. Another incident generating news is the discovery that Dutch royal marines have been smuggling cocaine from Curacao to the Netherlands on board of an Orion ship. Ironically, Orions are used as weapons in the War on Drugs in the Caribbean. A final story regards the refusal of Desi Bouterse, former army commander of Surinam, to cooperate with a Dutch judicial inquiry into his drug-dealing practices. An international warrant for his arrest is issued by Interpol. Nevertheless, Trinidad and Tobego and Guyana refuse extradition during provocative visits of Bouterse, and even Surinam refuses to grant the Dutch judicial commission access to witnesses.
In June 2000 (d) parliament presents a resolution to legalise the controlled cultivation of soft drugs and delivery to coffee shops. Government still resists, largely because of a lack of an international basis.

During January and February 2002 (e) government fights ‘cocaine swallowers’. These often are deprived young people from the Dutch Antilles who carry plastic capsules filled with cocaine inside their bodies when trying to get into the Netherlands. They are arrested en masse at Schiphol airport and the Secretary of Justice Korthals is forced to present an emergency bill for temporary penitentiaries. The cells of these penitentiaries are designed to detain four persons, which goes against previous national policy and is criticised within parliament. This urgent problem occupies both journalists and MPs.

The media agenda focuses on the use and dealing of ecstasy within the Amsterdam police department in June 2003 (f). Fifteen officers are fired. Another high-key issue revolves around criticism of the German Foreign Secretary Schilly that the Dutch government is not doing enough to prevent drug smugglers from entering Europe via Schiphol airport. He regrets the fact that the Netherlands is blocking a European consensus about a sharper drug policy. Furthermore, the German police use a criminal civilian infiltrator to investigate drug offences on Dutch territory, without authorisation of the Dutch authorities.
6.3.3 French drugs

The first rise in media attention in November 1998 (a) follows a publication by MILDT (Interministerial Mission to Fight Drugs and Toxicomania) on November 16, indicating that one in every three teenagers has already used cannabis and that regular use among teenagers has doubled in the past five years. Nicole Maestracci, president of MILDT, proposes a more pragmatic approach to the drug problem, preventing occasional use to turn into abuse rather than promoting abstinence. The debate on drug use among teenagers is intensified when the Swiss go to the polls for the complete legalisation of drugs on November 29. The proposal is rejected by a majority of the Swiss electorate.

In June 1999 (b) MPs interrogate Secretary of Health Bernard Kouchner on the future approach of drug abuse. While a revision of the law on narcotics of 1970 is deemed premature and drug users should remain liable to punishment, general opinion in parliament and government rejects imprisonment as an appropriate means to fight drug use among teenagers.

Parliament debates a bill in December 2000 (c), proposed by the right-wing opposition, in favour of punishing driving under the influence of drugs with a prison sentence. Government rejects the bill. Besides the fact that it would be too costly and unreliable to drug-test drivers, government is not convinced of the causality between drug use and dangerous driving.

The peak on the media agenda in February 2001 (d) can be explained by international events. The decision of the ‘Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia’ (FARC) – for whom drug trafficking is the primary source of income – to resume negotiations with the Colombian government, generates a fair amount of news. Closer to home, the decision of the Belgian government to decriminalise cannabis use simultaneously opens the discussion in the academic community as to whether the French criticism of the Dutch policy of tolerance is still tenable. In addition, the ‘European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs’ (Espad), coordinated by Sweden, publishes a report on February 20 stating that French teenagers are among the heaviest drug users in Europe. These events combined lead to a reopening of the debate on decriminalisation of soft drugs in France, to which government is still fiercely opposed.

The peak of October 2002 (e) represents the first drug-related discussion during the period of research that succeeds in reuniting the parliamentary and media agendas. Likewise, it is one of the rare occasions when the media appear interested in a bill that is under scrutiny in parliament. The coalition parties reintroduce the proposal to impose a penalty of two years imprisonment on driving under the influence of soft drugs at the end of September. After days of evaluation the bill is passed on October 8.

Two key issues appear on the media agenda in April 2003 (f). The first is the ‘affair Patrick Henry’. This Frenchman murdered a little boy in 1977 and was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was conditionally released...
because of exemplary conduct in 2001. Being caught in the act of theft a few months earlier, the Spanish authorities lock him up for drug trafficking in October 2002. On April 16 Patrick Henry is once again imprisoned in France. It is a touchy affair within French society, since it represents a remorseless breach of the trust given to him by the French legal system. The second issue revolves around a political quarrel between Home Secretary Sarkozy and Secretary of Justice Perben. The central question is whether the 1970 law on narcotics should finally be revised. Sarkozy argues that it is badly equipped to handle small offences such as cannabis use: since the law prescribes imprisonment in all cases, such offences are seldom actually penalised. Sarkozy is very much in favour of a more gradual and pragmatic system of punishment, as proposed by MILDT. This is not because he aims at the legalisation of cannabis use, but because he prioritises quick but real punishments in the case of small offences. Whereas Perben first declares that the 1970 law is not up for discussion, he soon retracts his statement, very likely under pressure from the French council of ministers.

Figure 6.9: Attention for drugs on the French parliamentary and media agendas

6.3.4 Drugs: concluding remarks

It is safe to speak of regular correspondence between the agendas in the Netherlands. The British and French media follow their own interests, as do the British and French parliaments. The Dutch media, however, show an
interest in the inquiry of commission Van Traa, as well as in the legislation concerning the 'cocaine swallowers', which are primarily parliamentary events.

The domestically rooted issue of drugs contains a strong international dimension in the United Kingdom in the earliest years of the time series. The most prominent aspect in those days is the cooperation with the United States, primarily motivated by the need to protect British society. The majority of the discussions involves domestic policy making or domestic incidents. Although the Netherlands is regularly faced with one-way criticism of its drug policy coming from abroad, the main events also largely remain within the boundaries of the national political arena. An important exception is the French attack on the Dutch soft-drug policy. It is a typical example of a high-profile international conflict, which ends up on both the media and parliamentary agendas. Instead of undermining the Dutch executive, it made Dutch society, including the political opposition and the media, unite as one block against French arrogance. In France, the situation is hardly different from the other two countries. The discussions are of a domestic kind (it should be noted that the French time series are too limited to include the Franco-Dutch conflict).

It is interesting to observe that similar discussions emerge across the countries. Both the United Kingdom and France discuss the need to fight drug abuse among teenagers and whether or not to decriminalise the use of cannabis. However, these policy considerations have their own timetable in each country. They may face similar problems, but they come up with individual solutions at different points in time. In conformity with the formal power of the European Union in this policy domain, the EU does not appear as a key player on any of the agendas in any of the three countries.

6.4 Immigration

6.4.1 British immigration
In January 1990 (a) the press is focused on the hundreds of thousands of 'boat people' from Vietnam who arrive in Hong Kong wishing to apply for British asylum. 200,000 Immigrants are granted access. Many thousands are repatriated to Vietnam. Prime Minister Thatcher is heavily criticised by the United States for pursuing an inhumane policy.

In November 1991 (b) history repeats itself when another wave of Vietnamese boat people reaches Hong Kong. Both the media and parliament zoom in on this event. Again the British prime minister provokes a lot of international protest for the many forced returns to Hanoi and for the high level of force allegedly involved. During this month Home Secretary Kenneth Baker introduces a new and more stringent asylum bill, to curb the big jump in applications. There is growing suspicion among the executives that the majority of applications is tampered with.
Foremost on the parliamentary agenda is the Brixton riot that breaks out on December 13 1995 (c) in the south of London, after Wayne Douglas, a 26-year-old black man, died in police custody. Several hundreds of people are involved and accuse police officers of racism.

The war in former Yugoslavia dominates the media agenda in April and May 1999, as well as the parliamentary agenda in June 1999 (d). NATO has started carrying out heavy bombardments on Belgrade to stop President Milosevic from continuing his ethnic-cleansing practices towards the Muslim inhabitants of Kosovo. The war causes a massive stream of refugees from Kosovo towards neighbouring countries. British authorities offer them help and many are flown to the United Kingdom from temporary camps in Macedonia.

News in August 2001 (e) is first devoted to the racial murder of a Kurdish refugee in the Sighthill housing estate in Glasgow. The incident results in a cycle of violence between asylum seekers and racist youths. In three days a second asylum seeker from the same housing estate is murdered. The governmental policy of forced dispersal of asylum seekers is under fire from refugee organisations, as it is held responsible for dumping large numbers of asylum seekers in the poorest Scottish neighbourhoods. In late August the
The democratic deficit closer to home

news turns to the increasing tension between the UK and France about the high level of illegal immigration by way of the Eurotunnel. The UK accuses France of not pulling its weight in preventing escapes from the asylum centre in Calais. France’s intention of opening a second centre near Calais faces a lot of British protest. The tension further increases when France cuts back control to ensure accurate timetables of the trains through the tunnel. After a shooting incident caused by the police in Calais, Home Secretary David Blunkett finally calls for a summit in Paris, which improves mutual understanding and cooperation during the course of September. A third subject in the news is the call from MPs, supported by Secretary of Justice Jim Wallace, for a review of the 1999 voucher system for asylum seekers. It is increasingly acknowledged that having to run errands with vouchers encourages racial assaults, besides being degrading.

Parliament discusses the same voucher system in October 2001 (f), when Home Secretary David Blunkett publishes his review and announces that he will prepare new legislation on asylum and immigration. Furthermore, the coalition against international terrorism is evidently of major importance to the British parliament, less than one month after the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

The last attention peak of June 2002 (g) on the media and parliamentary agendas can be attributed to the new Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill of Blunkett. He is severely criticised by Labour MPs for his plans to segregate children of asylum seekers by educating them in accommodation centres rather than in regular schools. Both parliament and the media also discuss Blunkett’s meeting with the French Interior Minister Sarkozy about their future approach to illegal immigration across the Channel. The media further report on the French legislative elections. Most importantly, they report on the public fear that right-extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen, front man of Le Front National, is heading for a success after reaching the second round in the French presidential elections in April. A last prominent event on the media agenda is the EU summit in Seville on June 21, which primarily aims at tackling the immigration issue. Home and Foreign Secretaries Blunkett and Straw propose a European-wide crackdown on illegal immigration to their EU partners, by tightening control of the outer EU borders and sanctioning countries that refuse to fight the flow of immigrants to Europe. For the sake of compromise, the proposals are watered down by exchanging sanctions for rewards to cooperative countries.

6.4.2 Dutch immigration
In February 1997 (a) Pim Fortuyn, publicist and future politician, publishes his contentious book ‘Against the Islamisation of our Culture’. This draws the attention of the media throughout February and March. During a television debate, former Social Democratic politician Marcel van Dam calls him ‘an extremely inferior human being’, a statement that will haunt Van Dam
for many years to come. At this time parliament can still afford to ignore
Pim Fortuyn and is more concerned with preventing an illegal flight from
Turkmenistan with 173 Tamils on board from landing on Schiphol airport.
Both agendas also notice the rise of Le Front National in France and France’s
new and stricter immigration law.

In October 1997 (b) denied asylum seekers, notably Somali, figure high
on both agendas. They lack the necessary documents for a return to Somalia
and are accused by Assistant Secretary of Justice Schultz of sabotaging the
procedures. The Somali president criticises the haste with which the Dutch
government wants to deport these asylum seekers. Meanwhile, churches and
the Christian refugee organisation INLIA establish encampments to harbour
them at their own initiative, in protest against the dumping policy of the
Dutch government. Opposition MPs demand official accommodation and a
reopening of their dossiers. The media are also concerned with ‘white ille-
gals’ as the Turkish tailor Gümüs is forced to leave the country. The decision
evokes widespread indignation across the country, since Gümüs lived in the
Netherlands for many years, established a business and paid his taxes. The
public asks for a general pardon for these illegal, but well adapted citizens.

The war in Kosovo and the urgent need to offer refuge to the dramatic
stream of ethnic Albanians fleeing from Milosevic’s ethnic cleansing, takes
over the news and parliamentary debate in April 1999 (c).

In March and April 2000 (d) both agendas turn to the disappointing
results of the current integration policy. The discussions focus primarily on
strategies to prevent the creation of ‘black schools’ and ‘white schools’. Such
segregation in schools increases language deficiencies and youth unemploy-
ment among newcomers. Compulsory Dutch language courses for all immi-
grants are considered pivotal for successful integration. In March, the media
are additionally devoted to the resignation of charismatic right-extremist
Jörg Haider as political leader of the FPÖ, after its accession to the Austrian
government caused widespread astonishment and indignation in Europe.
As a result of FPÖ’s participation in government, the European Commission
issues sanctions against Austria, which it does not intend to lift, irrespec-
tive of Haider’s decision to step down.

The parliamentary peak of April 2002 (e) marks the run up to the general
elections of May. The flamboyant right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn pushes
the immigration issue to prominence on the campaign agenda and is notori-
ously successful. He especially focuses on the undesirable influence of the
Islam on Dutch society. The parallel is drawn between his success and Le
Pen’s near presidential victory in France.

On May 6 2002 Pim Fortuyn is murdered by a left-wing activist on the
premises of the Dutch broadcasting studios, causing unprecedented national
outrage and delivering him the status of national hero for the years to come.
This generates a massive stream of news for months on end, which is most
notable in June (f).
The democratic deficit closer to home

Figure 6.11: Attention for immigration on the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

Note. Media: (a) book by Pim Fortuyn; (b) ‘white illegals’; (d) EU sanctions against FPÖ in Austria; (f) murder of Pim Fortuyn; (h) Islamic fundamentalism in schools and mosques, anti-Semitism by young Moroccans. Parliament: (a) illegal flight with Tamils; (e) Pim Fortuyn in general elections; Both: (a) rise of Front National in France, stricter immigration law in France; (b) denied asylum seekers; (c) war in Kosovo; (d) review of current integration policy; (g) parliamentary report on Fortuyn’s security, AEL.

The peak on the media and parliamentary agendas in December 2002 (g) is caused by the publication of a parliamentary committee report about Fortuyn’s murder, in which the question is addressed whether government should have intensified security measures, especially since several requests were made by Fortuyn himself. During this time a new political movement of well-educated young European Arabs, the ‘Arab European League’ (AEL), arises in Belgium. This single-issue party is set on improving the position of Muslims and on fighting discrimination. It announces the expansion of its activities towards the Netherlands and its seeming fanaticism is looked upon with distrust. The electoral potential of the AEL among Dutch Muslim teenagers is expected to be considerable, as a result of increased religious and racial polarisation in this post-Fortuyn era, and of the mediagenic appearance of its political leader Abu Jahjah, an eloquent young Fleming of Lebanese origin.

In November 2003 (h) the news about immigration revolves around two related issues. Increased fear for Islamic fundamentalism has permeated Dutch society. Religious education of young Muslims in mosques and schools is looked upon with distrust. MP Hirsi Ali from the Liberal Conservative Party VVD proposes that stricter requirements must be imposed on the establishment of Islamic schools and that they must be subjected to
more thorough inspection. The Christian Democratic Secretary of Education Van der Hoeven (CDA) is of the opinion that this would be incompatible with the constitutional freedom of education. She defends the parental choice for religious or public education, which underlies the Dutch education system. The issue represents a fundamental disagreement between the coalition partners VVD and CDA. In addition, the media report on the growing number of incidents of anti-Semitism committed by young Moroccans, mostly in Amsterdam.

6.4.3 French immigration
In April and May 1999 (a) both the media and parliamentary agendas are deeply marked by the war in former Yugoslavia, most notably by the question whether the NATO bombardments are justified and by the Kosovar refugees. Domestically, the media pay considerable attention to the rupture within the Front National. Bruno Megret breaks with Le Pen and creates the Mouvement National. The division within the extreme-right movement negatively affects the prospects of both parties at the coming elections for the European Parliament. Opinion polls suggest that support for the extreme-right ideology is in decline throughout society. Le Pen actively contributes to the high level of media attention to the extreme right, by condemning the NATO bombardments, while defending President Milosevic.

The parliamentary agenda shows an attention peak in October 2000 (b) about a bill introduced by the left-wing coalition to fight discrimination. The bill is especially aimed at banning discrimination at the workplace and towards applicants.

February 2001 (c) is a very tumultuous month with a variety of events that demand media coverage. First, asylum seekers without a residence permit (les sans-papiers) occupy the church Saint-Bernard in Paris on February 4 to demand attention for their deplorable condition and for the faults of the French immigration policy. Second, on February 8 a highly controversial book about the Algerian war, La Sale Guerre (The Dirty War), is published by a former officer of the Special Branch. It describes how Algerian soldiers, disguised as Muslim guerrilleros tortured and massacred Algerian civilians in the early 1990s. Third, the United Kingdom accuses France of negligence regarding their attempts to reduce the number of asylum seekers passing through the Tunnel. On February 9 the British Prime Minister Blair meets his French counterpart in Cahors to discuss new and sharpened measures. Fourth, from February 17 onwards, the news zooms in on one event: a ship with 1200 Kurdish asylum seekers founders near the city of Toulon in the south of France. The discussion soon focuses on the question how to provide for these people who have survived such a traumatic experience. It is the first time in the history of France that the authorities are faced with a massive influx of immigrants, who on the one hand are illegal, but on the other hand should be treated like victims.
The democratic deficit closer to home

Figure 6.12: Attention for immigration on the French parliamentary and media agendas (hits)

Note. Media: (a) rupture within Le Front National; (c) protests by sans-papiers, book about Algerian war, Anglo-French dispute about immigration through the Tunnel, shipwreck with 1200 Kurdish asylum seekers; (d) parliamentary elections and protests against Le Front National, shooting incident in Sangatte. Parliament: (b) bill banning discrimination; (f) bill ‘immigration control and residence of foreigners in France’. Both: (a) war in former Yugoslavia; (e) protests by sans-papiers for general pardon, future immigration policy, the scandal of Sangatte, integration contract.

In June 2002 (d) the media agenda is practically monopolised by the parliamentary elections of June 9 (first round) and 16 (second round). Most coverage is devoted to Jean-Marie Le Pen, who gave France a big scare by coming in second in the presidential elections of April and May 2002. Many fear another extreme-right success, which is expressed in several large-scale demonstrations against the Front National. His image is severely challenged when he is accused of torture during the battle of Algiers in the 1950s where he was lieutenant parachutist. Whereas the Front national came in third during the first round, it reaches no position of importance during the second round. The UMP of President Jacques Chirac is the big winner. The cohabitation comes to an end. In addition, the media cover a shooting incident in Sangatte, a refugee camp near Calais at the French end of the Tunnel. The dead-end situation of the asylum seekers in Sangatte, who cherish – often idle – hope that they will once set foot on British territory, is the subject of considerable and critical media coverage.

The months September to November 2002 (e) see increased media attention for the immigration issue. The parliamentary agenda contributes to the immigration discussion as well by high attention in November 2002. The media report another revolt of illegal immigrants; this time, the basilica
Saint-Denis in Paris is invaded. They call for a general pardon. Just a few days before a mass demonstration by illegal immigrants and sympathisers scheduled for September 7, Secretary of Home Affairs Sarkozy admits that the judges have been to rigid in applying ‘the Chevènement law’ on immigration. He orders them to attach greater weight to the humanitarian aspects and individual circumstances of each dossier. However, a general pardon is out of the question. This discussion enters the parliamentary agenda in November, when the future of the immigration policy and budget is determined. Adequate reception centres and medical care seem of central concern. Furthermore, it is deemed of the utmost importance to the integration process that the admittance procedure is speeded up. It is repeatedly expressed that these goals can only be attained when future measures are coordinated at the European level.

Closely related to the unrests with dissatisfied asylum seekers is the Sangatte debate. This issue appears on both the media and the parliamentary agendas as well. During a visit of his British counterpart Blunkett in Calais on September 26, Sarkozy decides on November 15 not to allow any new applicants in the Sangatte asylum centre. Sangatte, with its many violent and deadly incidents, has become a symbol of political incompetence and of the painful absence of a uniform European policy. Parliament deals with Sarkozy’s decision concerning Sangatte in November. Like the media, the MPs also speak in terms of the ‘scandal of Sangatte’, to indicate the ostrich-like policy of the previous governments, while praising Sarkozy for his daring vigour.

One final issue that explains part of the peak on both agendas is the proposal by the UMP to create an ‘integration contract’ (contrat d’integration) for legal immigrants. A ‘reception contract’ (contrat d’accueil) should apply during the first four years after arrival, followed by a ‘naturalisation contract’ (contrat d’enracinement) during fifteen years, which gives immigrants the right to vote and to stand for office in local elections, with the prospect of acquiring the French nationality.

Attention to the immigration issue in parliament reaches an all-time high during July 2003 (f). Only one issue is at the centre of the discussion that lasts for days: the evaluation of the bill entitled ‘immigration control and residence of foreigners in France’. Parts of the package of new measures are the actual introduction of the ‘integration contract’ and the abolition of the ‘double penalty’ (la double peine). The double penalty implies that whenever a legal foreigner commits a crime, he may both be sentenced to imprisonment and be expelled from French territory, after having served his sentence. The double standards of this legislation have been subject to political protest for years.
6.4.4 Immigration: concluding remarks

The media and parliamentary agendas in the UK and the Netherlands display a much higher level of common interest than those in France. The British and Dutch media cover new bills concerning stricter criteria for immigration; the British and Dutch parliaments in turn deal with a range of high-profile issues that do not necessarily demand their attention from a legislative point of view. The British and Dutch parliaments have more than once devoted an entire debate to individual cases, as illustrated by the stories of Wayne Douglas and Gümüs. In general, the immigration issue is known to involve an inherent focus on human interest and conflict, resulting in high public sensitivity and outspoken opinions that the media and parliament do not appear to resist.

Each of the three countries is faced with the question of how to provide for an increasing number of asylum seekers and how to curb the number of applications. The national asylum policy turns out to be among the parliaments’ primary concerns. There has hardly been evidence of immediate interference by the European institutions in this matter, only in the case of the British authorities being reprimanded by the European Court of Justice for a reprehensible reception of newcomers.

On a slightly different level, however, Europe certainly has imposed itself on the immigration discussions. Worries about immigration policies and especially the electoral successes of extreme-right parties in neighbouring countries have repeatedly become the focus of European-wide debate. Note that this European profile much less characterises the French news than the British or Dutch public discussions, and is practically absent as far as the French parliament is concerned.
Chapter Seven  Agenda-building results

All the information needed to optimally specify the structural equation models has been collected from the diagnostical results in chapter 4. Furthermore, the qualitative exploration of the issue chronologies in chapter 6 has provided some sense of the discussions and key events, which have determined the course of the parliamentary and media time series. Hence, we now know what we are actually talking about. Graphical presentations of the time series, such as figures 6.1 to 6.12 in chapter 6, are insightful to locate the highs and lows in the level of issue attention, and to get an idea of the extent to which the parliamentary and media agendas are correlated and manifest similar trends. However, it is not possible to infer if and how the agendas depend on each other from these graphs, nor is possible to see if and how they depend on their own past. Therefore, the time has come to move on to the assessment of the hypotheses, which deal with the causal relationships between the parliamentary and the media agendas, by means of structural equation modelling.1

Each section in this chapter presents results in answer of one of the consecutive hypotheses. For the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France respectively, first the outcomes of the structural equation models based on pooled data of issues and periods are presented to assess the overall balance of power between the parliamentary and media agendas (section 7.1). The overall models are followed by models based on the data for elections and non-elections (section 7.2), per period (section 7.3) and finally those based on the data per issue (section 7.4). Of course, although not part of the SEM framework of analysis, hypotheses 5 and 6 on agenda convergence will also be addressed at the end of this chapter (section 7.5).

7.1 Overall agenda building
In each section (apart from section 7.6 on agenda convergence) a table will be presented, which summarises the results from the different SEM models per country (tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.4 and 7.6). Since these tables contain a lot of information, first some general information on how to read these tables will be presented.

In each of these tables, columns two and three display the crossover influence between the parliamentary and the media agendas ($\beta_{\text{media}}$ and $\beta_{\text{parl}}$), which occurred within one and the same month in all cases. These two columns are most important as they contain the answer to the question of whether to confirm or reject a hypothesis. The autoregressive influ-

1 The models were estimated using the square root of the original scores for attention per month, initially encompassing a lag of one month and a lag of twelve months (see chapter 4).
ences within the parliamentary agenda and within the media agenda are presented in columns four and five respectively. These columns give an idea of the inertia of both agendas. How persistently do the agendas respond to their own past as compared with the tendency to react to each other? It is indicated in the brackets behind the coefficients whether past attention influences present attention with a delay of one month \((t-1)\) or with a delay of twelve months \((t-12)\). The remaining columns 6 to 13 deal with the model fit, starting with the explained variance of the parliamentary agenda \(R^2_p\) and the media agenda \(R^2_m\), followed by the \(\chi^2\)-statistic and its \(p\)-value, the degrees the freedom, and two common fit indices \((RMSEA \text{ and } CFI)\). The final column presents the total number of observations per model \((N)\).

The fit of a model is satisfactory when the \(p\)-value of the \(\chi^2\)-statistic is greater than 0.05. This may feel counterintuitive, since in many statistical tests an insignificant \(p\)-value means that the null hypothesis should not be rejected because no significant relationship between the variables of interest has been found. Structural equation modelling does not compare an alternative hypothesis with the null hypothesis. It uses the \(\chi^2\)-statistic to test whether the covariance between variables, given the hypothesised relationships in the theoretical model, is not significantly different from the actual covariance between the variables. A small \(\chi^2\)-statistic with an insignificant \(p\)-value thus confirms the similarity of the model and the data. The additional test-statistics \(RMSEA\) and \(CFI\) should be smaller than 0.05 and near to 1.00 respectively.

A first general finding, which emerges from tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.4 and 7.6, is that the instantaneous crossover influences between the agendas \((M_t \rightarrow P_t \text{ or } P_t \rightarrow M_t)\) is consistently larger than the cross-lagged \((M_{t-1} \rightarrow P_t \text{ or } P_{t-1} \rightarrow M_t)\) influences between the agendas, indicating causation within one month. Furthermore, as already became apparent from the VAR analysis, the political agenda exhibits a fairly strong yearly seasonal effect, with almost no attention for any subject during the recesses of the summer holidays or Christmas holidays \((P_{t-12} \rightarrow P_t)\). The media agenda shows a stronger short-term monthly autoregression \((M_{t-1} \rightarrow M_t)\). To put it differently, politicians behave like old watchdogs that return to their kennels, whereas the media resemble a pack of hounds that follow their ‘interests of the day’ for a short period of time. Media’s long-term memory and attention span do not seem quite as elaborate as those of the average MP. In the remainder of this chapter we will concentrate on the question of who influences whom, rather than on the time-variant structure of the influence process.

On account of the first hypothesis, which predicts that agenda building does not only involve parliamentary influence but also media influence, figures 7.1 to 7.3 visualise the overall British, Dutch and French agenda-building processes respectively. The models include the whole research period, pooling the four issues. The same coefficients can be found in the first four
columns of table 7.1. However, the graphs might help understand the meaning of the coefficients in the abstract tables to the agenda-building process.

A first remark should concern the fit of the overall models (see table 7.1). The British overall model shows a very satisfactory fit ($\chi^2 = 0.01$, $p = 0.92$, $RMSEA = 0.00$, $CFI = 1.00$). The Dutch overall model shows a less ideal but still sufficient fit ($\chi^2 = 2.94$, $p = 0.23$, $RMSEA = 0.04$, $CFI = 1.00$). The fit of the French model is again highly satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 1.95$, $p = 0.86$, $RMSEA = 0.00$, $CFI = 1.00$).

Table 7.1: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from overall SEM models per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Crossover influence</th>
<th>Autoregressive influence</th>
<th>Model Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$P_t \rightarrow M_t$</td>
<td>$M_t \rightarrow P_t$</td>
<td>$R^2_p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.13**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A comparison of columns 2 (parliamentary influence) and 3 (media influence) gives an answer to the hypotheses about the balance of agenda-building power. Columns 4 and 5 present the autoregressive influence of the parliamentary and media agendas respectively. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; '-' indicates lack of significant influence.

As shown in figures 7.1 to 7.3, in none of the three countries, parliament and the press appear to treat each other as the ultimate source for their agendas, signified by the modest or absent crossover coefficients.

Figure 7.1: British agenda building, whole period, all issues

Note. The vertical flows of influences between the two right-hand variables represent the instantaneous crossover influence between the parliamentary agenda (t) and the media agenda (t). The conclusion about the balance of agenda-building power is based on these (standardised) coefficients. The flows of influences between left-hand and right-hand variables represent autoregressive influence with a lag of one month (t-1) or twelve months (t-12) on the agenda at present (t).
Despite the fair degree of independence displayed by both actors, as is also underlined by the strong autoregressive coefficients, there is still room for significant flows of crossover influence in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands. These flows are indeed bi-directional in the United Kingdom, as was predicted in hypothesis 1 ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = 0.07$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.13$, see figure 7.1). The influence of the media on parliament is nearly twice as strong as the reverse influence. Although both agendas partly determine the agenda of the other, the British media agenda is clearly the dominant one.

In the Netherlands, on the other hand, there is no question of a balance of power in which both parties are represented. Here, the media agenda is the only agenda of the two that is used as a source of information about what is important ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.13$, see figure 7.2). The strength of Dutch media influence on the parliamentary agenda is equal to that in the UK.

It is not so much the power of the political agenda that is questioned among agenda-building scholars. The controversy rather stems from the degree of media power. In this context, the overall British and Dutch results, which show that media influence is stronger than the reverse influence, if any parliamentary influence at all, are remarkable. Moreover, one of the last things ever questioned by agenda-building scholars is whether there is any short-term interaction between the two institutions at all. As two central institutions within contemporary democracy, some level of influence may be expected to go without saying. France tells us otherwise, though (see figure 7.3). The French press and the French parliament apparently live in two separate worlds. There is no significant crossover influence at all ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$).

The overall models give a first impression of the amount of independence and power (or rather the lack thereof) of the British and Dutch democratic institutions on the one hand, and on the other the central position that the news media have acquired in these societies.
This offers a first clear answer to the overarching research question of this study: what is the balance of power between the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda? Overall, the answer should be that the balance is in favour of the media agenda, if there is any interaction at all. This also supports H1, at least as far as the presence of media influence on parliament is concerned. The expectation of reciprocal influence only holds in the UK.

### 7.2 Agenda building during elections

The campaign machinery before and during elections produces an overwhelming amount of political news that is sheer impossible to miss for the citizens or the media. The question is whether journalists manage to make their own choices and get their own questions across in this publicity offensive of parties and candidates. Hypothesis 2 predicts that the large supply of political events, the mobilisation of political communication strategists in combination with obliging journalists during this democratic key event, causes parliament to be more successful in building the media agenda during elections than outside elections.

Table 7.2 shows that during times of routine politics the British parliament is unable to initiate the discussions that fill the news pages. The British press is responsible for several debates in parliament. Outside elections the reciprocal flows of influence that appeared in the overall model have disappeared in favour of unidirectional media dominance ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.09$). In the months running up to general elections and during the elections, the control of the press over the agenda of the British parliament is suddenly nowhere to be found ($\beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$). Compared with the modest contribution of the House of Commons to the agenda-building relations with the press in the overall model, the empowerment of the parliamentary agenda
during elections is overwhelming. Outside elections British MPs hold no sway in the face of the media, but during elections they suddenly succeed in getting a huge amount of media resonance for their issues ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = 0.34$). This supports the assumption that agenda-building dynamics during and outside elections are in no way comparable, and that the political campaign machinery does not escape the attention of the media. As described in chapter 2, there is no likely attempt on the part of the media to escape this ready supply of stories.

Table 7.2: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from election and non-election SEM models per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Crossover influence</th>
<th>Autoregressive influence</th>
<th>Model Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$P_t \rightarrow M_t$</td>
<td>$M_t \rightarrow P_t$</td>
<td>$P_{t-1/12} \rightarrow P_t$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Election 0.34**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-election - 0.09**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Election -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-election 0.08**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Election -</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-election - 0.08**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01; ‘x’ indicates lack of fit of the SEM model; ‘-’ indicates lack of significant influence. The fit of the Dutch non-election model and the French election model does not meet the criteria of RMSEA < 0.05. Moreover, the one-way parliamentary influence of $\beta = 0.08^{**}$ in the Dutch model proved rather arbitrary, since the model just as easily makes a case for one-way media influence of $\beta = 0.13^{**}$, which we chose not to report in the table for its slightly worse p-value and equally unacceptable fit ($p = 0.10$, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.99).

The Dutch elections have quite a different effect on the amount of attention that MPs and journalists pay to each other (see table 7.2). Whereas the balance of power in favour of parliament is very pronounced in the UK, all influence vanishes in the Netherlands. Although the Dutch press is dominant in the overall model, its influence is erased during elections. During routine politics, the present analysis unfortunately bumps into a technical difficulty, which makes it impossible to make any statement about the direction of influence in the Dutch case: the model does not fit. Since there is no result concerning the Dutch non-election model, there is no way of evaluating H2. We can only remark that Dutch MPs take no advantage of the publicity opportunities that elections offer, since there still is no significant flow of influence from the Dutch parliamentary agenda to the Dutch media agenda during elections ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}$). But interestingly, during elections the
Dutch media are also left empty handed ($\beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$). Although we do not know for sure whether this lack of media influence in election times represents a shift in the predicted direction, the lack of interaction during elections certainly is unexpected.

A striking lack of interaction between press and parliament was also observed in the French overall model (see table 7.1). Splitting this model along the lines of election and non-election years does not change this mutual lack of interest: campaigning does not translate into an opportunity for the French parliament to seize control over the media agenda ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$). Note that the fit of the French election model is just outside the bounds of the acceptable, which again makes it impossible to draw any conclusions. An interesting observation is nonetheless that in the autoregressive dynamics of parliament the long-term influence, thus parliament’s reliance on its own agenda of a year ago, is dropped in favour of a stronger influence of its agenda of the previous month. The same mechanism was observed in the British election model. Such short-term dynamics are quite plausible in the heat of the election battle.

One must avoid mistaking the increase in parliamentary power that was observed for the UK and any (unreliable) differences observed in the Netherlands and France, for real change if it is in fact merely based on coincidence. It should be ensured that the differences from one model to another are statistically significant.

Table 7.3: Significance of the differences between the (non-) election models per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>$\Delta$ Election models</th>
<th>Chi$^2$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>118.69</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>0.196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>9.95</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>19.80</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Chi$^2$-test that tests the statistical difference between models, requires a $p$-value smaller than 0.05 and a RMSEA greater than 0.05. In contrast, a $p$-value greater than 0.05 and a RMSEA smaller than 0.05 indicate a satisfactory fit of a single model.

A Chi$^2$-test to compare subpopulations is available in LISREL 8. The null hypothesis that the election model and the non-election model are essentially equal is convincingly rejected in the British case (see table 7.3), confirming that the emergence of parliamentary influence on the media agenda is truly a feature of election rather than routine times. However, the null hypothesis of equal models is neither rejected for the Dutch, nor obviously for the French agenda-building process. The lack of media power during Dutch elections should thus not be interpreted as a sign of subordination in the face of campaigning parties.
7.3 Agenda building over time

Has mediatisation, which is thought to touch on many aspects of public and political life, also left its footprints on the agenda-building process? On account of hypothesis 3, we move on to assess whether the balance of power between the people’s representatives and newpersons is stable over time or whether the media have tightened their grip on the parliamentary agenda.

As can be observed from table 7.4, all three British models, both Dutch models and both French models fit the data well.

Table 7.4: Agenda-building influences (crossover and autoregressive) between parliament and the media from SEM models per period per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Crossover Influence</th>
<th>Autoregressive Influence</th>
<th>Model Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( P_t \rightarrow M_t )</td>
<td>( M_{t-1/12} \rightarrow P_{t-1} )</td>
<td>( R^2_p )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-1995</td>
<td>- 0.15** 0.75** (t-12) 0.57** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.60 0.32 1.29 0.53 2 0.00 1.00 328</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>- 0.19** 0.72** (t-12) 0.67** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.56 0.46 0.79 0.67 2 0.00 1.00 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td>- 0.20** 0.66** (t-12) 0.75** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.50 0.57 1.45 0.48 2 0.00 1.00 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1999</td>
<td>- - 0.64** (t-12) 0.84** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.41 0.71 2.95 0.40 3 0.00 1.00 196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2003</td>
<td>- 0.20** 0.38** (t-12) 0.89** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.20 0.79 1.79 0.41 2 0.00 1.00 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-2001</td>
<td>- - 0.34** (t-1) 0.73** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.62 0.53 1.17 0.88 4 0.00 1.00 124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>- - 0.41** (t-12) 0.65** (t-1)</td>
<td>0.30 0.62 1.43 0.92 5 0.00 1.00 128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01; ‘-’ indicates lack of significant influence.

Already in the early days of British agenda building, from 1988 up to 1995, considerable media influence on the parliamentary agenda can be seen, while there is no parliamentary influence at all (\( \beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.15 \)). In the period 1995 up to 1999, the control of the news media over the parliamentary agenda has increased (\( \beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.19 \)), which is reinforced during the years 2000 up to 2003 (\( \beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.20 \)). During none of the three periods does parliamentary influence cross the threshold of statistical significance. The British members of parliament seem highly and increasingly sensitive to the daily whims of the media, while journalists take no notice of the activities of these politicians at all.

Turning to the Dutch situation, a similar trend in the direction of mediatisation has manifested itself. The shift is much more radical, however. The years 1995 up to 1999, period 1 in the Dutch data, present a picture in which parliament and the media manifest no interest in each other whatsoever (\( \beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.} \)). From 2000 onwards, the media have seized control over the parliamentary agenda, while the media agenda remains untouched.
by parliamentary interference ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.20$). Parliament has become highly responsive to events that appear in the news.

The French parliament and the French media are persistent in ignoring each other’s priorities. Similar to the overall model, the agenda-building process in France in the years 1998 to 2001 is exempt from any influence in either direction. This lack of mutual recognition continues to be the state of affairs throughout the years 2001 to 2003.

The trend towards an increasingly media-dominated agenda-building process has manifested itself in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands. It makes one wonder whether, in these democracies the collective interests of the people have come to be promoted by their political representatives only to the extent that they happen to coincide with news values. Hypothesis 3 is supported in two of out of three cases: British and Dutch media have strengthened their control over the parliamentary agenda. They have become important points of reference used by parliament to determine the current topics of political debate. France again turns out as a remarkably odd case. Parliament has not become more responsive to the media, nor have the media become more responsive to parliament: there is no agenda-building process to test the hypothesis to begin with.

Table 7.5: Significance of the differences between the time models per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$\Delta$ Time models</th>
<th>$\text{Chi}^2$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
<th>$\text{RMSEA}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK (period 1 and 3)</td>
<td>59.83</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL (period 1 and 2)</td>
<td>18.17</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR (period 1 and 2)</td>
<td>30.32</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again it must be made sure that we are dealing with true empowerment of the British and Dutch media agenda, rather than coincidental observations. The null hypothesis that states that the models for the first and last periods are essentially equal is rejected both for the British and for the Dutch time series. Hence, the difference between the coefficients of the models through time is statistically significant and the increased power of the media agenda has indeed been confirmed (see table 7.5).

7.4 Agenda building across issues

The agenda-building model remains to be tested for each issue separately in order to assess the importance of European versus national decision making to the balance of power between the media and parliament. Hypothesis 4 predicts that the responsiveness of the parliamentary agenda to the media agenda is enhanced in issue domains of EU decision-making authority. The balance of power is expected to be more favourable to the media agenda regarding European issues than it is regarding domestic issues.
7.4.1 Building the agenda of agriculture

The results pertaining to the issue agriculture are very straightforward in each of the investigated countries (see Table 7.6). Agriculture is categorised as a European issue, since it is incorporated in pillar one of the EU; hence, the media agenda is expected to be relatively strong compared with the parliamentary agenda. In the United Kingdom the agricultural agenda-building process displays strong media dominance. Parliament has no say at all in what stories will be filling the news pages ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.23$).

It is again the media that largely instigate public discussion on agriculture in the Netherlands ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.24$). Like their British colleagues, the Dutch MPs have not managed to interfere in the news selection of the media. The strength of media's influence on the parliamentary agenda is practically equal in the two countries, as is the lack of parliamentary influence.

At this point, it should be hardly surprising to learn that again no significant short-term agenda-building dynamics have been found in France.
would agree to disregard the French case – which may by now be considered an extreme case – the results of agriculture are in line with hypothesis 4.

7.4.2 Building the agenda of the environment
The dynamics between the British media agenda and the British parliamentary agenda with regard to the environmental issue correspond to what is expected in the context of such a European issue. As table 7.6 shows, media influence on the parliamentary agenda largely outweighs parliamentary influence on the media agenda. The agenda-building process is again unidirectional: parliament has no control over the media agenda. ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.14$). The British results of this European issue compare to those of the other European issue agriculture: both agenda-building processes exclusively involve media influence. However, the degree to which the media dominate the process is more forceful for pillar-one issue agriculture ($\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.23$) than for pillar-one issue environment ($\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.14$).

The results of the Dutch environment are not in line with hypothesis 4. Instead of finding a parliamentary agenda that is subordinate to the media agenda, the influence of the Dutch parliament is exceptionally strong ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = 0.35$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$). The news is not used as a benchmark for political debate. Quite the contrary: the environmental discussions of the Dutch MPs largely pass the test of newsworthiness and are copied onto the media agenda. Although decision-making authority has moved to the supranational level, something about this issue still make the media look for news sources among their own MPs.

As for the agenda-building dynamics between parliament and the media in France, nothing but stale news can be reported. The media have no influence on the parliamentary agenda and parliament has no influence on the media agenda.

7.4.3 Building the agenda of drugs
At the national end of the issue scale, parliament is expected to operate more independently from the media agenda. Indeed, in the UK every trace of media influence disappears for the domestic issue of drugs. Still, the British parliament also fails to set the media agenda on this domestic issue ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$). Lack of media dominance is thus not traded for parliamentary dominance; rather journalists and MPs do not believe the other to provide a sufficiently relevant contribution to the debate on drugs to copy it on their agenda.

In contrast, whereas British parliamentary influence turns out insignificant, the Dutch parliament convincingly initiates the media agenda on drugs. The Dutch media, like the British media, are left empty handed on this issue ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = 0.22$, $\beta_{\text{media}} = \text{n.s.}$). Hence, compared with the British situation, the Dutch media do attribute authority to their MPs, depending on the issue at hand, i.e. the environment and drugs. Again, there is no flow of
influence between the French media and parliamentary agendas in either direction.

7.4.4 Building the agenda of immigration

Pillar-three issue immigration is conceptualised as an issue in transition, which transcends the boundaries between domestic and European politics. We expected the media agenda to be less dominant here than in the cases of agriculture or the environment, but to be more influential than in the case of drugs. It is true that the position of the media agenda is stronger for the immigration issue than for the drugs issue, both in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands (UK: $\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.25$; NL: $\beta_{\text{parl}} = \text{n.s.}, \beta_{\text{media}} = 0.22$). In fact, media’s position is remarkably strong and very comparable across the two countries. The dominance of media’s immigration agenda even outweighs the dominance of media’s environmental agenda. These results are not supportive of hypothesis 4. Solely focussing on the formal, national level of decision making of the immigration issue obviously underestimates the news dynamics at play here. For the sake of completeness we should add that there are no agenda-building dynamics between the French media and the French parliament.

7.4.5 Controlling for real-world cues

Should our findings of a powerful media agenda regarding immigration be reconsidered, once the influence of real-world cues (RWC) is taken into account? In order to ensure that the influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda is not really a spurious relationship, explained by the fact that the media and parliament actually both react to the same real trends in society regarding immigration, the number of asylum applications was added to the British, Dutch and French models of immigration. Table 7.7 presents the results of the original immigration SEM models (identical to those in table 7.6), of the baseline models for shorter periods (if RWC was not available during the complete original period), and of the baseline model with RWC.

First, retesting the original British immigration model for the shorter period 1991-2003, during which the RWC data were available, again resulted in a model with a unidirectional media influence ($\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.25$) and a good fit ($p = 0.75$, RMSEA = 0.00) (see table 7.7).
Table 7.7: The impact of real-world cues on the agenda-building process of immigration (SEM models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>Crossover influence</th>
<th>Autoregressive influence</th>
<th>Model Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$P_t \rightarrow M_t$</td>
<td>$M_t \rightarrow P_t$</td>
<td>$rwc \rightarrow M_t$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK 1988-2003</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-2003</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'91-'03 + rwc</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.25** (t-12)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL 1995-2003</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'95-'03 + rwc</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.25** (t-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR 1998-2003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2003</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'99-'03 + rwc</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Similar to the previous SEM tables, columns 2 and 3 indicate the crossover influence between the parliamentary and media agendas. In this table, columns 4 and 5 display the additional effect of RWC on the parliamentary and media agendas respectively. One can observe that RWC does not reveal our initial SEM results to be spurious by comparing rows with identical periods with and without RWC. ‘x’ in columns 4 and 5 indicates that the relationship does not apply the model (original models do not include RWC); ‘-’ indicates the lack of a significant flow of influence; ‘x’ in the model fit (columns 13 and 14) indicates lack of fit of the SEM model. For further explanation on how to read this table, please see Table 7.1.
Adding the asylum applications showed that RWC strongly impacts the British media agenda (β_rwc = 0.25). The British media may not be very responsive to the British parliament, but they are certainly in touch with the real developments in the realm of immigration. Despite media’s reputation as a fast-moving institution, it takes them an extra month to let the facts sink in (t-1). Still, this considerable RWC-effect on the media affects neither the strength of media influence on parliament, nor the absence of parliamentary influence on the media (β_parl = n.s., β_media = 0.25).

Let us see whether Dutch journalists and MPs are in touch with reality, and importantly, whether this prevents them from being in touch with each other. Remember that media influence in the original Dutch model was β_media = 0.22. This even rises to β_media = 0.27 (p = 0.54, RMSEA = 0) once the asylum data are included. In the Netherlands it is parliament that responds to the real-world cues, also with a delay of one month (β_rwc = 0.25). Thus the Dutch parliament does not adapt exclusively to the priorities of the media regarding immigration affairs. Contrary to the British MPs, the Dutch MPs monitor and respond to their social environment as well.

The issue of immigration involves no agenda-building interaction between the French parliament and press. If there is no agenda-building influence between the French media and parliamentary agendas in the first place, it cannot be revealed to be a spurious one. It is nevertheless interesting to check whether asylum applications can attract the interest of parliament and the media in France. The baseline model that includes data from January 1999 onwards, which is only three months less than the original model, appears to have a much better fit than the original model (β_parl = n.s., β_media = n.s., p = 0.76, RMSEA = 0). Furthermore, the short-term autoregressive influence of the parliamentary agenda is no longer significant. Including the RWC to the French immigration model changes nothing to the baseline model. Not only is the RWC unsurprisingly of no consequence to the initial lack of agenda building, it also has no independent effect on any of the actors itself.

In summary, both MPs and journalists may react to real-world cues, but this does not prevent parliament from reacting to the news. As far as immigration goes, it is now safe to argue that our findings of media dominance do not concern a spurious relationship, which should really be seen as an artefact of the influence of real-world events on both agendas. Given the centrality of the number of asylum seekers in the immigration debate, it is not extremely likely that controlling for RWC in the other three issue areas would wipe out the agenda-building influences currently established.

7.4.6 Issue-specific agenda building: concluding remarks
Before jumping to conclusions about the different agenda-building dynamics in different issue contexts, the statistical significance of those differences needs to be determined once more. Table 7.8 summarises the results.
of the $\chi^2$-test. For each country the four issue models were simultaneously compared.

Table 7.8: Significance of the differences between the issue models per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue models</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>172.52</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>90.85</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>76.75</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The null hypothesis that the agenda-building process of agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration are essentially equal may be rejected for the UK, for the Netherlands ($p < 0.0001$), as well as for France ($p = 0.0002$).

Now is the time to compare the results from the Granger causality test, presented in table 4.9 in chapter 4, which indicate the cumulative long-term flows of influence over the course of twelve months between both agendas, with the just discussed results from the SEM models, which indicate the instantaneous balance of power (up to two months). Importantly, the hypotheses relate to this short-term interaction between the press and parliament, and therefore the SEM models are at the centre of attention in this study. However, we are aware that a complex, and not always predictable, short-term and long-term time structure may be involved in the agenda-building process, which the parsimonious SEM models cannot 100% account for. It is plausible to assume that the agenda that dominates in the short run is also the most powerful in the long run. Logically, the Granger causality tests would then merely serve to support the SEM models. Nevertheless, the Granger causality tests are not necessarily consistent with the SEM models, and may provide additional information to complete the picture. Table 7.9 displays the results from the SEM models and the Granger causality tests side by side, for each issue in each country. Some concluding remarks will now be formulated regarding issue-specific agenda building, by reviewing the short-term SEM results in combination with the long-term Granger causality results, where the pith of the remarks is based on the former.

First, recollecting the results from the issue-specific SEM models, starting with the United Kingdom, the issues agriculture, the environment and drugs provide clear support for the hypothesis that the balance of power is more favourable to the media agenda when the European dimension of an issue is stronger. We may have to reconsider classifying immigration as an issue in transition, since British media have at least as much control over the parliamentary agenda as they have when the issues in pillar one are concerned. The long-term dynamic of British agenda building as indicated by the Granger causality results corresponds to the short-term dynamic in the
cases of agriculture and immigration. The dominance of the media agenda remains present as time goes by. Whereas drugs is an issue that does not trigger any interaction between the British press and the British MPs within two months (SEM model), both agendas pay attention to each other over the course of a year (Granger causality test). The distribution of power is still equally divided – although parliamentary influence is significant at the 5%-level and media influence at the 10%-level (see table 4.9) – so the initial answer to hypothesis 4 remains the same. Turning to the British environment, in the long run parliament manages to perform as a news source for the environment after all. The media have the strongest agenda, but parliament is not as powerless as one might assume if one only looks at the SEM results.

### Table 7.9: The dominant agenda according to the SEM models and the Granger causality tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>Parliament → media</th>
<th>Media → parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>SEM (short term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (long term)</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>SEM (short term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (long term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>SEM (short term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (long term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>SEM (short term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (long term)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ’x’ indicates the flows of influence detected by the respective tests, whereby the three left-hand columns represent parliamentary influence and the three right-hand columns represent media influence. The F-scores and corresponding significance level of the Granger causality tests are reported in table 4.9.

In the Netherlands, one of the two European issues (agriculture) as well as the national issue (drugs) can be added to the list of SEM results that are in line with hypothesis 4. Regarding immigration, the same conclusion should be drawn for the Netherlands as was done for the UK. The Dutch media are exceptionally dominant regarding this issue. Perhaps immigration has a stronger European character than was initially assumed, or perhaps other characteristics of immigration make parliament turn to the press. The one exception not supportive of hypothesis 4 is the Dutch environment. Although it does concern a European issue, the media are deprived of influence altogether, whereas parliament clearly does build the agenda. The Granger causality results only add information in the case of Dutch agriculture, which is entirely consistent with the SEM results: the media agenda dominate both in the short and in the long run.
We have seen from the SEM models that the French institutions appear to ignore each other as relevant players in the political debate. The Granger causality tests shed an interesting alternative light on this seeming and striking isolation of the French democratic institutions. If only the French MPs are granted sufficient time to respond, they do pick up on media incentives, but only in the domains of agriculture and immigration. Hence, media influence is present in France after all, but it slowly develops with a delay of two to twelve months. The parliamentary agenda stays as powerless in the long run, as it is in the short run. As we now know, these two issues, regarding which the French media agenda succeeds in influencing the parliamentary agenda, were also associated with indisputable media dominance both in the UK and in the Netherlands. Here the French results cautiously link up with the British and Dutch results.

In general, it may be concluded that none of the four issues allows the British parliament to determine the British public debate in the short run, whereas the Dutch media still display a certain esteem for what goes on in the Dutch parliament as far as drugs and the environment are concerned. Influence of the British parliament merely shows up as cumulative long-term influence, interestingly in the case of these very same issues of drugs and the environment. As in the United Kingdom, the French media never take cues from the parliamentary agenda, and, in contrast to the UK, they do not even consult the French parliament as a news source over the course of a year. Hence, of all three countries it is in the Netherlands that parliament seems to have retained the strongest status in the eyes of the media. Another general conclusion is that the countries may disagree about the time span of agenda-building influence in the different issue domains, but they agree, including France, about the issues that are incontestably dominated by the media agenda: agriculture and immigration. If we again were to disregard differences in the time span of influence, the domestic issues of drugs and the European issue of the environment also share a pattern: Dutch parliamentary dominance and mutual flows of influence in Britain.

7.5 Agenda convergence
Do closer technological and political European connections translate into a convergence of the parliamentary agendas or media agendas of European countries, as predicted in H5 and H6? The first pair of member states that will be discussed is the UK and the Netherlands. Their parliamentary agendas have indeed become more similar, with a correlation coefficient rising from $r = 0.28$ to $r = 0.47$. At the turn of the century, British and Dutch MPs have progressively attuned their understandings of which political events matter, across the domains of agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration. An even stronger indication of an emerging European public sphere (e.g., Gerhards, 1993; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Schlesinger, 1999) is the growing convergence of the British and Dutch media agendas, with the
instantaneous correlation increasing from $r = 0.46$ in period 1 to $r = 0.65$ in period 2. Note that the press in both countries initially already manifested a considerable overlap of interest, which even became more evident in the later years. Column 8 of table 7.10 presents the $t$-values of the correlation differences between the periods. Both shifts towards agenda convergence in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands are significant.

Table 7.10: Agenda convergence among the British, Dutch and French agendas (Pearson’s correlation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Δ Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>$r$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK x NL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliaments</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK x FR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliaments</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NL x FR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliaments</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *$p < 0.05$ ($t > 1.96$); **$p < 0.01$ ($t > 2.58$). Period 1 includes the years 1995 up to 1999 in the case of convergence between the UK and the Netherlands. Period 1 includes the years 1998 up to 1999 in the case of British and Dutch convergence with France. Period 2 includes the years 2000 up to 2003 in all cases.

Moving on to assess the convergence between the next pair of countries, the United Kingdom and France, it becomes clear that different observations should be highlighted than in the case of the UK and the Netherlands. In the first period the correlations between the British and French media agendas and between their parliamentary agendas are nearly equal and already very high (media: $r = 0.53$; parliament: $r = 0.52$). Although France and Britain may be notorious for taking an opposite stance on political questions, apparently they make the same choices about which political questions are imminent, both in parliament and in the news. Hence, they appear to agree to disagree. Throughout time, the parliamentary agendas choose a different path than the media agendas; whereas the correlation of media agendas remains stable at $r = 0.54$, the parliamentary agendas of France and Britain show a slight decline of mutual interests ($r = 0.45$). However, this parliamentary divergence is not significant. No indication of increased harmonisation between the British and French public spheres has been found.

The match that remains to be discussed is the Netherlands and France (see table 7.10). This match in the earliest period is nearly as strong as the
The earliest match between the UK and France (media: $r = 0.49$; parliament: $r = 0.48$). Again, the parliamentary and media agendas start out with a comparable level of agreement, but evolve in opposite directions. In the second period, the Dutch and French media agendas have converged to a modest, but insignificant extent ($r = 0.59$). Their parliaments were taken up by increasingly different political problems ($r = 0.31$). Although this decline in correlation from period 1 to period 2 seems considerable ($\Delta r = 0.17$), it is again non-significant.

In sum, only the UK and the Netherlands have experienced increased mutual recognition of important current affairs, among both journalists and MPs. Between France and the UK on the one hand and the Netherlands on the other, there is no question of agenda convergence or of agenda divergence. However, it is tempting to note the downward trend in the correspondence between the French and foreign MPs. It is also tempting to note the tendency of the French and foreign media agendas not to diverge. Although the French window to Europe is not widening, it should not be ignored that this window was already the widest to begin with (see the first column of correlations in table 7.10).

Irrespective of the amount of convergence, the agreement between the issues on the media agenda is particularly high compared with the correlations between the parliamentary agendas. This difference in the level of agreement is especially manifest between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands during the full period, and between France and the others in the most recent period. This suggests that the common accusation that the media are merely interested in domestic matters with immediate relevance to their publics, and are blind to issues of European importance with their complexity and lack of human interest, may just have to be reconsidered. The fact that media correspondence outweighs parliamentary correspondence indicates that the similarity between the media agendas is not merely an artefact of media using their own increasingly converging national parliaments as news sources, thereby simply copying this convergence. Reliance on other news sources with a European dimension enters the equation, at least to account for the additional degree of correspondence between the media agendas. This may concern national executives across Europe increasingly harmonising their policy priorities. This may also concern a direct, though perhaps one-sided, connection between the British and Dutch media according to the self-referential media momentum (e.g., Breed, 1955; Eilders, 2002; Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003; Mathes & Pfetsch, 1991). It may also be a consequence of already considerably established links between the European media and political news sources that are active within the European political arena. In recent years, the media appear to have responded with equal or greater sensitivity to the intensified European setting of politics than parliaments have (see column 7 of table...
7.10), but the media agendas seem best adapted to the European dimension of politics to start with.

7.6 Summary
One of the most salient findings in this chapter is the lack of short-term agenda building between the French parliament and press. In the next chapter an attempt is made to find an explanation for these results. When summarising the answers that the present chapter has provided to each of the hypotheses, let us for now stick to the British and Dutch results. Do parliament and the media maintain reciprocal agenda-building relations, as predicted in H1? Not necessarily. Only British agenda building supports H1. However, the part of the hypothesis that is concerned with media influence seems convincingly supported, as there is even media dominance in both the British and Dutch cases. In H2 the parliamentary agenda is expected to prevail during elections, and more so than outside elections. Again, H2 is only supported in the British case where strong parliamentary dominance during elections was found, whereas the media dominate outside elections. H2 is neither confirmed nor disproved by the other countries. H3 is univocally supported. The British and Dutch media have become stronger agenda builders in the past decade. Hence, during times of routine politics, the media are dominant and increasingly so.

What can be concluded about the influence of European integration on the national agenda-building process? The agenda convergence that has been observed among the British and Dutch parliaments (H5), but especially among European media (H6) suggests that Europe matters to the construction of national agendas. Still, the step from ‘Europe matters’ to ‘Europe moderates’ turns out to be a big one. Although the majority of issue-specific results is in line with H4, it cannot be upheld in its present form: formal European authority in issue domains does not necessarily strengthen the media agenda. Both pillar-one issue agriculture and domestic issue drugs are in line with the hypothesis. The former consistently involves media dominance. If we include the long-term influence, this is even true in France as well. The latter either involves parliamentary dominance or no influence in either direction, consistent with a weak media agenda in a routine domestic context. Pillar-three issue immigration gives rise to results comparable to those of pillar-one issue agriculture (also in France), and therefore involves more media influence than expected of this in-between issue. But what is truly inconsistent with H4 is the Dutch parliamentary dominance in the case of the environment. Besides shedding light on the lack of short-term French agenda building, it will be the task of chapter 8 to come up with an empirical answer to these unexpected results of British and Dutch immigration and the Dutch environment.
Part Two
Explaining the yet unexplained:
The role of European actors
and political conflict
Chapter Eight   European impact revisited

The expectation that the part played by the media within the agenda-building process is larger whenever the European Union decides on the issue (hypothesis 4) has been confirmed in many cases, but not all. On the one hand it was expected that the media are relatively strong agenda builders in the case of pillar-one issue environment, but the results in chapter 7 showed parliament to be the dominant agenda regarding the Dutch environment. On the other hand, it has been shown both in the British and Dutch case that the issue of immigration gives rise to a much more powerful media agenda than was expected based on its status as a pillar-three issue in between the national and EU authority domain. Hence, the results of immigration and of the Dutch environment in chapter 7 cast doubts on the moderating role of European integration in the national agenda-building process. In addition, France proved an extremely remarkable test case since no short-term agenda building was found between parliament and the press. Only in the long run were flows of influence established from the media agenda to the parliamentary agenda.

Despite these irregularities, the majority of issues support H4. Moreover, because the issues revealed remarkably consistent agenda-building patterns across the countries, especially judging from the combination of the short-term SEM models and long-term Granger causality tests, there is sufficient ground for diving a bit deeper in the question of European impact. In this chapter, an attempt is made to fill the lingering gaps in our understanding of media power in a European context.

It will be assessed whether the unexpectedly strong or unexpectedly weak agenda-building power of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda can be predicted from the strong or weak role that European actors played in news events. The importance to and involvement in actual public discussions of European actors may not coincide with their formal authority according to the three-pillar structure that underlay the original agenda-building design of this study. Hence, a more relaxed functional hypothesis is proposed, i.e. that the actual presence of European actors in issue discussions, rather than EU’s decision-making authority in the issue domains, increases the agenda-building power of the media as compared with parliament’s agenda-building power. So, is the moderating role of European integration a valid assumption after all, if one were to let go of the issue classification based on EU’s three-pillar structure?

This study drew from two sources of information. First, the qualitative chronology of attention peaks, presented in chapter 6, was recollected to tell us why the French media and parliament might be out of touch. The chronology of events enabled us to evaluate whether the environmental and immigration key-events contain strong or weak European and national
dimensions (section 8.1). Second, in a new analysis, the amount of attention taken up by national versus European political actors in the news (referred to as ‘visibility’) was used as an indicator of the actual or functional – rather than the formal – ‘Europeanness’ of the issues. The media will speak for themselves about whom they consider the central players in the context of the different issues (section 8.2). Which are the issues that prompt the media to pay much or little attention to European actors? This quantitative assessment of the moderating role of Europe consisted of an exploratory data inspection in which a rank order of issues was established based on the level of European visibility in the news (analysis 1 in sections 8.2.1.2 and 8.2.2.1), as well as an interaction regression analysis in which media’s influence on the parliamentary agenda was made to depend on the level of European visibility in the news (analysis 2 in sections 8.2.1.3 and 8.2.2.2).

8.1 What really happened?

8.1.1 Revisiting the chronology of France
Perhaps one of the most remarkable findings in chapter 7 of this study is the persevering absence of short-term agenda-building influences between the French media and the French parliament. It is obvious that both political institutions turn to other political sources to judge the importance of current affairs. It is a fact that the French parliament and French parties in general suffer from a lack of authority as compared with the French president and the prime minister. The competences of the French parliament are restricted by the constitution of the Fifth Republic (see section 5.3). Perhaps its symbolic status as the guardian of democracy has proportionally sunk, to the extent that it does not appeal to journalists. This would explain the lack of influence from parliament on the media agenda. Nevertheless, one would expect a relatively weak institution to be more easily influenced by public opinion and consequently by media coverage. The lack of media influence on the parliamentary agenda is therefore especially out of the ordinary. By no means do we pretend to present an all-embracing explanation for the self-wilfulness of French MPs regarding the media, since the macro perspective of our analysis does not allow for it. Nevertheless, one can trace the extent to which the French agenda-building models are rooted in, and could have been predicted by, the actual course of events as described in the chronology of chapter 6.

Figures 6.1 to 6.12 in chapter 6 depict the British, Dutch and French time series of agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration respectively. They revealed a considerable level of interconnectedness of parliament and media in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The highs and lows on both agendas roughly coincide on many occasions. In France, synchrony between parliament and media is the exception rather than the rule. In fact, the French time series frequently follow opposite paths. According to the time series, there is a certain amount of shared interest between the
media and parliament in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, which is lacking in France. The same picture emerges when reviewing the historical overview of events. Of the highlighted attention peaks, only one event in the cases of drugs and immigration and two events in the cases of agriculture and the environment trigger simultaneous discussions on the French media and the parliamentary agendas. On the British and Dutch agendas the proportion of shared key events exceeds 50% in the majority of cases.

Judging from the nature of the events behind the attention peaks (described throughout chapter 6), it is primarily the French parliament that is responsible for this lack of mutual interest. The French media agenda has more in common with the British and Dutch media agendas than with the French parliamentary agenda. Even, the French media agenda also has more in common with the foreign parliamentary agendas than with the French parliamentary agenda. The French media pay attention to an array of subjects; from law proposals (e.g., penalty on drug-driving in 2002) to sudden hyps (e.g., controversial book about the war in Algeria in 2001), from domestic affairs (e.g., José Bové’s trial in 2001 and 2002) to European affairs (e.g., the Swiss (1998) and Belgian (2001) legislation on drugs). It shares this flexibility with the four foreign agendas. In contrast, across the four issues the French MPs apparently are heavily engaged in procedural matters. Parliament is mostly involved in the evaluation of national bills, and less willing or able to hook up with the discussion of the day. Among their most apparent interests are the Loi d’Orientation Agricole in 1998 and 1999, the anti-pollution tax (TGAP) in 1999, the bill for driving under the influence of drugs in 2000 and 2002, the budget for agricultural welfare benefits (BAPSA) in 2002, the water bill in 2002, the bill on humane asylum provisions in 2002, and the ‘Immigration control and residence of foreigners in France’ bill in 2003. Peaks on the parliamentary agenda that were caused by spontaneous reactions of parliament to real-world events seem limited to major and non-ignorable crises such as the BSE crisis in 2000, the natural disasters hitting France in 2000 and 2003, Kosovo in 1999, or the Sangatte scandal in 2002.

Hence, the French media and the French parliament both appear to have a classic interpretation of their job descriptions. The diversity of the events on the French media agenda leads us to believe that the media have no pre-established opinions about what to cover and what not to cover; anything is possible as long as it is likely to appeal to the French audience. Hence, in the broader context of European news coverage, this does not lead to any deviant outcomes or a more narrow scope in the French news. The data suggest that it is the French parliament that holds more strict ideas than either its British or Dutch counterparts about what it does and does not consider part of its routine job. In theory, apart from merely debating bills proposed by the government or the Senate, the French MPs have the right to propose bills – at least within la domaine de la loi as established by Article 34 of the
The democratic deficit closer to home

constitution (Elgie & Griggs, 2000) – to table questions for oral or written answers and submit the government to interpellations, like the British and Dutch MPs. Especially these latter activities are generally more suited for spontaneous reactions to the daily events. But apparently, the French MPs still feel little need, or see little opportunity, to link up with the daily media agenda in order to gain the appropriate public attention to fight their political battles. Let us try and achieve a provisional understanding of what might be the reason for this lack of parliamentary responsiveness to the media.

Of course, with the current data, one can only speculate on the true underlying motif. Perhaps it is a sense of pride that prevents the MPs from giving in to the meddlesome and disrespectful interpretative journalist. Perhaps the French MPs really do not depend on the media to take the pulse of the rank and file of their parties, and have access to more direct ways of communicating with the people. It is true that the contacts between MPs and their constituencies are indeed relatively strong (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001). Or perhaps the just-mentioned subordination of the French parliament to the French executive has spread a sense of fatalism among the MPs; a feeling that it would be pointless to use media scoops to scrutinise the government.

The data in this study suggest that this third motif might have the greatest veracity. Although this study indicates that the two French institutions that are expected to perform as the watchdogs of democracy, parliament and the media, do not form a system of political control that is as integrated as many might expect from a Western European democracy, it also indicates that the French MPs and the French press do not operate 100% isolated from each other. Some level of responsiveness of the French parliament to the media emerges if a much longer period than two months is taken into account. Such delayed flows of media influence on the French parliament is exactly what the Granger causality tests have established in the domains of agriculture and immigration (see table 4.9). It is therefore reasonable to assume that, rather than calling it a sense of fatalism preventing French MPs from linking up with the media agenda, it might be more fair to point to the rigid and selective scheduling of the parliamentary agenda, which is for a great part the result of the restricted parliamentary competences under the Fifth Republic. First, we know from section 5.3.3 that the aforementioned ‘spontaneous’ instruments of political pressure at the French parliament’s disposal, i.e. questions to the government and interpellations, hardly impress the French executive, who has ample opportunity to circumvent the parliament rationalisé one way or the other (e.g., Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001). Section 5.3.3 also described that the French executive lays claim to a large part of the parliamentary agenda one month in advance, except for a single day each month (Döring, 1995). An agenda that closely follows the executive agenda has restricted and unpredictable leeway in choosing alternative input. Only when the media have made an ongoing effort to prove
the importance of a new issue, only when parliament thinks it can make a
difference, and then still only when it can find a hole on its future agenda,
might media’s agenda-building influence eventually come about.

8.1.2 Revisiting the chronology of the environment
Looking back on the content of the news and debates about the environ-
ment in the Netherlands (see chapter 6), it quickly becomes apparent that,
at least as far as the most eye-catching media events and parliamentary
affairs are concerned, the agendas are primarily domestically rooted. The
parliamentary inquiry into governmental negligence after the Bijlmer plane
 crash is exemplary in this context. Likewise, national executives have uni-
lateral control over whether or not to close down the nuclear power plants,
over whether or not to liberalise the electricity market, or over whether or
not to expand Schiphol airport. Of course, European regulations confine
their room for manoeuvre, but these directives are not the reason why the
discussions are instigated and hardly substantively contribute to the discus-
sions. It is national party politics that defines the lines along which the key
events are interpreted.

There is only one group of international events to counterbalance the
domestic focus within this issue domain. These international events are lim-
ited to the United Nations’ Kyoto negotiations. The European Union per-
forms as a representative of the European member states, rather than as a
supranational power to which the European countries are accountable. The
position of the European Union on Kyoto is considered self-evident. There
does not appear to be any internal disagreement about this position. Conse-
quently, the individual member states are ignored as individual players in the
British and Dutch public debates, whereas the EU appears as a natural back-
ground presence rather than as a dominant political power. It is the United
States who fulfils a key role in these storylines, since all international efforts
are directed at convincing the US of the importance of ratifying Kyoto. The
plots of the UN conferences appear to depend entirely on the choices of the
US. Repeatedly the US draws all the attention towards itself, since it remorse-
lessly puts its partners in their places by rejecting their proposals.

So far, the arguments highlighted above apply to the United Kingdom
as much as to the Netherlands. The majority of British environmental key
events concern domestic politics and the UN climate conferences are the
exclusive source of attention to international politics. Still, the British
agenda-building dynamics favour the media, as was expected. Then, where
does the difference between the two countries stem from? The answer may
lie in the fact that one of the UN climate conferences takes place in The
Hague, which enhances the representative function of the Dutch govern-
ment. On top of this, it is a Dutch Secretary of the Environment, Jan Pronk,
who chairs the conferences in The Hague and Bonn. These were of particular
domestic relevance to the Netherlands, since with Jan Pronk an authorita-
tive political source was available to the media at the national level. In contrast, the most elaborate reference to the EU during these events is found in the British press, which zooms in on European Commissioner Ripa di Meana’s threat to boycott the earth summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Hence, it is observed from the chronology of issue events that the Dutch national political level is more strongly represented in the Dutch news about UN climate conferences than the British national political level is represented in the British news. This may explain why the hypothesis that pillar-one issues, such as the environment, involve a strong media agenda (H4) is rejected in the Netherlands, but confirmed in the United Kingdom: in actual issue discussions the Dutch environment is not as European as was expected based on the formal level of EU authority. Furthermore, it should be noted that, although to a much lesser extent than in the Netherlands, domestic policy affairs are preponderant in the British chronology as well. This observation is also consistent with our agenda-building findings in chapter 7, which becomes clear when the British chronologies of the two European issues agriculture and the environment are compared. Note that the abundance of references to the European Union in the case of agriculture and the poor representation of the EU in the case of the environment seem nicely reflected in the British agenda-building models: whereas the coefficient of media influence on the parliamentary agricultural agenda is as high as $\beta = 0.23$, it drops to $\beta = 0.14$ when the media build the parliamentary agenda of the environment.

8.1.3 Revisiting the chronology of immigration
One could speculate on the explanation for the strong influence of media’s immigration agenda both in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands by drawing from the literature on routine news values within journalism (e.g., Altheide & Snow, 1979; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). It is very well possible that the issue of immigration triggers strong media dominance, because of the exceptional public sensitivity commonly associated with immigration and integration affairs. The media give the public what it desires, adopting a proactive attitude in search of news stories. Politicians, who are not in a position to ignore strong public sentiments, may find it very hard not to adjust to persistent journalists. If so, one is dealing with the interpretative style of journalism performing at its best, which explains that the media are calling the shots. Another explanation can be found in Vliegenthart’s Framing immigration and integration (2007). Rather than media’s eagerness to put the immigration issue on the agenda, Vliegenthart shows for the Netherlands that it is MPs keeping silent about the sensitive immigration issue that causes a dominant flow of influence from the media agenda to the parliamentary agenda. They only respond if they really must. Politicians are very aware and afraid that too much attention would needlessly play into the hands of right-extremist currents in society.
However, there is also good reason to believe that the strong media influence can be explained by initiatives among European nations to internationalise this policy area. As an issue that is already incorporated in EU’s pillar three, the many cross-border discussions that were highlighted in the British and Dutch chronologies of key events, may just have been enough to breach media’s reliance on familiar sources back home. The electoral success of the extreme-right French Front National made it onto the British and Dutch media agendas as well as onto the Dutch parliamentary agenda. The success of the extreme-right ‘Austrian Freedom Party’ (FPO) as well as of the Belgian Muslim party ‘Arab European League’ (AEL) reached the Dutch news and parliament. In addition, the border conflict between France and the United Kingdom concerning immigration through the Eurotunnel, prompting several bilateral meetings, claimed a prominent position in the British news as well as in the House of Commons in late August 2001. The intergovernmental European partners rather than the supranational EU itself primarily appear to enhance the European profile of the immigration issue.

Although the formalities regarding decision-making authority still lag behind, problems relating to immigration, integration or racism in one country are nevertheless treated as if of immediate consequence or threat to another, as if a common European interest were at stake. Sometimes, there is a European-wide consciousness that human rights in Europe are challenged by right extremism, at other times there is a consciousness that a failing immigration policy in one country quickly leads to higher flux of asylum seekers towards the neighbouring countries as a result of Europe’s internal open borders. In line with the knowledge that the European Union does not have full authority within the domain of immigration, the supranational EU institutions are rarely prominently visible in the accounts of the British and Dutch media and parliaments. In line with the intergovernmental decision-making procedures attached to pillar three, the governments of the European neighbours are highly visible. Hence, the key events described in chapter 6 suggest that immigration is a European issue after all.

**8.2 The moderating role of European visibility**

Remember that this chapter intends to reveal whether the reason for the inconsistent agenda-building results of immigration and the Dutch environment in chapter 7, is either that the hypothesis of the moderating role of Europe on national agenda-building truly makes no sense, or that the issue-specific design based on formal EU authority, did not correctly discriminate between high and low levels of European influence. Rather than the formal role of the nation state versus Europe in the decision-making process, Europe’s actual degree of involvement in current political discussions will be determined, irrespective of whether this interference is recognised as legitimate or not. The nature of the key-events of the Dutch environment and British and Dutch immigration just described indeed suggests that such
a functional definition of the Europeanness of issues is a more promising way forward to more accurately lay bare Europe’s influence on the national agenda-building process. Therefore, hypothesis 7 presents a modified version of hypothesis 4 regarding the moderating role of Europe.

H7 Higher visibility of EU actors or member-state actors in the national public debate increases the influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda.

Whereas the previous sections made a preliminary qualitative assessment of the real Europeanness of the issues by revisiting the chronology of key-events, this was done quantitatively in the analyses of the sections to come. How prominently are European actors present, both institutions and individuals, in the national news coverage of the four issues? This actor-centred approach consisted of an exploratory descriptive component (analysis 1) and a hypothesis-testing statistical component (analysis 2). First, in analysis 1, the issues were ranked according to the level of visibility of European actors in the news about the respective issues. This informed us about the extent to which the issues, which the media associate most with European actors, are the same as the ones involving strong media agenda-building power. This descriptive exploration of European impact was followed by the estimation of a regression-based multiplicative interaction model in analysis 2 (e.g., Brambor, Clark & Golder, 2006). This formally tested whether the hypothesis that the visibility of European actors in the news moderates media’s influence on the parliamentary agenda is a sustainable one.

8.2.1 Methodology

8.2.1.1 Data and operationalisation

The data used in analyses 1 and 2 of the moderating role of Europe hardly need extra introduction. Since the purpose of this study was to link up with and achieve a more profound understanding of the agenda-building results of the SEM models, the analysis was based on the same data. The selection of countries, issues, documents and the time frame was identical to the selection used in the agenda-building study (see section 4.1).

However, there was a difference in the operationalisation. This analysis of the moderating role of Europe in national agenda building would ultimately require an objective measure of the involvement of European actors in ‘the public debate’. First of all, there is not one public arena to look for and capture such a debate; it does not exist, except in the collection of diverse but interconnected forums. Second, even if there were such an indisputably accurate indicator of European involvement, unfortunately it was not at our disposal. Nevertheless, the design of this study offered two opportunities to tap into important parts of the public debate: the news media’s and parliament’s accounts of the issue events.
Rather than the debates in parliament, media’s perception of whether European or domestic institutions and politicians have been most important to the course of issue events was chosen as primary source of data. This provided a reliable indication of whether the media essentially consider an issue a home affair or whether European stakeholders substantially contribute to the discussions. Conversely, it was also an indication of whether parliament has reason to believe that an issue is considered a European or home affair. After all, the aim is to explain the extent to which the media are able to determine the parliamentary agenda, and not the reverse. The news offers a looking glass to the public sphere (Baisnée, 2001; Gerhards, 1993; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Meyer, 1999) and it is this looking glass, media’s own perception of the world, which determines media’s choices: whether they follow the agenda of the national parliament, or whether they are incited to look a bit further and use alternative sources to build their agenda. If one chooses the viewpoint of the MPs, one arrives at a similar conclusion. When do the MPs decide to adapt their agenda to the stories in the news? Common sense suggests that they would do so when they are under the impression that the media can provide them with some useful information for their political activities. From this perspective, news content serves as the guideline as well. Any lingering question as to whether media’s interpretation of real-world events is partisan or unbiased, and whether the lack of extra-media data therefore poses methodological problems (Rosengren, 1979; Scholten, 1982), is an irrelevant one. Note that the European visibility in the parliamentary debates was also included in the regression model, but as an additional independent variable potentially explaining the parliamentary agenda, rather than as a variable moderating the effect of the media agenda (see section 8.2.1.3).

Table 8.1: Number of keywords per category of political actors per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>National visibility</th>
<th>European visibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National actors</td>
<td>EU actors (supranational visibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The British, Dutch and French instruments of automated content analysis, containing keywords for institutions and individual politicians at the national, EU and member-state level, are available from the author upon request. The lengthy dimensions of these wordlists with keywords and disambiguation rules prevented the author from publishing them in this book.
The principles of the automated content analysis underlying the analyses in this work have been outlined in detail in section 4.2. The present analyses relied on the same top-down methodology, but instead of employing the wordlists of keywords that represent the four issues, it used wordlists of keywords representing groups of actors. In a similar manner, rules for disambiguation were applied to the individual keywords. In order to reconstruct the degree to which Europe is represented in the four issue domains, three categories of actors were traced in the news: national actors, EU actors and European member states. Table 8.1 presents the total number of keywords included in the research instrument to indicate each of these three actor categories. Examples of keywords and disambiguation rules per country in the research instrument can be found in tables A.4 to A.6 in appendix A.

We arrived at these three groups of actors by making a first distinction between actors that belong to the national domain and actors that belong to the European domain. The amount of attention in the news enjoyed by national institutions and politicians, as well as the amount of attention enjoyed by European institutions and politicians was measured for each issue. If, for example, more space is devoted to EU institutions and EU officials in the news coverage of the environment than in the coverage of immigration, it can be concluded that the European visibility in environmental news is stronger than that of immigration. Hence, this would imply that the actual involvement of Europe is stronger in the case of the environment than in the case of immigration. Such an observation would be a reinforcement of this study’s classification based on formal EU decision-making competence, since the environment is incorporated in pillar one and immigration is incorporated in pillar three.

A second distinction was made between Europe as represented by the European Union and Europe as represented by European member states, hence between the representatives of the supranational European level and the representatives of the intergovernmental European level. It has been explained at length in chapter 3 why Europe is expected to enhance media control over the parliamentary agenda, namely because the national political elite, notably MPs, lose control over their political environment as soon as other authoritative actors enter the scene, who do not belong to the familiar national environment (e.g., Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Molotch & Lester, 1974; Soroka, 2003; Wood & Peake, 1998). Now, if the European Commission, a supranational EU actor, turns out to have been of no importance within a certain issue domain, it does not mean that the issue therefore must have been confined to the familiar routines of national politics. Individual member states may have a similar routine-breaking effect. Negotiations between the chancellor of Germany and the prime minister of the Netherlands may demand such diplomatic efforts of the Dutch political elite that its room for manoeuvre is seriously compromised and subsequently its agenda-building power vis-à-vis the media. Or, these contacts between
member states may strongly appeal to the media who then put all available means to use and steal a march on MPs (see section 3.5). This category of member states comprised references to the fifteen member states prior to the enlargement in 2004, as well as to the consecutive heads of state during the period of research.

8.2.1.2 Ranking issues according to European visibility

The objective of the first analysis in this section on the moderating role of European visibility was to compare the issues with respect to the level of European and national visibility in news coverage about these issues. The issues were ranked according to scores for proportional actor visibility in issue-specific news. These scores represented the sum of hits of a specific group of actors per issue, divided by the sum of hits of all three categories of actors per issue (multiplied by one hundred). Thus, the scores presented the visibility of one group of actors as a percentage of the visibility of all groups of actors. Using proportional scores safeguarded the comparability of actor visibility across issues, which was the sole purpose of this part of the study. It corrected for the fact that the newspaper articles were not selected for their relevance to specific actors, but for their issue relevance, as agenda building is about issues rather than actors (see section 4.2.1.1). Therefore, increased attention for an issue due to an incidental key event would automatically increase the probability of increased involvement of actors, whether European, national or otherwise. This methodological artefact is obviated if actor visibility is a share of the visibility of other actors of interest, rather than an absolute value.

The comparison of the issues resulted in three rank orders of the four issues per country, indicating which of the issues gives rise to most, less and least visibility of EU actors (supranational dimension of the issue), European member-state actors (intergovernmental dimension), and national actors (national dimension) respectively. This third rank order of national visibility will be presented, because the strength of an issue’s national dimension (as compared with other issues) is also informative about the relative strength of the European dimension. The assumption behind hypothesis 7 implies that the media agenda is likely to be stronger in the case of issues with only high visibility of European actors, than in the case of issues with high visibility of both European and national actors. It will further become clear whether the rank order of issues according to European and national visibility is roughly consistent across countries.

2 The presented scores were based on the raw number of keyword hits per article, rather than the square roots of the scores, which was used in some analyses in this study. Hits in titles and leaders of articles were counted as being twice as important as hits in the rest of the article.
The extent to which the rank order of issues coincides with the rank order of media power of the issue-specific SEM models (or in the French case, of the Granger causality tests) may be interpreted as a preliminary indication of the extent to which media power is contingent upon the European visibility associated with an issue (H7).

8.2.1.3 Interaction models with European visibility

Analysis 2 statistically tested the hypothesis of the moderating role of European visibility in the national agenda-building process (H7), by means of ordinary least squares regression. The results of the regression analysis will be visualised in a graph per country, which is intended to show the extent to which the influence of the national media agenda on the national parliamentary agenda actually increases with the level of European visibility in the news. A multiplicative interaction model was constructed to establish whether any association between strong media agenda-building power and European events as suggested by the issues’ chronologies, is merely a coincidence, or whether the newsworthiness of European actors actually enhances media’s control over the national parliamentary agenda.

The main reason why the present test of European influence was performed by means of regression analysis rather than structural equation modelling is that SEM models have a hard time handling interaction variables (e.g., Jaccard & Wan, 1996; Kline & Dunn, 2000). Any attempt to include such a variable would result in a model that is theoretically difficult to interpret. Moreover, due to complex adjustments to the model, the possibility to compare these new SEM models with the previous agenda-building models, which only estimated main effects, would be lost anyway. Additionally, the focus of analysis 1 was on the question whether an interaction effect of the media agenda and European actors in the news exists, rather than on a precise estimation of the mutual flows of influence between the agendas. This was a one-sided question for which the advantage of SEM models, i.e. their ability to simultaneously estimate reciprocal effects, was no longer relevant. Regression analysis is the common way of testing interaction effects.

Admittedly, regression analysis carries the risk of overestimating the influence of an independent variable. Whenever the paths of influence between an independent and a dependent variable are in fact reciprocal, which is obviously not modelled in regressions, a share of the influence of the dependent variable on the independent variable is falsely attributed to the independent variable. However, at present it is important to know whether the underlying pressures on the parliamentary agenda result from an interaction effect between the media agenda and the visibility of European actors, rather than from media’s issue agenda alone: if so, Europe matters in the context of agenda building by reinforcing media dominance. The moderating role of Europe was the primary objective here; the absolute effects were of secondary importance.
Besides the just-mentioned inaccuracy of the regression coefficients as a result of their neglect of reciprocity, one should be aware of another statistical argument why not to take the regression coefficients at face value. As soon as an interaction term enters the regression equation, the regression coefficients of the constitutive variables should no longer be interpreted as the unconditional main effects of those variables as in linear-additive models. The effects of both constitutive variables are made to depend on the other variable and therefore do not represent the average effect on the dependent variable of the separate independent variables, as is aptly explained in a clear-cut and comprehensive outline of interaction models by Brambor, Clark and Golder (2006).

In constructing the interaction models, the methodological advise of Brambor et al. (2006) to include all variables constituting the interaction term, was taken to heart. First of all, the interaction term was constructed by multiplying the two constitutive variables: the media agenda and the visibility of European actors in the news. The media agenda and the visibility of European actors in the news were both independently included in the equation. If one expects parliament to react to the presence of European actors in issue domains, and there are two available indicators of European prominence, then the effect of both measures should be taken into account. Therefore, the visibility of European actors in parliamentary debates was introduced as an additional independent variable.

Since the structural equation models indicated that the parliamentary agenda endures influence from the media agenda within one and the same month (t = 0), the effects of the media agenda, of the news visibility and parliamentary visibility of European actors and of the interaction term were also estimated at t = 0. The SEM models further indicated a strong autoregressive influence from the parliamentary agenda one year earlier, which completed the list of independent variables. The interaction model can be expressed in the following regression equation:

\[
\text{parliamentary agenda (t)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{parliamentary agenda (t-12)} + \beta_2 \text{European visibility in debate (t)} + \beta_3 \text{media agenda (t)} + \beta_4 \text{European visibility in news (t)} + \beta_5 \text{media agenda (t) x European visibility in news (t)} + \epsilon
\]
The unstandardised coefficients of the interaction models were used as input for the graphs that visualise the dynamics between European visibility and the media agenda in each country. For different levels of issue attention on the media agenda (the average media attention \( M \) plus and minus 2 standard deviations (SD) of media attention), the level of issue attention on the parliamentary agenda was estimated at different levels of European visibility in the news (average European visibility minus 1 SD, average European visibility, average European visibility plus 1 and average European visibility plus 2 SD). The graphs will thus show several regression lines of media’s effect on the parliamentary agenda, each representing a different level of European visibility.

In visual demonstrations of interaction effects, it is customary to fix the additional independent variables that do not contribute to the interaction effect at their mean level. This applies to ‘parliamentary agenda (t-12)’. This would also have applied to ‘European visibility in debate (t)’, would it not have been reasonable to assume that the visibility of European actors in parliament is related to the amount of visibility of European actors in the news. The level of ‘European visibility in debate (t)’ was therefore not fixed, but made to vary with the level of ‘European visibility in news (t)’ according to their correlation coefficient as actually retrieved from the data set \( r_{UK} = 0.38; r_{NL} = 0.40; r_{FR} = 0.23 \). The differences between the slopes of the regression lines indicate the interaction effect. The differences in the intercepts of the lines point to the independent effect of the visibility of European actors, both in the news and in the debates.

8.2.2 Results

Before turning to the results of the hypothesis tests, some interesting differences are worth noting between the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France, when the amount of visibility of European actors in the media is compared with the level of visibility of national actors. The same goes for the change in the proportional visibility of European versus national actors in the news over time. This overall level of proportional visibility is a

---

3 As in the SEM models, monthly time series were employed. Recollect that the variables were made up of the square root of the sum of keyword hits per month. This time it concerned both issue hits in the case of agendas and actor hits in the case of European visibility. Again a weight of two was attached to hits in the title or leader of an article.

4 The value of ‘European visibility in debate (t)’ (either the average value or the average value plus or minus one or two standard deviations of ‘European visibility in debate (t)’, depending which level of ‘European visibility in news (t)’ was calculated), was first multiplied with the unstandardised coefficient of ‘European visibility in debate (t)’. Subsequently, this value was multiplied with the correlation coefficient of ‘European visibility in debate (t)’ and ‘European visibility in news (t)’.
rough indication of the extent to which European actors succeed in competing with national actors for media attention, and thus of the extent to which European actors actually play a role of importance in the national public arena. Moreover, the change herein tells us whether their importance as perceived by the media increases along with the formal level of EU authority. A brief description of both the level of and the change in actor visibility now follows (see figure 8.1). Regarding the first point about the level of proportional visibility, the Netherlands stands out most, whereas a considerable level of similarity can be observed between the United Kingdom and France. Regarding the second point about change in visibility, it is France that differs from the other two countries.

National actors are indisputably at the centre of news coverage in all three countries. The visibility of national actors in the UK amounts to an average of around 56% over the periods; in the Netherlands it even amounts to an average of around 79%, and in France the average is a modest 50%. This high visibility of national actors in the Netherlands leaves little room in Dutch newspapers for EU or other European actors, and indeed much less than in the UK or France.

Figure 8.1: Visibility of national, EU and member-state actors in the news per country over time (%)

Note. The total visibility of the three actors together per period per country was set at 100%. The percentages indicating proportional visibility were based on the absolute number of weighted actor keyword hits. In order to achieve the highest level of comparability of the periods across countries, the most recent period was equal for all countries (similar to the test of agenda convergence, see table 4.10). The scores were based on the absolute number of weighted actor keyword hits.
Compared with these two countries, where the visibility in the news is roughly equally divided between domestic actors and both categories of European actors, the Dutch press pays well over 20 percent points more attention to domestic actors at the expense of European actors. This is consistent with the findings of both De Vreese (2003) and Pfetsch (2005) that there is little attention for European integration in Dutch TV coverage and in the Dutch newspapers respectively, compared with other European countries (see chapter 6). The self-image of the Dutch as a cosmopolitan nation is clearly contradicted. Overall, the member-state actors consistently receive slightly more attention in the British, Dutch, and French press than politicians and institutions from the European Union. The minor differences between the UK and France concern the British preference for domestic actors, where the French press favours coverage of member-state actors. Note that these percentages say nothing about the absolute levels of attention for the three groups of actors. It may well be, although unlikely, that the absolute amount of Dutch news attention to European actors exceeds the level of attention in French or British news. However, every mention of a EU commissioner in the Dutch press is counterweighted by much more mentions of a Dutch minister than is the case in either the British or French press.

The trends in figure 8.1 are by no means uplifting news for the press officers in Brussels, whose job it is to communicate Europe to the European citizens. European decision-making authority has intensified and expanded, but judging from figure 8.1, the proportional visibility of Europe has not. On the contrary, the trends in the UK and the Netherlands move in the direction of increased visibility of national actors at the expense of European actors. In the UK, the visibility of European actors has decreased from 49% to 40%, for which the declining visibility of EU actors is especially responsible (23% to 17%). In the Netherlands, with a shift from 23% to 20% the trend is much less outspoken, which is not surprising considering the low level of visibility that EU and member-state actors already had to share. The slight decrease of European visibility in Dutch news is more or less equally divided between EU and member-state actors (resp. 10% to 9% and 13% to 11%). Only in French news have European actors maintained their proportional level of visibility in the face of national actors (50% to 51%). One should be aware that the period of research differs across the countries. The strongest decline in the UK is based on the longest historical period and caused by the large difference in visibility between the periods 1 and 3. The trend between the most recent periods is practically stable in all countries. Apparently, the damage that European visibility has suffered, was done between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s, despite the increase in European decision-making power in the same period as a result of the Treaty of Maastricht.

This is telling information, considering the fact that the third hypothesis of this study predicted an increasingly powerful media agenda as a result of technological developments, commercialisation, voter dealignment, and
also European integration. Since it is presently observed that European visibility, and thus European importance as perceived by the media, does not correspond to the true levels of EU authority, there is reason to believe that the increase in media power observed in the UK and the Netherlands has not been caused by Europe’s increased decision-making authority, but rather by the former three societal developments. Several researchers of European communication processes suggest that it is in the run-up and follow-up of key events such as EU summits that the visibility of Europe in national news increases (Adam, 2007; De Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003a; Trenz, 2004). Perhaps the EU key events from the mid-1990s onwards have not been able to attract the same level of interest as the events surrounding the historical Maastricht Treaty. This is additional support for the idea put forward in this chapter, that one should look for European impact in Europe’s true contribution to issue debates, measured as visibility, and let go of Europe’s formal level of decision-making power, which underlay the research design in part one of this book.

We will now move on to the results of analysis 1, which should answer the question as to how the visibility of national versus European actors is distributed across the four issues, and whether this in line with the SEM results of a weaker or stronger media agenda.

8.2.2.1 Rank orders according to European visibility

The exploratory analysis 1 will present a preliminary answer to hypothesis 7, which states that higher visibility causes a stronger flow of influence from the media agenda to the parliamentary agenda. The answer is affirmative if European actors, whether EU actors or member states, are relatively more visible in news about those issues that trigger a dominant media agenda than in news about issues that trigger a dominant parliamentary agenda. In more concrete terms, of particular interest is whether news about British and Dutch immigration involves higher visibility of European actors (or lower visibility of domestic actors) than news about the British and especially the Dutch environment. The reason for this particular interest is the fact that these two issues were responsible for the unexpected SEM results in chapter 7, i.e. an unexpectedly strong and unexpectedly weak media agenda respectively.

A first general observation, which can be derived from table 8.2, concerns the fact that the visibility of national actors consistently turns out higher than the visibility of both groups of European actors for all four issues. This should not come as a surprise, since the European Union is far from a federal body capable of raising the same amount of interest as the nation state. A second general observation to be made for all countries in table 8.2, is the fact that European member states are more visible for all

---

5 It has been checked that these overall scores per issue are not distorted by an incidental visibility peak or dip at one moment in time.
issues, except for agriculture. This implies that the intergovernmental European dimension of issues is generally emphasised more in the news than the supranational European dimension. Only in the case of agriculture, a pillar-one issue, the reverse is true.

What does table 8.2 say about the distribution of European and national visibility across the issues? Starting with the visibility of EU actors in the UK, the highest (proportional) level is found in news about agriculture (rank 1). British environmental news, also a pillar-one issue, involves the second highest level of EU actors (rank 2). British immigration, the pillar-three issue, gives rise to the second lowest level of EU visibility (rank 3). Finally, British news about the domestic issue drugs manifests the lowest level of visibility of EU actors (rank 4). This rank order according to the level of supranational visibility is not only observed for the British issues, but is identical in the Netherlands and in France.

Table 8.2: Rank orders of issues according to the proportional visibility of EU actors, member states and national actors in the news per country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visibility</th>
<th>Agriculture (%)</th>
<th>Environment (%)</th>
<th>Drugs (%)</th>
<th>Immigration (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UK</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU actors (supranational visibility)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member states (intergovernmental visibility)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National actors (national visibility)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total visibility)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU actors (supranational visibility)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member states (intergovernmental visibility)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National actors (national visibility)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total visibility)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU actors (supranational visibility)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member states (intergovernmental visibility)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National actors (national visibility)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Total visibility)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The total visibility of the three actors together per issue per country was set at 100%. The percentages indicating proportional visibility are based on the absolute number of weighted actor keyword hits.
Interestingly, the rank order of supranational visibility is entirely in line with the three-pillar classification of issues, and consequently, with the authority of the supranational European Union. So far, the visibility scores provide no additional information about the influence of Europe on national agenda building, to what was already expected based on the initial pillar-based classification of issues.

Moving on to the second group of actors that constitute European visibility: the member states, the visibility distribution varies across countries. In the UK, immigration can be found on top of the list: member states are most visible in immigration news (rank 1). Here, immigration, a pillar-three issue, beats the pillar-one issue agriculture, which shows the second highest level of member-state visibility (rank 2). Moreover, British immigration by and large beats the other pillar-one issue environment, which demonstrates the lowest level of member-state visibility of all issues (rank 4). British news on the national issue drugs (rank 3) contains higher levels of member-state visibility than news about the environment. In the Netherlands, it is in agricultural news that member states are most visible (rank 1). Dutch immigration news comes second (rank 2) and thus again involves higher member-state visibility than the environment (rank 3). Member states are least visible in Dutch news about drugs (rank 4). Finally, in France, similar to the UK, the highest visibility levels of member states are found in immigration news (rank 1). News about agriculture and news about the environment are associated with equal levels of member-state visibility (ranks 3 and 3). The visibility of member states is lower than that of immigration and higher than that of drugs. Overall, it is regarding the visibility of member states – intergovernmental European visibility – that European visibility diverges from the pillar-based classification of issues. As far as intergovernmental visibility is concerned, immigration presents itself as the most European issue in the news (ranks 1 or 2), in contrast to the environment, which is only moderately European (ranks 3 or 4). The visibility of member states in news about agriculture and drugs is as could be expected of these respective unambiguously EU and unambiguously domestic issues.

The third and last type of visibility that needs to be discussed is the visibility of national actors. The issues that received an identical rank in all three countries will be discussed simultaneously. In line with common sense, British, Dutch and French news about the national issue drugs is associated with the highest visibility level of national actors (rank 1). Equally understandable is the visibility score of national actors in news about the pillar-one issue agriculture. National actors are least visible in this pillar-one issue (rank 4). Regarding the final two issues, immigration and the environment, the British and Dutch rank orders differ from the French rank order. Both in the UK and in the Netherlands, national actors are more visible in news about the environment (rank 2) than in news about immigration (rank 3). In France, the reverse is true: immigration news involves a higher level
of national visibility (rank 2) than environmental news (rank 3). Hence, national actors play a more prominent role in the public debate of pillar-one issue environment than the public debate of pillar-three issue immigration in two of the three countries.

Interpreting the aforementioned results, it may first by noted that all data sources and analyses that have been consulted throughout this study, unambiguously point in the same direction for all countries: agriculture and drugs are issues at different ends of the ‘Europeanness scale’, both with regard to the visibility of European actors (H7) and with regard to the formal three-pillar classification of EU authority (H4). The SEM models of agriculture and drugs yielded results in support of H4, i.e. that a pillar-one issue involves a powerful media agenda and a domestic issue involves a powerful parliamentary agenda. Therefore, these two issues did not give rise to uncertainties and additional questions for the present chapter to resolve in the first place. The present exploration of actor visibility merely confirms the assumption throughout part one that agriculture is indeed a European – notably supranational – issue, and that drugs is a national issue.

The unexpected findings in the SEM models concerned the issues environment and immigration, more specifically in the UK and the Netherlands. European issues were expected to involve a more powerful media agenda than national issues, but the SEM models showed a stronger media agenda in the case of pillar-three issue immigration than in the case of pillar-one issue environment. It can be concluded from the present analysis that the visibility of EU actors, or supranational visibility, does not help explain these unexpected results, since the rank order is identical to the initial pillar-based classification. Nevertheless, an explanation is offered if one combines the rank orders of member-state visibility, or intergovernmental visibility, and national visibility. EU actors may merely be moderately visible in immigration news, but member states are exceptionally visible. In contrast, EU actors are fairly visible in environmental news, but this supranational visibility is no match for the other pillar-one issue agriculture. At the same time, member states are much less visible in environmental news than in immigration news, whereas national actors are more visible. According to actor visibility, immigration is a more intergovernmental European issue than initially assumed, and the environment is a less European and more national issue than initially assumed.

In sum, analysis 1 of actor visibility in the news suggests that stronger media agenda-building power goes hand in hand with a greater importance of European actors as perceived by the media, both of supranational EU and intergovernmental member-state actors. It suggests that the European dimension of issues should not be defined in terms of formal decision-making competence according to the three-pillar structure of the European Union, but in functional terms of actual meddling of European actors in the national public debate, because the former carries a risk of underestimating
the role of intergovernmental relations between member states. Analysis 1 has yielded a preliminary indication that European visibility indeed opens the agenda-building dynamics to media power.

### 8.2.2.2 The interaction effect of European visibility

Both the qualitative issue chronologies, revisited in section 8.1, and the visibility of European actors in the news, in the previous section, suggested that it is likely that European visibility encourages MPs to follow the media agenda. Regression analysis has formally put the hypothesis to the test whether parliament is more likely to attune its agenda to the agenda of the media, the more media report about European actors (H7). Table 8.3 presents the regression coefficients of the interaction model in the three countries. Table 8.3 can be consulted for the level of significance of the interaction effects.

#### Table 8.3: Interaction effect of the media agenda and European visibility in the news on the parliamentary agenda per country (regression analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliamentary agenda (t-12)</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European visibility in debate (t)</td>
<td>0.248</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media agenda (t)</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European visibility in news (t)</td>
<td>-0.239</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>-0.24***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media agenda (t) x European visibility in news (t)</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.048***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Individual coefficients in models with interaction terms should no longer be interpreted as main effects (see section 8.2.1.3). This table is primarily intended to identify the significant interaction effects. N_UK = 680, N_NL = 348, N_FR = 204 (pooled analysis of months and issues); *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01 (two-tailed), †p < 0.1 (one-tailed); R² = 0.69, R² = 0.39, R² = 0.73.

The table presents significance levels of two-tailed tests. Two-tailed tests reveal that the effect of the interaction term ‘media agenda (t) x European visibility in news (t)’ on the parliamentary agenda is significant in the United Kingdom (p < 0.01) and manifests a tendency in France (p < 0.1). However, hypothesis 7 predicts a positive effect of European visibility on media power, not just any effect. Therefore, a one-tailed significance test is acceptable. As a result, both the British (p < 0.01) and French interaction effects (p < 0.05) are significant and the Dutch interaction effect represents a tendency (p < 0.1). The lower levels of significance of the Dutch and French...
The democratic deficit closer to home

interaction effects compared with the British effect are even more acceptable if one takes into account that the former are based on a smaller number of observations ($N_{UK} = 680, N_{NL} = 348, N_{FR} = 204$). As has been mentioned earlier, the value of coefficients of variables in an interaction term should not be taken at face value. Neither should the negative sign of these coefficients. The results of the British, Dutch and French interaction models definitely confirm hypothesis 7.

Because the individual coefficients in table 8.3 are not instructive about the pattern of the interaction effects, figures are presented to visually inspect the particularities of the interaction effects. Figures 8.2 to 8.4 present for the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France respectively, how European visibility in the news moderates the effect of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda, based on the unstandardised regression coefficients of table 8.3.

Figure 8.2: Influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda for different levels of European visibility in the United Kingdom (in news about all issues)

First, the British interaction effect will be discussed. Figure 8.2 shows that, under normal circumstances, the stories in the media are worthy of political attention in the eyes of the British MPs. Even at levels of European visibility lower than the average level, MPs adapt their agenda to the agenda of the media. The higher the level of European visibility, the more MPs follow the media agenda. In circumstances of unusually low European visibility (less than 1 SD below average), this dependence of parliament on the media appears to vanish. These results make sense in the light of the SEM results in chapter 7. Remember that the flows of influence in the British
SEM models of agenda building represent media dominance in three out of four issues. The British parliament readily follows the media agenda of agriculture, which analysis 1 has shown to be associated with strong supranational and intergovernmental visibility. It also readily follows the media agenda of immigration, with high intergovernmental visibility. But also the environment, with a reasonable level of supranational and merely a moderate level of intergovernmental visibility, causes parliament to follow. In the rare event that the media do not emerge as issue pioneer, neither does parliament. This is the case with drugs, which is associated with extremely low levels of European visibility.

The Dutch parliament also seems more attracted to the media agenda, the more Europe is visible in the news. Still, although figure 8.3 reveals interaction dynamics that move the Dutch agenda-building process in the same direction as in Britain, the starting position of parliament’s reliance on the media is an entirely different one.

Figure 8.3: Influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda for different levels of European visibility in the Netherlands (in news about all issues)

At a low and moderate level of European visibility, the Dutch MPs are very resistant to the media agenda. Only when Europe starts taking up a significant part of news coverage – more than 1 SD above the average level of visibility – parliament apparently decides that it can no longer ignore the media agenda. Note, however, that the interaction effect is only significant at the 10% level (see table 8.3), and that figure 8.3 must therefore be interpreted as an interaction tendency rather than an interaction effect. This tendency in the Dutch interaction model is nevertheless in agreement with the agenda-building models of chapter 7. Only issues with high levels of European visibil-
ity invite the media to dominate the agenda-building process. Judging from the Dutch SEM models, these issues should be agriculture and immigration. Indeed, the results of analysis 1 showed the highest supranational and/or intergovernmental visibility and the lowest national visibility in news about these two issues. Whereas the moderate level of European involvement in the environmental policy domain, combined with the high visibility of national actors, has been sufficient to trigger a certain level of media dominance ($\beta_{\text{media}} = 0.14$) in the British SEM models, this issue singles out the Dutch parliament as the dominant agenda of the two ($\beta_{\text{parl}} = 0.35$).

In sum, the negative response of the Dutch parliament to the media agenda for all but high levels of European visibility according to interaction figure 8.3, corresponds to parliamentary dominance in the SEM models. Under normal circumstances the Dutch media turn to parliament for their daily information, as is illustrated by the SEM models of both drugs and the environment. Only under circumstances of exceptional European visibility in the news, the Dutch parliament has recourse to media’s knowledge supply, as though it takes a bit of European name-dropping to persuade the MPs of the seriousness of a news item. Thus, Dutch MPs normally do not follow the media agenda, but go about their own business, except when the media report about European actors.

Figure 8.4 indicates that interesting dynamics between the French media agenda and the French parliamentary agenda are taking place, notwithstanding the lack of a short-term relationship between the agendas in the SEM models. As in the other two countries, a stronger visibility of Europe in the news positively affects media’s influence on the parliamentary agenda. According to figure 8.4 parliament’s receptiveness to issues in the media is even slightly more deep-rooted than that of the British MPs. Irrespective of the European visibility in news coverage – even at levels lower than 1 SD below the average level of visibility – the French parliament is inclined to follow the media agenda. Similar to Britain and the Netherlands, parliament increasingly submits itself to the judgement of journalists regarding the newsworthiness of issues, the more the media mention the involvement of European actors.

Returning to the speculations about the French parliament’s resistance to the media agenda, which were formulated in section 8.1.1, the present results of analysis 2 reject the suggestion that accommodating the scoop-digging journalist might clash with the political pride of the French MP. Rather, it appears from figure 8.4 as though MPs are willing to turn to the press as a source of political information, if they are convinced that the press has ‘something valuable’ on offer and if their schedule allows for it.
In contrast to the Dutch interaction model, the French model, and to a lesser extent also to the British model, shows that valuable news is not necessarily but preferably about Europe. An opposite reasoning for the Netherlands arises from figure 8.3. Here, valuable news appears to be necessarily about Europe. Europe may just be the kind of subject regarding which MPs – very likely in contrast to the national executive – still have a hard time addressing appropriate channels of information, due to a lack of sufficient institutionalisation of European politics within the national parliamentary structures (e.g., Boerboom, 2004). At the same time, it is also the kind of subject regarding which public opinion increasingly indicates it wants political accountability and reassurance. Dutch politicians may be watchful of news coverage only in an area that they perceive of as both difficult and sensitive, i.e. Europe.

8.2.3 Concluding remark
A short remark suffices to wrap up this chapter: Europe moderates national agenda building. The visibility of European actors increases the influence of the national media agenda on the national parliamentary agenda; hypothesis 7 is confirmed. The SEM results of chapter 7 may initially have created the impression that it is the media in and of themselves to which MPs respond. However, the additional results in this chapter suggest that MPs rather use the media as a proxy for European political activity. Whereas Europe performs as an additional incentive for the British parliament, and probably also for the French parliament, to take notice of what goes on in the press, it performs as a prerequisite for the Dutch MPs to surrender to media preferences.
Chapter Nine  The moderating role of conflict

The findings reported in the previous chapters are a considerable contribution to scholarly knowledge on the power play between media and politics in a European context. Europe has been shown to enhance the influence of the media agenda over the parliamentary agenda. The research design has allowed European impact on the parliament-media power play to be demonstrated in two ways: through issue-specific agenda-building models (chapter 7) and through the effect of the visibility of European actors in the news on media power (chapter 8). The question of why Europe would contribute to a powerful media agenda is still in need of an answer, however. Agenda-building studies are not designed to reveal the underlying mechanisms empowering either one or the other. In this chapter an attempt is made to determine whether one of the principal determinants for media power mentioned in the field of political communication studies, i.e. political conflict, accounts for this study’s results as well. Conflict is suggested to explain that media influence on the parliamentary agenda is stronger in the case of European issues than in the case of domestic issues.

As there is no body of literature that specifically targets the current question about the effect of conflict on agenda building, this chapter is forced to build a bridge between several strands of literature addressing the separate components of this relationship. First, literature is discussed that argues the influence of the media agenda on politics to increase with unanticipated events, due to the breakdown of routine politics (policy uncertainty). Conflicts are argued to be a specific type of non-routine events creating policy uncertainty. (section 9.1). Second, literature in the tradition of the indexing hypothesis is discussed, which relates conflicts to the political influence of opinions in the media (section 9.2.1). Third, by linking these two strands of research it is elaborated why and how conflicts might impact agenda building (section 9.2.2). Finally, by briefly recapitulating the theoretical arguments in section 3.5 as to why Europe was expected to favour the media agenda over the parliamentary agenda, in which policy uncertainty was the common denominator, conflicts are linked to the European political arena (section 9.2.3).

Running ahead of the theoretical conclusions, the media agenda is on the one hand argued to profit from the political uncertainty created by conflicts; on the other hand conflicts are expected to be especially prominent in the European political arena. Conflicts create a window of opportunity for media to choose among alternative news sources. If European actors are part of the conflict, the media have the choice to ignore the national news sources, at the expense of the parliamentary agenda.
9.1 Agenda building as a contingent process

Studies that downplay the influence of the media agenda on the political agenda focus on fairly obtrusive or domestic political events and topics, which do not need coverage in the media to get noticed by citizens and the average political representative, for example ‘the economy’ (Kleinnijenhuis & Rietberg, 1995; Light, 1982), ‘traffic safety’ (Walker, 1977), or ‘civil rights’ (Flemming et al., 1999). Also the ones that focus on election times find limited media impact (e.g., Brandenburg, 2002; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003), due to the highly structured, proactive and provocative campaign adverts aimed at and overrunning the media, as well as to the inherent news value that journalists assign to elections. Scholars agree that the influence of the media agenda on the political agenda is contingent upon the type of issue studied (e.g., Baumgartner et al., 1997; Lang and Lang, 1981; Soroka, 2002; Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006; Yanovitzky, 2002), amongst other more methodological choices in the research design.

Many issue-attributes opening up the agenda-building process to media dominance involve political elites who have lost grip on what is happening and who subsequently lose grip on their neatly organised (non-) publicity strategies. In order to predict what type of issues weaken or strengthen the political elite when faced with publicity, it is helpful to consult the ‘typology of public events’, which Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester created as early as 1974. Without any conscious reference to the agenda-building tradition on their part, potential conditions determining the direction of agenda building are nicely fitted in this model. They indicate two dimensions to distinguish four types of public events, or rather events that made the news. The first dimension distinguishes between intentional and unintentional activity. The second one deals with the question whether the one who acted (effector), who is assumed to have political authority, is identical to the person or group of persons who made it public (informer).

Table 9.1: Molotch and Lester’s event classificatory scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intentional happening</th>
<th>Unintentional happening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoted by effector</td>
<td>routine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>serendipity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted by informer</td>
<td>scandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accident</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usually political authorities intentionally act and inform the public about their excellent performance. Routine politics makes for routine (news) events, news in the interest of public authorities. The exact opposite of the routine event is the accident. These events are unintentional and preferably covered up by the effectors. Publicity is sought by challengers. Closely related are scandals, which result from intentional but potentially harm-
ful behaviour on the part of authorities, destined for secrecy, but revealed by others. The last group of events is classified as serendipity. The occurrence is accidental, but the consequences are beneficial to the effectors, who therefore turn it into a public event. Examples are unforeseen beneficial side effects of a policy measure, but also private family matters that make politicians look human and increase their popularity.

Translated in terms of agenda building, the two cells at the bottom of Molotch and Lester’s scheme comprise all circumstances in which the media have a window to influence the policy agenda, playing the role of the informer. According to them it is also “the suddenness of the accident and its unanticipated nature” (1974, p. 109), as well as the fact that “the event’s realization typically comes as a surprise to the original actors” (p. 110), which creates this window of opportunity for third parties. Sudden event-driven issues, in particular crises, make it impossible for politicians to be prepared, to have an answer that has been well thought through (Bennett, 1997; Sumpter & Braddock, 2002). Unprepared sources make for reluctant sources, while others rise to the occasion and find a willing ear in newsmakers (Wolfsfeld, 1997). Similar to politicians without a plan in case of crises, are politicians whose actual performance is being compared with past promises and public expectations. Whenever the conclusion is negative or whenever policy makers display weakness, journalists’ opportunities to initiate their own agendas, or to use alternative political sources to do this for them, increase (Cook, 1998; Robinson, 2001).

9.2 Conflict

Molotch and Lester described when and by whom events are likely to be made public, and when such publicity would weaken or strengthen a political actor. Whereas a conflict is a common event in politics that easily fits the mechanisms described by Molotch and Lester, it stands out by its absence in their event classificatory scheme. Although not explicitly mentioned by Molotch and Lester, we will argue that the type of conflicts that we are presently interested in, i.e. involuntary conflicts, may be incorporated as a variant of the scandals and accidents in the two bottom cells of the event classificatory scheme.

As the term ‘involuntary conflicts’ already implies, not all conflicts are harmful to the influence of the political actors involved. The central question in Molotch and Lester’s argument is when a window of opportunity for alternative (news) sources is created. This suggests that the media have more influence when the position of a group of actors, such as parliament, as a newsworthy source is challenged, by the media themselves or by other political actors. This position certainly is not challenged when a (voluntary) conflict is used for political profiling. In such instances, especially common during election times (see section 2.5), politicians use conflicts to reach the media (routine cell of the event classificatory scheme). The concept ‘instru-
mental actualisation’ by Kepplinger, Brosius and Staab (1991) stresses that mediated conflicts often have a voluntary character. Events relating to the conflict are selectively highlighted (instrumentally) by journalists to favour one viewpoint over the other. According to the authors, journalists use instrumental actualisation to promote their personal opinions. The goal of the protagonists is to see as much of such favourable events reflected in the news as possible. They thereto actively suggest such events to journalists. The media have no reason not to follow the agenda of those actors who create conflict (the effectors).

When publicity is sought by the opposition, or outsiders such as lobby groups, activists, the media, or international authorities (the informer), political authority is challenged and the same conflict can be used to one’s disadvantage and is involuntary. For example, politicians can do without publicity when conflicts show their inability to take a stand against the opponent or emphasise their subordinate negotiation position. However, this is especially interesting news for the media, who may turn to investigative reporting to put the issue on their agenda, or who may consult alternative news sources to put their agenda forward. One way or the other, such an involuntary conflict, comparable with both scandals and accidents in the event classificatory scheme, enhances media’s freedom to choose among agendas of different actors. Such an issue may consequently be forced on the agenda of those involuntarily implicated in the conflict.

There is another type of involuntary conflict, which is less evident in terms of the event classificatory scheme, but nevertheless highly relevant from an agenda-building point of view. A political actor, such as a political party, may simply be excluded from a conflict. Whether a party would have liked to be part of a conflict, in view of political profiling, or whether a party is happy not to be part of it, in view of potential harm to the party image, it is certain that it is in no position to be calling the shots and generate publicity. The inevitable consequence of residing on the sidelines is that one's own agenda is less newsworthy than the agenda of the actors defining the conflict. One might carefully compare this type of conflicts with accidents in the event classificatory scheme, since one has no control over the conflicts arising between others.

In short, although conflicts may be beneficial to some under some circumstances, they usually highlight the flaws of a previously unchallenged position. They turn silent consensus into an ever-widening discussion, from which those with alternative viewpoints may profit (e.g., Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Hall, 1993; Schattschneider, 1960/2003). Conflicts attract media attention, and may be used to control the media agenda, but success is not guaranteed and depends on which other actors are involved: the media suddenly have a wider range of news sources from which to autonomously choose, at the expense of the routine news sources. Conflicts can thus often be understood as non-routine events, creating an uncertain political envi-
ronment for those involved. This may expose the latter to influence from others, including the media (see also, Cook, 1998; Robinson, 2001; Sumpter & Braddock, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

So far, we have argued that the power of the media agenda is contingent upon the level of policy uncertainty in issue areas (section 9.1). Also, conflicts have been conceptualised as non-routine events, enhancing policy uncertainty as a result of alternative viewpoints from alternative news sources (section 9.2). With these two assumptions a first careful attempt has been made to establish the link between conflicts and a strong media agenda. In the remainder of this chapter additional literature from different traditions in political communication will be consulted, in order to present additional support for the connection that has just been put forward.

9.2.1 Conflict & the political influence of media opinion

9.2.1.1 Advocates of the indexing hypothesis

In the literature on the media-policy relation, elite conflict is a frequently recurring theme to describe the circumstances under which the news media stand the best chance of influencing the policy choices of the executive, usually of the US president. An early account of the role of conflict is the 'manufacturing consent theory' as put forward by scholars such as Herman and Chomsky (1988) and Entman (1991). The authors emphasise the total surrender of the media to the worldview of their executive leaders. Media coverage reinforces the dominant perspective, both in terms of agendas (the issues) and frames (the interpretations and opinions). Journalists mobilise support for the status quo. They cannot help themselves but to even go as far as self-censorship. In this extremely one-sided account of the media-politics dynamics, also known as the 'executive' version of the manufacturing consent theory (e.g., Robinson, 2001), the distinction between levels of media dependence in times of elite consensus versus elite conflict has not yet been made.

The distinction was made by Daniel Hallin in *The Uncensored War* (1986), who for the most part agrees with the executive account of the dominance of politics over the media. Hallin argues that the media are inclined to follow elite figures in general, rather than attributing absolute power to only government officials as Herman and Chomsky or Entman do. He introduces three concepts to describe different levels of media autonomy: the sphere of consensus, the sphere of legitimate controversy and the sphere of deviance. Starting with the latter, Hallin is quick to exclude the sphere of deviance as a viable description of media behaviour. This sphere includes opinions and actions not represented by the political elite. These opinions and actions will not find a platform in the media, due to the fact that journalists take their cues from official sources. In the sphere of consensus, the political elite agrees on problem definitions and policy choices, and the media will adopt
The democratic deficit closer to home

the mainstream perspective of these official sources. There is just no reason for the media to do otherwise. In the sphere of legitimate controversy, consensus among officials shows cracks. The media are faced with a choice of angles from which to present their coverage. Although independent journalistic reflection is encouraged, Hallin argues that journalists seldom voice opinions from outside the small circle of official and predictable antagonists, such as members of the major opposition parties. In times of elite conflict, news accommodates different viewpoints, but all within the sphere of legitimate controversy. Hence, in Hallin’s view, media autonomy is enhanced by conflicts, but limited nevertheless.

Hallin’s assumptions regarding the sphere of legitimate controversy are conceptually refined in Bennett’s frequently cited ‘indexing hypothesis’ (1990). The primary assertion of the indexing hypothesis is that criticism of executive policy may emerge from news coverage, but, due to the routine professional practices of journalism, this criticism seldom originates from others than the politically influential themselves. News beats reflect simplified and routine assumptions of where political power is concentrated. Consequently, "the range of viewpoints in coverage of most national policy debates is tied or ‘indexed’ to the public pronouncements of, and the degree of public opposition among, key public officials who can affect decisions about issues” (Bennett, 1997, p. 105). Strong official preferences will receive wide coverage. If such preferences do not stir up controversy among the key public officials, these will be adopted in media coverage as the single dominant perspective. If they do cause a stir among other interesting news sources, opinions different from the initial one, and even from outside the purely political arena, will colour the news pages and editorials. The indexing hypothesis, representing the ‘elite’ version of the manufacturing consent tradition, has evolved into the dominant hypothesis advocated by leading scholars in the field.

According to the scholars that represent the manufacturing consent paradigm (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Entman, 1991; Hallin, 1986, 1994; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Mermin, 1996, 1997) political conflict sets the boundaries of the social diversity among news sources and of the ideological spectrum of viewpoints in news coverage (Bennett, 1997). Changes to policy outcomes that may result from strong public opposition are not brought about by autonomous media, but always by news sources from elite circles. But this school of academics, while denying media’s own political influence, still acknowledges the importance of conflicts for media’s susceptibility to deviant voices and to the chance that the executive may have to reconsider its initial viewpoints.

9.2.1.2 Challengers of the indexing hypothesis

From the mid-1990s onwards, a group of scholars explicitly challenges the indexing hypothesis. Their first motive for doing so is empirical. In 1996,
Althaus, Edy, Entman and Phalen tested the indexing hypothesis on the Libya crisis of 1985 and found that the journalistic values of objective and event-centred reporting may prevent journalists from indexing the coverage to the dominant US elite debate. Objectivity requires dominant positions to be counterbalanced by divergent voices. Althaus et al. found that in order to achieve objectivity, the media turned to foreign sources. Also, journalists did not cover the whole spectrum of available US elite voices, but seemingly randomly chose some at the expense of others. The evidence suggests that the media independently decide who represent the opposing sides of the conflicts. Even, when there is no conflict, the media may decide to create one for the sake of objectivity. In 2002, Althaus is still just as convinced of the need to revise the indexing hypothesis, when he finds that criticism in the media debate about the 1990 Gulf crisis does not develop parallel to criticism in the debate in official circles. Besides, the media provided a platform to marginal voices that appeared more critical of official US policy.

A few years after his launch of the indexing hypothesis Lance Bennett himself says the following about it: “Indexing explains some patterns in the news, but it is just one rule in the journalistic rule book. Our goal is to find other rules that explain how different political situations are reported” (1997, p. 105). He feels the need to nuance the previously assumed passivity of journalists in their selection of news sources. The routine practice of news reporters pushes them to gather information beyond the familiar official institutions in specific situations, or in Bennett’s words:

When a political issue or conflict does not fit easily within (or moves outside of) domestic institutional decision settings, journalists follow the trail of power to the actors, including international actors, deemed most likely to resolve the conflict. The trail of power is not charted by some objective theory of politics, but rather, once again, by implicit journalistic assumptions about political actors regarded as having the potential to change the outcome of a situation (1997, p. 114).

The enclosed assumption that media’s perception of the politically influential does not necessarily coincide with the formal distribution of power across actors, implies that the media have considerable leeway in confronting the political elite with viewpoints from unexpected corners. Whereas government is used to engage in policy conflicts with representatives from opposing parties as part of the routine political process, a great deal more might be asked of government when a public platform is given to less mainstream and less predictable challengers. Bennett acknowledges that this is where the potential political influence of the media lies, since the media decide when and to whom officials are asked to react.

In an article with the specific aim of exposing the flaws of both the executive and elite versions of the manufacturing consent theory, including
the indexing hypothesis, Piers Robinson (2001) created a model of media influence. He criticises Hallin, Bennett and Mermin for failing to explore the circumstances under which critical news coverage might actually result in autonomous media influence on executive policy. The first theoretical flaw is that they wrongfully equate reliance on elite news sources with a lack of media influence. By doing so, “the theory black-boxes the dynamics between media coverage and any given policy process” (2001, p. 528). Robinson argues that the media may influence policy outcomes whenever they manage to compel the executive to respond to unfavourable coverage, irrespective of who was the source of the information. The second fundamental shortcoming concerns the belief of the manufacturing consent tradition that by merely copying elite views the media lose their ability to play an independent role in an elite conflict. As in any conflict, journalists retain the liberty to take sides. Robinson argues that journalists may just as well choose to side with non-elites, which makes them powerful participants in their own right. Robinson finishes his criticism by referring to a body of empirical evidence that takes the edge off the manufacturing consent arguments, such as key policy makers admitting that they have indeed adopted policies in answer to sensitive media coverage.

Robinson proposes that the news frame, in which a problem is explained and presented to the public, is likely to deviate from the dominant political frame under circumstances of policy uncertainty. He defines policy uncertainty “as a function of the degree of consensus [italics added] and coordination of the subsystems of the executive with respect to an issue” (2001, p. 534). Robinson agrees with the limited role of the media as predicted by Bennett and Hallin in case of pure elite consensus and pure elite dissensus. But if elite dissensus is combined with a lack of policy, a vaguely defined or compromised policy, the vulnerability of policy and the insecurity of policy makers create a window of opportunity for partisan news coverage to influence the direction of future policy. In such cases, policy makers may respond to media coverage out of fear of facing a critical public opinion, out of fear of damaging their image and credibility, or simply because they start to question the tenability of their current policy themselves. Robinson adds that in case of policy uncertainty policy makers must deal with the additional handicap that their public relations’ ‘reply-service’ is not as smoothly organised and swift as it is supposed to be, which makes them even more susceptible to media influence.

The last work critical of the indexing hypothesis that will be discussed in this section is by David Niven (2005). First, he also shows that source use in actual news coverage cannot be predicted by indexing. He shows that even Mermin, an important advocate of the hypothesis, found mixed evidence in his study on the Panama invasion and the Gulf War (1996), i.e. that journalism did raise criticism about logistical aspects of government policy. Second, Niven develops an economic model for media influence. He
The moderating role of conflict postulates that journalists give priority to some professional tactics (or news values) above others according to the principle of cost minimisation and benefit maximisation. Such a selection is inevitable, because some news values are internally inconsistent or even mutually exclusive. Political conflict is the central variable that journalists use to estimate the relative value of clusters of internally consistent tactics. If there is large-scale political consensus, the relative value of applying the mainstream viewpoint (tactic 5) outweighs the value of inserting the journalist’s personal (deviant) viewpoint (tactic 4). With the latter he would call down universal criticism upon himself. And because there are no two sides to the story, bothering to turn it into an interesting story by adding drama (tactic 3) that is not there, or bothering to strive for objectivity by searching for divergent opinions (tactic 1) that hardly exist, has decreased value for any journalist. Consequently the value of efficiency (tactic 2) increases, because the journalist can spare himself the trouble, the time and the resources of further investigation. In case of perfect conflict over an issue, Niven’s law of economical reporting prescribes the exact opposite. The values of objectivity and drama hugely increase, which means that it pays to be less efficient in the quest for an interesting, balanced and provocative news story. Since there is not just one dominant perspective to conform to, it is no longer a suicide attempt for a journalist to frame the story in line with personal preferences or emphasise marginal voices, which may originate from anywhere and anyone with any effect. Hence, a cost-benefit analysis explains why media are passive and conforming in case of elite consensus, as the indexing hypothesis would have it. In case of elite conflict, the media enjoy a much freer reign and represent a greater challenge to elite preferences than is suggested by the indexing hypothesis (Niven, 2005).

Wrapping up this leading academic debate, the indexing hypothesis might be best understood, in the words of Lance Bennett himself, as “one rule from the journalistic rulebook” (1997, p. 105), which is especially (or exclusively) useful to explain media’s invisibility in times of political agreement. There is too much empirical evidence against indexing in times of divided elite opinion to assume such reliance on elites, or lack of free will on the part of the media. Apart from the natural newsworthiness of decisive political actors as well as their reliable availability to journalists (see chapter 2), part of the explanation behind media’s meekness in the absence of political quarrel, might just lie in journalists’ lack of interest when there is no quarrel to report about. This idea will be developed further in the following section, which attempts to fill the gap between the political impact of the tone of the news in times of conflict and the political impact of the attention in the news: the media agenda.
9.2.2 Conflict & agenda building

Note Robinson’s aforementioned argument that the media may influence the decision-making process whenever they manage to compel the executive to respond to news coverage. This suggests that media influence starts with the ability to find resonance on the political agenda, and thereby alludes to the agenda-building process. According to Bennett, Robinson, and Niven, the way to find resonance on the political agenda is to first find alternative news sources that challenge the position of routine (elite) authorities.

If conflicts indeed encourage the agenda-building power of the media, they should first attract higher levels of media attention in order to be able to put the pressure on the political agenda. Political actors are hardly inconvenienced by media breathing down their necks if only little or moderate attention is given to a problem. Indeed, few scholars, the indexing advocates included, would disagree about the mobilising effect that conflicts have on the media in terms of attention. For example, John Zaller’s receive-accept-sample theory (1992) holds that in case of elite consensus, nobody, neither the media nor the public, considers the issue important enough to come up with counterarguments or to pay attention to the few marginal opponents. Once the elite becomes divided, not only the balance of pro and cons in news coverage may move away from the initial elite perspective, but also the sheer attention for the subject increases. The special attention of the media for conflicts is also expressed in Niven’s economic model of media influence, discussed in the previous section. It asserts that journalists can afford to be less efficient (tactic 2) in terms of the time and resources they invest in a story, when there are more, and more controversial, sides to a story. They will eventually be rewarded by the level of drama (tactic 3) and objectivity (tactic 1) in the story. If policy agreement proves so solid that such an endeavour appears useless, a story is likely to score low on the news values objectivity and drama. Journalists will sooner cease efforts to chase the storyline. Therefore, it is likely that the more media coverage is restricted to a faithful reflection of the mainstream viewpoint about an issue, the less the amount of coverage that this issue will attract.

Hence, conflict is a cherished news value that assumes a prominent position of its own in the journalist’s rulebook (e.g., Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Soroka, 2003). In case a conflict is not manifestly pronounced, journalists will even try and create one. In the name of objectivity, journalists actively go out to find news sources that allow matching arguments with counterarguments (Patterson, 1996; Tunstall, 2002). As a rule of thumb political conflict causes higher levels of media attention (see also, Adam, 2007; Peter 2003a.). From the newsworthiness of conflicts can be derived that if a conflict is confined to the parliamentary arena, for example between two political parties, parliament is likely to succeed in attracting media attention and thereby in building the media agenda. However, if an interest group attacks a political party for a certain passage in its party programme, the attention...
of the media is attracted, but not necessarily for an issue that the political party had planned to discuss in parliament or elsewhere. Finally, if a conflict emerges at the government level, or between European member states, and parliament is on the sidelines, the parliamentary agenda is the least of the media’s concerns.

A greater level of media attention as such would not force itself back upon the political agenda if the coverage would not represent a challenge to the current state of affairs. Intrinsic to conflicts is that disagreement exists about the appropriate solution to a problem, and that, whatever position one holds, one will meet resistance. Assuming that the media strive for objectivity, every point of view can count on positive as well as negative news coverage. Baumgartner, Jones and Leech (1997) directly link negative coverage to a stronger agenda-building influence of the media, since ‘criticism often spurs involvement by people who had not previously paid attention to an issue, shifting the balance of power. This is what political scientist E. E. Schattschneider has called “conflict expansion” (1960/2003, p. 354). Conflicts have a habit of spinning out of control. When official consensus breaks down, more and different viewpoints will be covered, the more parties will get involved, the more consensus will break down, possibly resulting in an explosion of political discussion and subsequent media coverage.

As mentioned earlier, alternative voices suddenly gain the opportunity to address certain underexposed aspects of a problem in the media. A previously marginal issue may be placed at the centre of media attention. Official sources are invited into the news story as they always are, but once an issue is out, it cannot be pushed back to the margins of public discussion (Bennett, 1997). The issue is placed on the political agenda.

As a final argument to focus on conflict as the explanatory factor for this study’s results of media dominance in European issue domains, we build upon results from agenda-setting studies, which deal with media effects on the public. Appeasing public opinion and impression management are the main motivations for politicians to at least place a widely contested issue on their agenda (e.g., Robinson, 2001; Wood & Peake, 1998). Irrespective of whether coverage influences the content of policy, an abundance of negative media attention certainly forces politicians to comment on their position in the conflict. Lang and Lang observed that the Watergate scandal only became politically relevant once the media had stirred up enough controversy “to give the bystander public a reason for taking sides” (1981, p. 464). Negative coverage may be interpreted as an indication by the public and other stakeholders that there is a problem to be solved, and they will expect of the political elite to come forward and present or defend their solutions. Interesting in this context is a cross-national comparative study by Peter (2003b), who finds clear evidence for the moderating influence of polarised elite opinion about European integration on the agenda-setting process. To understand this mechanism, he refers to Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996),
and Duch and Taylor (1997), who argue that elite consensus prevents European matters from being politicised, which reduces the chance of them becoming prominent issues during elections. He moves on by drawing the parallel between issues selected as election topics and issues that are thought important in the public mind. Elite consensus, the lack of politicisation, will lead the public to think that there is no problem or that solutions have already been found. Consequently, the issue will be considered less threatening and will figure low on the public agenda. Peter concludes that “political elites disagreeing about European integration seem to sensitise citizens to the issue. Political elites agreeing about European integration seem to numb them” (2003b, p. 699). Peter thus shows that elite polarisation is a reason for the public to increasingly follow the media agenda regarding the issue of European integration.

This piece of evidence for the moderating role of elite polarisation on the agenda-setting process is yet more reason for us to wonder why high levels of attention to elite conflict in the media would not also enhance media’s influence on the parliamentary agenda. Remember that public opinion was singled out as the principle elicitor of political response. If media succeed in moulding the political agenda, it is primarily because politicians believe the media to have a powerful influence on the public agenda (Schudson, 1996). Then political conflict on the media agenda might be able to mobilise public attention, but also the attention of political actors not initially involved in the conflict. To illustrate with a familiar example that directly relates to our research question, if France and the Netherlands fight over the legalisation of soft drugs, the British media have a reason for not following the issues of the routine news sources at the British national level, but rather put this international debate on their agenda. Consequently, anticipating the British public opinion as a result of this increased media attention to soft drugs, British MPs may want to discuss the position of the British government on this matter and thereby place this issue on the parliamentary agenda. Had the British media not paid much attention to the issue, British MPs might not have made the effort to rearrange the initial scheduling of the parliamentary agenda.

9.2.3 European conflict & agenda building
Having established the connection between conflicts and the political influence of the media agenda by drawing from diverse strands of political communication research, it is now time to take our argument to the last level by relating conflicts to the European political arena. After all, the aim is to explain why a stronger media agenda was found when European actors were more visible in the news.

It has been a central argument throughout this research that the additional European dimension of national politics has extended the decision-making networks within which diplomatic incidents may occur (see section
3.5). Previously irrelevant and invisible actors from outside the national political circuit may now catch some of the attention of the national media, provided that a newsworthy event such as a conflict can be reported. Galtung and Ruge (1965) and Shoemaker and Reese (1991) referred to the news value proximity to explain why the media prefer news stories that are physically close to the audience to news stories that are distant, such as European news. Consequently, in order to reach the national media agenda, European news should relatively score higher on other news values, such as conflict, so as to compensate for the lack of proximity. This may be a first answer to the question of why conflicts might explain the moderating role of European visibility on agenda building: if European actors manage to reach the national news, it is relatively more often in the context of conflict. This is indeed confirmed by a framing analysis by De Vreese (2003) of British, Dutch and Danish news. If the political elite, whether domestic or foreign, forms a united front on a policy issue, journalists’ investigative nature will hardly be activated and the national political agenda will dominate the media agenda. It is unlikely that alternative European news sources will be consulted. Once a policy issue has become a polarising force among national and European elites, the notoriously unpopular daily affairs of Brussels might suddenly strike the home-based corps of journalists as worth finding out more about. The agenda of a European actor might replace the agenda of the national political elite in the news, in turn inviting or forcing the national elite, such as MPs, to respond.

A second reason why conflicts might explain the moderating role of European visibility on national agenda building, is found in the expectation that conflicts are actually more common in the complexities of European politics than in routine domestic policy making. Section 3.5.3 illustrated some political constellations in which European politics may trigger conflicts. In the national arena, conflicts may emerge within parties, between parties in parliament, between parliament and the executive, between interest groups and either parliament or government, and sporadically perhaps even within the executive. Many of these types of conflicts are part of the normal workings of the political process. However, as soon as the subject is not restricted to the domestic political process, but affects European actors, the axes of negotiation multiply, as well as the diversity of national interests, which are to be defended. Where one negotiates, where one relies on the power of diplomacy, disagreements may need to be bridged and conflicts may be created. On top of the just-mentioned loci of conflict, they may now also emerge between the EU institutions and national governments, or among (blocks of) national governments. Whereas open conflict within the executive is quite rare on a domestic level, since it represents a severe proof of incompetence, national representatives have shown themselves more willing to openly seek confrontation within or outside either the European Council or the Council of Ministers. The mechanism of media empowerment
vis-à-vis the parliamentary agenda, i.e. media’s independent choice to use alternative news sources, is likely to activate. We invite the reader to consult chapters 5 and 6 for a selection of the numerous controversies involving the EU at several political levels that actually went down in history (for French and German examples, see Adam, 2007).

The bottom-line of the theoretical exercise of this chapter is that the national parliament loses out to the vigour of the media in a European context. This is partly explained by the fact that issues that are part of European politics (such as agriculture and immigration in this study), with its complex network of political actors and mix of national interests, are more prone to conflicts than the more routine political process of domestic issues. Moreover, a story involving European actors might not have made the news had it not been newsworthy because of a conflict. Conflicts are thus expected to be relatively more frequent in news about European actors than in news about domestic actors. For the other part it is explained by the fact that the national parliament is far from a decisive actor in these conflicts, and hence not the most interesting news source. If the parliamentary agenda itself does not give rise to a particular conflict, the parliamentary agenda is unlikely to build the media agenda. These two arguments are expressed in the ensuing two hypotheses:

H8 European actors are relatively more often associated with conflicts in national news than national actors.

H9 Conflicts involving European actors enhance the influence of the national media agenda on the national parliamentary agenda.

Hence, if conflict emerges within parliament, the parliamentary agenda is expected to lead the media agenda, since it then is parliament that is newsworthy. However, if conflict involves European actors, the parliamentary is expected to become irrelevant to the media. Compared with government, especially parliament may either be insufficiently interested to build the media agenda on a particular European issue. Only when it notices that the item is turned into a news event, MPs may reconsider and jump on the bandwagon (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Hoetjes, 2001; Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001). Or, MPs lack sufficient means to convince the media that they are the indispensable source to deliver them their story. As we know, opinions about European affairs are often more widespread among MPs than their opportunities to influence European issues or even to get hold of updated and in-depth information about European affairs. They often prove to be behind the times with respect to issues of European importance, which have such great potential for political polarisation (e.g., Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Boerboom, 2004; Maurer & Wessels, 2001; Van den Bos, 2006).
9.3 Methodology

In order to test hypothesis 8 – European actors are relatively more often associated with conflicts in national news than national actors – a measure of co-occurrence in the news will be established for European actors versus national actors. In order to test hypothesis 9 about the moderating role of conflicts with European actors on the national agenda-building process, an interaction regression model is envisaged, similar to the model in chapter 8. Whereas the model in chapter 8 controlled for the level of European visibility in the news when assessing the influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda, the present interaction model should control for the amount of conflicts involving European actors by using the aforementioned scores for co-occurrence.

9.3.1 Political conflict defined & operationalised

Political conflict is defined as a negative relationship between two or more actors in this study. Whether conflicts are reciprocal or one-sided relationships, whether they are caused by emotional personal vendettas or by rational policy disagreements, they are all expected to activate media’s thirst for a good story, enhance competition among political news sources, and subsequently strengthen the media agenda.

Because the interest of the current study is in the agenda-building relations between the press and one specific political actor, i.e. parliament, it may intuitively seem logical to restrict the operationalisation of political conflict at the national level to conflicts involving members of parliament. Nevertheless, this is theoretically undesirable. The parliamentary agenda is expected to dominate the media agenda as long as issues are part of routine domestic policy making, as MPs are familiar with those domestic routines, including the routines of government (see section 3.5). We were therefore interested in the level of conflict with national actors in general, because it is expected that the routines of the national political process – and not just parliamentary politics – are generally less associated with conflict in the news than the complexities of the European political process are, in line with Galtung and Ruge’s (1965) news value of proximity (see also Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Hence, a distinction was made between national actors in general, including parliamentary actors, on the one hand, and European actors.

As was the case in the analysis of European visibility in chapter 8, European actors included both EU actors and member-state actors.

These two groups of actors were said to be associated with conflict in the news if they co-occur in close textual proximity with an expression of

1 The author is hugely indebted to Wouter van Atteveldt, who both developed and tested the analytical tools for content analysis of the evaluative object ‘conflict’ presently discussed. This project of bottom-up content analysis was further designed in close collaboration with Rens Vliegenthart.
conflict. The sentence was chosen as a natural delimiter of proximity, operationalised as the average sentence length of 20 words. Co-occurrence should thus be understood as a conditional probability measure: given the occurrence of a European actor in the news, what is the probability of the occurrence of conflict within a window of 20 words?

Before a score for co-occurrence could be constructed, we faced the challenging task of identifying conflicts in the news. The following sections elaborate upon the reason why identifying conflict is not as simple as identifying national versus European actors, for which predetermined wordlists of keywords and disambiguation rules were used. An alternative methodological route towards automated content analysis of conflicts is presented.

9.3.2 A bottom-up approach to automated content analysis of conflict

In the previous chapters, the content analysis envisaged to extract the amount of attention to issues or actors from textual material. Both issues and actors represent rather factual objects. The mere presence of factual objects in texts can be reliably identified with wordlists, provided appropriate disambiguation rules are applied. The approach to automated content analysis taken in part one of the study is known as a dictionary approach (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 12). In the present analysis the object of interest is the presence of conflict in the texts. This concerns the evaluative (or affective) identity of the relationship between actors. A content analysis concerned with the quality of a relationship between objects (actors in this case) is generally referred to as a semantic network analysis (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 12). According to Krippendorff the attraction of a semantic network approach for content analysts (and simultaneously its difficulty) is in: “the promise of finding answers that are not literally contained in a body of texts” (2004, p. 293). Compared with factual objects the problem of semantic validity (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 13) is much more urgent in the case of evaluative objects. Another more practical problem is that there is much more variation in expressions for evaluative concepts than for factual objects and actors, which makes it much more difficult to draft a sufficiently exhaustive collection of keywords. To identify evaluative objects it is inevitable that a more complex tool is created, which is able to identify whether relationships between actors are positively or negatively charged. The process of creating an appropriate tool for this type of content analysis, which is essentially a validating process, is described throughout section 9.3.3.

The problem of semantic validity was largely obviated in this study’s earlier content analysis of issues and actors, by paying considerable attention to disambiguation both at the keyword and document level. For a sample of documents, the hits, which were retrieved by the subsequent versions of the wordlist, were visually inspected (see sections 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.1.3). The collection of keywords and disambiguation rules were interactively validated
by adding stricter or more relaxed disambiguation rules, or by adding key-
words, until it was visually determined that a workable balance was found
between the number of wrongfully included hits and the number of wrong-
fully omitted hits. This visual validation of a sample of documents was an
acceptable remedy, since the gap between keywords of factual objects such
as issues and actors and the underlying semantic entity is usually relatively
small: keywords as ‘carbon dioxide’ or ‘secretary of the environment’ will
rarely refer to objects that do not mean ‘carbon dioxide’ or ‘secretary of the
environment’. It is much harder to draft a similar wordlist with indicators
for conflicts, first because it relates to other actors in the texts – it is rela-
tional – and second because it conveys a value – it is evaluative. An indicator
for political opposition such as ‘Michael Howard strikes again, this time at...’
(The Independent, November 8 1993) could mean just about anything if the
textual context is disregarded.

Words can be identified as meaningful only when they occur in the cor-
rect syntactical position and refer to a desired actor or object. Words gain
meaning from the multi-word units (MWUs: combinations of words) in
which they occur. Especially if a word appears in a specific type of multi-
word unit, i.e. a collocation or fixed word combination, its meaning may
drastically shift from one context to the other. For instance, the word ‘fight-
ing’ might easily lead to misinterpretation if one ignores that it is actu-
ally followed by the words ‘like a lion’ or ‘against a shadow’, rather than by
‘against his oppressor’. Hence, there is an essential problem with the use of
simple wordlists for evaluative purposes. It relies on the implicit assumption
that a word has exactly one meaning, irrespective of the context in which
it occurs. This assumption is even made explicit in Osgood’s definition of
‘common meaning terms’, which are supposed to have similar meanings to
whomever reads or hears these words in whatever context (Osgood, Saporta
& Nunnally, 1956). However, the viability of the assumption with respect to
evaluative objects is challenged by later work, which states that the mean-
ing of a word depends on the genre (Biber, 1988), or the type of object that is
modified by a predicate (MWUs) (Osgood, 1962). Hence, judging evaluative
meaning should no longer be a question of simply counting frequencies of an
a priori determined (or top-down) collection of keywords. We are looking for
a tool that translates textual features into semantic meaning by taking into
account the linguistic context (MWUs) and the domain of discourse (genre).
Nevertheless, in a semantic network approach some sort of dictionary will
still be needed to instruct the computer. Let us look at some of the options
that previous research offers.

A first possible approach to the problem of getting a computer to auto-
matically detect evaluative objects is using existing lexicographic sources,
such as thesauri. Roughly speaking, a thesaurus is a dictionary that classi-
fies words in broader categories, some of which may be indicative of evalua-
tive relations between objects. Roget’s thesaurus and Word-Net for English,
and the Brouwers thesaurus for Dutch, are examples of such thesauri (Brouwers, 1989; Kirkpatrick, 1998; Miller, 1990). Two objections against the use of thesauri can be mentioned, for which the concepts of precision and recall are called to mind (see also section 4.2.1.2). Precision refers to the percentage of times that the computer is correct in assigning conflict, i.e. the confidence of the coding. Recall refers to the percentage of true conflict that is actually classified as such. Low precision and recall are indicators of the errors of commission (first type error) and omission (second type error), respectively. Precision increases at the cost of recall and vice versa. Figure 9.1 schematically presents these classification errors and how they relate to precision and recall. Hence, low precision implies that many textual expressions have been coded as conflict, which do not really mean conflict in the targeted context: too many false positives. Low recall implies that many expressions, which truly refer to conflict, have not been coded: too many false negatives.

Figure 9.1: The errors of commission and omission, applied to the classification of conflict

Precision = \( \frac{tp}{tp + fp} \)
Recall = \( \frac{tp}{tp + fn} \)

How do the thesauri score on these validity measures? The first objection is that thesauri do not take the many possible conjugations of words, which are especially relevant in the case of MWUs, into account. Consequently, the entry ‘rub someone up the wrong way’ would overlook the occurrence ‘his complaints rubbed a great many people the wrong way’. This results in a high number of false negatives and thus in low recall. The second objection stems from the fact that a thesaurus is a very extensive inventory of the words and MWUs available in a language. As a consequence it is not genre specific.
Many words, which may occur in totally separate domains of discourse, are assigned to the same category. If all words in the conflict category were automatically used to identify conflict in news content, a large number of false positives would be the inevitable result. Thesauri are thus also likely to lead to low levels of precision. In agreement with these objections, a preliminary study by Van Atteveldt and colleagues demonstrated that simple thesaurus-based wordlists, applied to large amounts of manually coded newspaper articles, perform poorly with regard to predicting human judgements of conflict in the article as a whole (Van Atteveldt, Oegema, Van Zijl, Vermeulen & Kleinnijenhuis, 2004). However, this study did not take the MWUs in the thesauri into account, which may have resulted in a more negative performance than necessary.

Another approach to content analysis of evaluations, which has been tried in previous research, is the manual wordlist. In contrast to thesauri, manual wordlists do not rely on pre-existing word collections, but are manually constructed within the context of a research project. Coders identify the words that refer to the relevant objects and the relevant relations between them. Two research projects should be mentioned. First, the Kansas Event Data System (KEDS) uses a list of nouns for actors and verbs for events to automatically extract information about events from international conflict news. These event data are then employed to build statistical early-warning systems for political change (Bond, Jenkins, Taylor & Schock, 1997; Schrodt & Gerner, 1994). The KEDS researchers succeed in obtaining useful results regarding evaluative objects partly because they use wordlists in combination with grammar parsing (e.g., Kleinnijenhuis & Van Atteveldt, 2006, p. 233). The success of the second research group suggests that grammar parsing may not be an indispensable additive for obtaining useful results. David Fan and colleagues use the simple identification of actors and co-occurrences to predict and explain media support for these actors (Fan & Tims, 1990; Shah, Watts, Domke, & Fan, 2002). They choose to draft rather limited wordlists with explicit indicators, the meaning of which is largely beyond doubt, and without MWUs. Their aim is to eliminate false positives as much as possible. Hence, they give priority to precision. The implication is that the higher number of false negatives is accepted as an inevitable side effect.

In view of the shown potential of the straightforward method by Fan and colleagues, we chose a similar though slightly modified approach. First, the present study invested in a genre-specific instrument. Therefore, similar to the aforementioned manual wordlists, a bottom-up approach to the problem of automatic identification of conflicts was chosen. Human coders started from texts of the targeted genre: press content, and used this particular context to indicate actual uses of conflict predicates in the texts. In contrast to Fan et al., precision was not given priority to recall. The reason can be found in the ultimate goal of this study, which is to test a specific hypothesis about the effect of conflict in the news on the agenda-building
process. Therefore, it is important not to produce too many false negatives by only taking very explicit words into account, which might generate a time series with a too small $N$ and too many interruptions to include in a regression analysis. But the incorporation of less explicit words also means that there is even more need to include MWUs in the wordlist to disambiguate these keywords. Hence, the present aim was to detect conflict as it is actually expressed in news, which means not restricting the wordlist to the most explicit conflict words, as Fan et al. do, and also that attention was paid to MWUs, which Fan et al. ignore. This bottom-up approach enhances semantic validity, both in terms of precision and recall. This collection of actual uses then served as the input for a computational tool able to automatically classify a future body of documents.

9.3.3 A research design for the validation of a tool
The bottom-up human-coding procedure, which will be discussed in section 9.3.3.1, should enhance the semantic validity of the automated classifier. However, semantic validity is not enough to guarantee the quality of predictions of conflict in future, yet unseen, texts. This also requires predictive validity (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 13). This study dealt with the predictive validity of the final automated classifier in two ways. First, the predictive performance of several competing computational classifiers was submitted to an a priori evaluation against a first subset of the eventually targeted corpus of documents. The classifier with the best predictive performance was selected. This validating procedure will be discussed in section 9.3.3.2. Second, the conflict predictions of the selected classifier in another subset of the data were compared with the results of human classifications of the same documents (see section 9.3.3.3).

The methodology outlined in the following sections intersects the fields of social science and artificial intelligence. It is primarily deemed of interest here for its potential to provide a practical solution to our socio-political problem. Therefore, details that are necessary for the understanding and transparency of the procedures will be presented. Technical details, which may understandably be of the utmost interest to artificial intelligence scholars, will nevertheless be avoided as much as possible.

9.3.3.1 Towards a tool with semantic validity
In view of the envisaged genre specificity of the final instrument for automated content analysis, the corpus for this bottom-up content analysis had to be representative of the newspaper articles underlying the agenda-building analysis in part one and the European visibility analysis in chapter 8. In chapter 8 it was explained why only media data and not also parliamentary debates were analysed. It suffices to recollect that the present objective is to test the impact of conflict on media’s agenda-building power, and not on the agenda-building power of parliament. For lack of an objective measure
of political conflict, media’s perception of political conflict can be expected to better predict media’s response to political conflict than indications of conflict in parliament.

To ensure that the corpus was indeed representative of the news in the original database, stratified random sampling was applied to select newspaper articles; each of the three newspapers per country and each of the four issues represented a stratum. However, only data on the British and Dutch press were included. This decision was based on purely pragmatic considerations. The manual coding procedure was simply too labour and time-consuming to organise it for all three countries. Moreover, the methodology is still very experimental. Before additional coders with more extensive knowledge of the French language were to be approached to participate in the project, it paid to see whether the British and Dutch data would come up with promising results.

The coding team consisted of five persons, whose job it was to identify expressions of conflict in the natural context of newspaper articles. Two researchers and two students, all native Dutch speakers, were responsible for the coding of Dutch news. The same two researchers, who have adequate knowledge of English, and one native English speaker, who also masters Dutch, coded the British news articles. They disposed of user-friendly coding software especially designed for this project. With one button click a relevant expression could be classified as political conflict. The coders were guided by a software manual and coding instructions.

A first coding instructing regarded the recording units (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 5). Since words are regularly used in common or fixed combinations, not only the noun, which often bears the core of the meaning, but also the verb, adjective and preposition etc. were annotated as part of the indicative expression, if relevant. Here, words or MWUs represented the recording units.

Second, in line with the aforementioned definition of political conflict, coders were instructed to identify textual expressions as conflict if two or more actors were mentioned between whom a negative relationship was established. Importantly, the negative relationships had to involve judgements rather than factual statements, such as: “The Greens’ 42 parliamentary seats, compared with 27 previously, are likely to ensure lively opposition in the Bundestag” (The Guardian, June 9 2000). As criticism is often expressed by denying support: “TDs not amused as Kenny apologises for racist joke” (Sunday Times, September 14 2002), a separate button was included in the computer programme to capture utterances of support among actors. With a third button, negation words were coded separately from expressions of either conflict or support.

A third coding instruction concerned the context unit (Krippendorff, 2004, chap. 5), which is the sentence. Coders were instructed only to use information within the sentence to decide whether there is conflict or not.
To make up for any missing information in the sentence, for example as a result of the fact that words frequently refer to objects mentioned earlier in the paragraph, coders were only allowed to use linguistic knowledge. The aim was to assure that the interpretation of coded expressions was as unequivocal as possible. It is important to realise that the objective of the content analysis was not to obtain a correct interpretation of the particular articles that were hand-coded, but to retrieve a collection of expressions that is sufficiently sensitised to the occurrence of political conflict in the larger body of articles underlying the present agenda-building analysis or any other relevant news data set. The coders were therefore explicitly instructed not to apply real-world knowledge and if necessary only a limited amount of common sense to the interpretation of expressions, but to stick to the text as closely as possible. If coders were uncertain whether there was conflict in a sentence, they were asked to refrain from coding.

The result of the manual coding of the British data was a total number of 1164 positive and 1996 negative predicates (words or MWUs) in 1559 sentences (299 articles). In the Dutch articles, 1094 positive and 1210 negative predicates were coded in 1106 Dutch sentences (446 articles). This came down to an average of around ten conflict indicators per British article and five conflict indicators per Dutch article, which suggests that the density of British conflict-flavoured news is about twice as high. The top 25 most frequently annotated predicates indicating conflict, single words as well as MWUs, for English and Dutch are presented in appendix C. In order to evaluate the performance of wordlists based on these annotated words and MWUs – which is the aim of the next phase of computational model construction – the sentences in which they were recorded were treated as independent units of analysis. Sentences in between annotated sentences, in which no conflict (or support) was identified, were collected to serve as negative examples: the ‘ neutrals’. This yielded 1895 neutral British sentences and 2140 neutral Dutch sentences, bringing the total size of the corpus to 3454 British sentences and 3246 Dutch sentences. With this corpus of annotated sentences, models could be built (or trained) and evaluated, which should eventually be able to automatically annotate and classify a future body of newspaper articles. Such trained models with predictive qualities are known as machine-learning models in the world of artificial intelligence, and are discussed in the ensuing sections.

9.3.3.2 Towards a tool with predictive validity

Machine learning is the study of computer algorithms that improve automatically through experience (Mitchell, 1997). In the present application of machine learning (e.g., Van Atteveldt et al., 2004), the problem of deciding whether or not a text contains an evaluative expression of conflict is an ordinary classification task, where the classifier is a model that assigns a category (conflict, support or neutral) to the text based on features of the
text. Such features may refer to any piece of information derived from the text, such as word frequencies, MWU frequencies, or word class frequencies. Also thinkable are features based on more complex information, such as ‘is the sentence formulated in the passive voice?’ or ‘does it mention a political party?’, although these are beyond the scope of the present study. A number of such classifying models have been developed in the field of machine learning, each with its own characteristics. It was our task to choose the combination of a model and the underlying features with optimal performance. Especially the selection of the appropriate type of features is crucial, as bad features will lead to a bad classifier. Generally, a number of model-feature combinations are tested and the best one is used for the classification of new texts. Since the objective was not to model the causative process underlying the problem, i.e. it was of no importance which precise words are indicative of conflict, this procedure of ‘data fitting’ was justified. It is a measurement tool that works that we were after, and not a tool that accurately models the psycholinguistic reality of evaluative interpretation.

Creating a machine-learning model consisted of a number of steps. The first step was splitting the manually coded data in a training set (90% of the data) and a test set (the remaining 10%). The features of interest (either words or MWUs) were defined and extracted from the data in the training set. The chosen model was then trained on this data set: the classifying quality of the features in the model was estimated. To compare the performance of the competing models and feature sets, each of these models was tested on the test set, delivering an unbiased estimation of their performance on unseen data. The model that performed best on the test set was then trained on the whole data set (90% training set + 10% test set), with the intention of using it for classifying new articles. The distinction between a training and a test set is essential from the perspective of predictive validity, since it ensures that the results are indicative of the expected performance on new data. Using the same data for training and testing easily leads to over-fitting, which means that the model predicts noise in the training data (‘sample’), instead of the actual generalities in the ‘population’. This approach is very much alike significance tests for well-behaved distributions (such as the normal distribution assumed by regression analysis), but is has the advantage of not relying on such assumptions. Moreover, the distinction ensures that more complex models are not automatically preferred over simpler models.

To compare the performance of the different models, a metric had to be chosen. An obvious and simple metric is the accuracy: the percentage of classifications (tags) that were correct. This intuitively useful metric is hardly meaningful in case of an uneven distribution over the classes: if many data are of the same class, such as the neutrals in the current case, a model can achieve an excellent accuracy simply by always assigning that class to every case.
Therefore, in machine learning the aforementioned twin-measures precision and recall are often used (Voorhees, 2004). Considering the trade-off between the two – precision decreases recall and vice versa – it is useful to have an overall comparison measure: the $F$-score, which is defined as the harmonic average of precision and recall and is closest to the lower of the two.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Accuracy} & = \frac{(tp + tn)}{(tp + fp + tn + fn)} \\
\text{Precision (Pr)} & = \frac{tp}{(tp + fp)} \\
\text{Recall (Re)} & = \frac{tp}{(tp + fn)} \\
F\text{-score} & = \frac{2 \times Pr \times Re}{Pr + Re}
\end{align*}
\]

In the formulas above, $tp$ refers to true positives, $tn$ refers to true negatives, $fp$ refers to false positives and $fn$ refers to false negatives (see figure 9.1 for an illustration of these four types of classifications in the context of conflict). In the following sections, the two competing modelling techniques are introduced: naive Bayes and maximum entropy. The average precision, recall and $F$-score will be presented to evaluate and compare their performance, as well as the overall classification accuracy.

But first, the types of features used to create the models are discussed. Three types of features were used. The first group consisted of features based on the occurrence of single words in the annotated expressions of the training set. The second group included features based on the occurrence of single words plus MWUs, consisting of word pairs, in the annotated expressions. The third group was composed of lemmas (stems) of the words or MWUs (group one or two) with or without a Part of Speech (POS) tag (Baayen et al., 1995; Drenth 1997). POS-tags indicate the function of a word, i.e. a verb (/v), a noun (/n) etc. For example, the verb ‘walked’ would be included in the word matrix as ‘walked’, in the lemma matrix as ‘walk’ and in the lemma+POS matrix as ‘walk/v’. This feature matrix was only used for classification of the Dutch language, because English is a language with much more regular conjugations than Dutch. Since at present the task is still disproportionally time-consuming, the gains would probably not make up for the costs. All classifiers used the frequency of each of these words or MWUs or lemmas as an independent variable in the models. Various values for frequency cut-off were tried, which means that only words or MWUs were included in the feature matrix that occurred at least 2, 3, 4 or 5 times. Likewise, the required level of accuracy was varied (either no cut-off or a cut-off of 75%): only words or MWUs were included that are not ambiguous between conflict and support.

### 9.3.3.2.1 Choosing maximum entropy over naive Bayes

A naive Bayes model assigns a weight to each word for each possible class (conflict, neutral or support). It calculates the probability of a class given the occurrence of a word. It then naively assumes that all words independ-
ently contribute to the classification, which means that there can be no interaction between the words: they are context-insensitive. The final probability (or classification outcome) is determined by multiplying the sum of word frequencies with the individual weights. Hence, a naive Bayes model functions as a weighted wordlist, similar to a regression analysis without interaction terms. The context-insensitivity clearly is a significant drawback in view of the identification of conflict. Nevertheless, because naive Bayes models often proved quite successful in text classification (John & Langley, 1995; McCallum & Nigam, 1998), it was decided to run the models in order to get a preliminary idea of the possibilities.2

First, a naive Bayes model was created that relied on a feature matrix of all single words highlighted by the coders. This model performed poorly on the British data, attaining an F-score of at most 32% and an accuracy of 46%, as well as on the Dutch data with an F-score of at most 27% and an accuracy of 59% (see table 9.2). The accuracy was fairly high in both cases, but this can be attributed to the fact the model assigned the large neutral category too often. The unsatisfactory results of this word-based naive Bayes model were very likely caused by the context-dependence and interdependence of the words, which were ignored in the model. To counter this, the naive Bayes model was elaborated by including slightly more complex features representing MWUs in addition to single words. This should be more true to the way evaluations are often expressed in actual language, namely in common word combinations. As table 9.2 shows, the best performing model hardly performed better than the simple naive Bayes model, with maximum F-scores of 33% and 29% on the British and Dutch data respectively (accuracy of 46% and 53% resp.).

The assumed independence between features was probably seriously violated by the naive Bayes models, even by the latter one using a feature matrix of words plus MWUs. A way of tackling this problem is the maximum entropy approach, which does not assume independence of the features. A maximum entropy model is a log-linear model popularised for natural language processing by Berger, Della Pietra and Della Pietra (1996). In the maximum entropy approach equal values are assigned to equal feature values. In an iterative process, it subsequently chooses the model with the least unwarranted assumptions, which is the model with the highest uncertainty

2 The naive Bayes models were tested on a preliminary data set containing a larger amount of documents. Also, the assignment was to identify negative and positive evaluations in general, not restricted to conflict or support among actors. Hence, the presented results were produced by models trained on more data and with an easier classification task. The already poor results are likely to worsen rather than improve if the models are applied to a more restricted data set with only real conflict predicates. It was therefore decided not to re-enter the relatively time-consuming process of adapting and rerunning the naive Bayes models.
The democratic deficit closer to home

or entropy. This results in a log-linear model, where the log of the probability assigned to a certain class is proportional to the product of feature values and feature weights.

Table 9.2: Performance of naive Bayes and maximum entropy models with feature matrices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Freq. cut-off</th>
<th>Acc. cut-off</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Naive Bayes on words</td>
<td>word</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naive Bayes on word pairs</td>
<td>Word</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum entropy on words</td>
<td>word</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum entropy on word pairs</td>
<td>Word</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Naive Bayes on words</td>
<td>lemma+POS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naive Bayes on word pairs</td>
<td>lemma+POS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum entropy on words</td>
<td>lemma+POS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximum entropy on word pairs</td>
<td>lemma+POS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again two versions of a maximum entropy model were constructed: one with single words as features, and one with both single words and MWUs. There was substantial gain in exchanging naive Bayes for maximum entropy models. The best of the word-based models for the British data produced a decent $F$-score of 48% and an accuracy of 49%. With the best Dutch word-based model an $F$-score of 58% and an accuracy of 57% were even obtained (see table 9.2). Including the MWU features did not improve the British results, i.e. $F = 45\%$ and accuracy $= 44\%$. It resulted in a slightly better model for the Dutch data, i.e. $F = 59\%$ and accuracy $= 60\%$.

The feature combinations underlying these best performing models were quite different in the British and Dutch case. For the English language, surprisingly good results were obtained by a parsimonious maximum entropy model, which relied on the simple feature matrix of single words, with an frequency cut-off of 3 occurrences and no accuracy cut-off. For the Dutch language, the best results were produced by a more complicated maximum entropy model with a feature matrix in which words and word pairs were transformed into lemmas with POS-tags. The model included no frequency or accuracy cut-off (see table 9.2). In sum, although there definitely was room for improvement, these $F$-scores near to 50% or 60% at the sentence level were reasonable enough to continue towards the last validating step: comparing automated and human coding of articles.
9.3.3.3 Validating the best tool with human coding, but without success!

The selected maximum entropy model was trained to detect conflict in sentences. Once conflicts can be identified in sentences, it can be determined how often they co-occur with European actors and how often they co-occur with national actors (measured in a window of 20 words), on account of H8. Subsequently, the co-occurrence between conflict and European actors can be used to determine whether or not European conflict moderates media’s agenda-building power over parliament, on account of H9. In this section a final validating procedure is discussed, through which it was checked whether the maximum entropy models with reasonable but not excellent F-scores for English and Dutch were able to approach human judgements of conflict between actors.

If the instrument is capable of detecting conflict in sentences in the news, one may expect on the basis of common sense that the instrument will be capable of detecting conflict in news articles, which are collections of many sentences. This may be expected to be an easier task, since noise in the classification of sentences can cancel out in the classification of a complete article. Therefore, additional articles were randomly sampled from the original data set: a hundred British and a hundred Dutch articles. The aim was to compare human coding of these articles with classifications of the best British and Dutch maximum entropy models. In this round of manual content analysis, the article as a whole, rather than separate words or MWUs, functioned as the recording unit: either the article was coded as an article containing conflict or it was not. In this round, the coder was free to use the whole of the article as the context unit, just like an average newspaper reader would. The word and MWU frequencies of the underlying feature matrices of the maximum entropy models were derived from the entire article, rather than from the sentence.

Unfortunately, the performance of the automated classifier on this test set of articles turned out to be too unreliable to proceed within the confines of the present research project. Pearson’s correlation between the conflict classifications of the human coding and the computer coding was revealed to be insignificant in the case of the Dutch newspaper articles. There was a modest correlation of 0.20 ($p < 0.05$) in the British case. Regressing the computer classifications of ‘neutral’ ‘support’ and ‘conflict’ on the human classification of ‘conflict’ did not produce any significant coefficients, neither for the British nor for the Dutch articles. Hence, the maximum entropy models, our most promising models, still seemed loose canons compared with human assessments of the evaluative meaning in news. The remaining 50% or 40% of classifications, which the models could not correctly account for according to the F-scores, appeared too significant to approximate human coding of articles. There was little point in having these models in their current state classify the original corpus, which consisted of hundreds...
of thousands of articles. At this point there was no other conclusion than that we were not able, within the time limits of this study, to produce a research instrument and subsequent data with sufficient validity to proceed towards a test of hypotheses 8 and 9.

9.3.4 Concluding remark
Much to our regret, the study of the moderating effect of European conflict on media’s agenda-building power comes to an untimely end. The techniques that were selected for automatically identifying conflicts as evaluative objects in news articles appeared to be too premature, or rather, our application of these techniques was. Nevertheless, many promising tools have been developed in the field of artificial intelligence. Just as importantly, others have already proven successful in applying them to the real-world complexities that the social scientist is interested in (e.g., Bond et al., 1997; Fan & Tims, 1990; Schrodt & Gerner, 1994; Shah, Watts, Domke & Fan, 2002). It should therefore not be impossible to improve the results regarding our research objectives, if only more time and energy is invested. Many researchers might even have continued on the basis of the present model performances with F-scores of 50% and 60%. We therefore wish to emphasise that it is mainly due to a lack of time and means within the confines of this research project, that the additional effort has currently not been invested.

This does not prevent us from speculating on possible ways forward. Apart from the possibility that the human coding was not done with sufficient care, the corpus of human coded sentences may simply have been too limited. If a broader collection of multi-word units is generated from the human coding, closer to the large variety in actual linguistic usage, the models might improve considerably. Also, much is expected from applying grammar parsing. This yields more precise information about whether the MWUs, which have been identified by the human coders, actually occur in the appropriate syntactical function within the sentence. Only MWUs that are indeed found to refer to a predicate linking two actors in a conflict relationship are counted as conflict indicators during text classification. The present models might improve greatly if they disregard accidentally identical MWUs that fulfil a different function in the sentence.

One should also not forget that meticulous efforts have been made by others to enhance our understanding of the prominence of conflicts in the European Union. Of particular interest is the work of scholars, mostly in the field of European public-sphere research, who reconstruct semantic networks in media content with laborious manual content analysis to assess the relationships, such as conflicts, between European nations and the EU or other member states (e.g., Adam, 2007). Nevertheless, we definitely deem the search for a valid method of automatically detecting conflicts involving European actors worthwhile and no less feasible.
Chapter Ten Conclusion & discussion

Much literature is devoted to the omnipresence of the mass media and the trivialisation of politics in contemporary society. In this study a uniquely extensive data set was brought to the fore to empirically tackle whether media control over national parliamentary politics has indeed intensified in the European Union. The central agenda-building question, applied to the two watchdogs of democracy, was: What is the balance of power between the national parliamentary agenda and the national media agenda? In contrast to other political communication traditions dealing with media power, in agenda-building research it is not the tone of or frames in the news that matter in processes of reciprocal influence, but the sheer attention paid to issues. Hence, MPs and journalists may agree to disagree by copying each other's issues, on which they are then free to hold different opinions. Consequently, although influencing the political agenda is an important aspect of political power, this study does not claim to say anything about the outcome of political decision-making. This study claims to reveal who decides what issues are considered for political decision-making.

Agenda-building studies have to date failed to agree about the balance of power between media and politics, as has also been emphasised in a comprehensive overview by Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006). Moreover, they have largely neglected to allow this balance of power to vary in different contexts. The objective of the present study was to offer a more integral approach to agenda building, by explicitly conceptualising it as a contingent process and thereby suggesting and testing explanatory mechanisms. This study applied longitudinal, cross-sectional and cross-national data to assess shifts in the balance of power through time, during elections, as well as differences across issues and countries. Furthermore, a first explanation for the balance of power in different contexts was offered, by introducing the prominence of European actors and political conflict in the news.

This chapter starts by briefly walking us through the applied methodology and the research findings per hypothesis and per country (section 10.1). Section 10.2 discusses limitations of the research design and suggestions for future research. The ensuing section takes a closer look at the contributions of the present approach to agenda-building theory, to European communication research, as well as to the multilevel governance research (section 10.3). Sections 10.4 and 10.5 discuss practical implications for parliamentary politics and journalism, after which section 10.6 rounds off with a short concluding remark.
10.1 A recapitulation

10.1.1 Part One
The purpose of the first and central part of this study was to determine the reciprocal flows of influence between the parliamentary agenda and the media agenda: who leads whom? Additionally it was assessed whether the answer to this question is different for different periods in time, during elections, and for issue domains of EU decision-making authority.

Methodology. The data comprised all relevant parliamentary debates (thousands) and newspaper articles (hundreds of thousands) from three national dailies in each of three countries on the issues of agriculture, the environment, drugs and immigration, covering a period of fifteen years for the United Kingdom, eight years for the Netherlands and five years for France. Besides a qualitative content analysis to explore the discussions causing attention peaks, a thematic top-down automated content analysis was used to assess the amount of attention that each agenda paid to each of the four issues per month. Extensive wordlists with rules for disambiguation were manually drafted and validated by iterative visual inspection of the results, after which they were used to count keyword frequencies as a measure of attention.

Structural equation modelling (SEM) was deployed to see if one time series of issue attention systematically precedes the other and to estimate all paths of influence. SEM is a parsimonious technique that has the power to instantly generate a simple answer to the conceptually simple question of reciprocal influence between two agendas within a given time frame. To ensure that the underlying data allowed the SEM models to produce such simple and valid results, an elaborate effort was invested in diagnostical statistics. These included tests of the normality of each variable (Box-Cox), of time-series stationarity (Dickey-Fuller), of the speed and the duration of influence (VAR models, Schwarz’s Bayesian Information Criterion: monthly time unit with maximum delay of two months), of serial autocorrelation (Breusch-Godfrey) and heteroscedasticity (Engle’s ARCH) in the regression residuals, and of causality in the long run (Granger causality). The Granger causality tests had yet another function than to optimise the SEM models: they also gave a provisional idea of the direction of causality, and thus of the balance of power. However, they neglect instantaneous influence (within one month) and merely determine cumulative influence over the course of a year. These results are best understood as long-term incremental influence, whereas the research questions are primarily concerned with short-term routine interactions rather than occasionally delayed responses between the agendas.

For each hypothesised contingency, a SEM model was constructed: an overall model to test agenda building under general circumstances, as well as models for different periods in history, for elections versus non-elections,
Conclusion & discussion

and for EU versus non-EU issues. The results regarding each hypothesised contingency will now be recapitulated.

Hypothesis 1: The parliamentary agenda does not only influence the media agenda, but the parliamentary agenda is also influenced by the media agenda. Based on inconclusive evidence of both political and media dominance in agenda-building research so far, it was argued that the often-assumed primacy of politics should not be confused with a monopoly of politics. Whereas the agendas exert a mutual influence in the UK, the Dutch media agenda is not influenced by the parliamentary agenda, which contradicts the results of an earlier Dutch study (Kleinnijenhuis & Rietberg, 1995). Especially the lack of influence in both directions in France is striking. The assumption of reciprocity may only hold for the UK, but the assumption of media influence on the parliamentary agenda is undeniable both for the UK and the Netherlands.

Hypothesis 2: The agenda-building power of parliament over the media is stronger during elections than during times of routine politics. The media were expected to be more receptive to the overwhelming influx of campaign news, as it complies better with the journalistic routines of news production. Unfortunately, the Dutch results for agenda building during non-election times, as well as the French results during elections turned out to be unreliable, which makes it impossible to come to a conclusion. Only agenda building in the UK supports H2, where strong parliamentary control over the media agenda during elections indeed replaces media dominance during routine politics, in accordance with results from Brandenburg (2002).

Hypothesis 3: The influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda has increased compared with the influence in the reverse direction. The argument was found in the emergence of the interpretative style of reporting to which the communication strategies of politicians have had to adjust, as well as by an increasingly uncertain political environment created by European integration. Once again, there was no trace of an agenda-building relationship between the French parliament and media, neither in the late 1990s, nor in the early 21st century. Nevertheless, both the British and the Dutch media have gained considerable control over the parliamentary agenda, while parliament is left empty handed, convincingly confirming H3. It is noteworthy that the visibility of European actors in the news as presented in figure 8.1 did not increase during the research period. Hence, the idea that the increase in media power over time is caused by the process of European integration is therefore less plausible.

Hypothesis 4: In issue domains with more European decision-making authority, media agenda-building power increases vis-à-vis parliamentary agenda-building power. The EU environment is one of uncertainty and complexity for national MPs. In contrast to domestic politics with its familiar routines, their traditional status and value as news sources may be impaired in EU policy domains. In part one, European prominence was
narrowly defined as the amount of European decision-making authority in issue domains according to the formal three-pillar classification of the EU. As pillar-one issues, agriculture and the environment were classified as EU issues. The issue of drugs was classified as purely domestic, since no common European decision making occurs. As an intergovernmental pillar-three issue, immigration was classified as an ‘issue in transition’, subject to both national and supranational decision-making authority. Although none of the issues is capable of triggering agenda-building interactions between parliament and the press in France, all British and Dutch issues support H4 except for the Dutch environment. Parliament clearly dominates the media agenda regarding this EU issue. Furthermore, the level of media power in the case of both British and Dutch immigration, the ‘issue in transition’, is much stronger than anticipated. This Dutch finding of media influence on parliamentary debates is consistent with recent results by Vliegenthart (2007).

Interestingly, the Granger causality tests provided evidence that the French parliament and media do not operate in total isolation, as the French press succeeds in influencing the parliamentary agenda of agriculture and immigration in the long run, consistent with British and Dutch media dominance regarding these same issues. Adding the Granger causality results to the SEM results also made British agenda building resemble Dutch agenda building more closely, since long-term parliamentary influence showed up in the case of British drugs and the environment after all. Therefore, in the UK, the Netherlands and even in France, agriculture and immigration clearly involve an unchallenged media agenda, whereas drugs and the environment leave room for parliamentary influence in both the UK and the Netherlands.

The evidence of a parliament-dominated Dutch environmental issue, as well as the repeated evidence of a media-dominated immigration issue suggested that the political level at which decisions are formally made, may be an important but not exclusive factor in determining whether an issue is subject to routine politics. H4 cannot be accepted in its present form, but a modified version might be, since even the unexpected results across the countries seem to point in the same direction. It was the aim of part two of the study to present a more conclusive answer to these lingering questions (see section 10.1.2).

**Controlling for real-world cues.** In order to exclude the possibility that the parliament-media influences are spurious due to both agendas really responding to real-world cues (RWC) rather than to each other, the number of asylum applications was controlled for in the agenda-building model of immigration. RWC strongly impacts the British media agenda, the Dutch parliamentary agenda in the Netherlands, but again neither of the agendas in France. Vliegenthart (2007) has also found that asylum applications impact the Dutch parliamentary agenda of immigration rather than the
media agenda. However, these effects neither change media dominance as initially established in the UK and in the Netherlands, nor the original lack of agenda building in France.

**Hypotheses 5 & 6:** The national political (H5) and national media agendas (H6) in EU member states display convergence over time. Such convergence would enhance the plausibility of the assumption in H4 that European integration affects national agendas across Europe. This was backed up for the British and Dutch parliamentary agendas, as well as for the British and Dutch media agendas. France is again responsible for deviant results. No trend towards convergence was observed between the priorities in France and in the UK or the Netherlands, whether observed on the parliamentary or on the media agenda. A general outcome is that the European media agendas increasingly give evidence of shared concerns, and more so than the parliamentary agendas. Therefore, the European outlook of the media must be explained by other news sources than just parliament. Although one can only guess whether these sources are foreign media according to the self-referential media momentum, or other political sources, it is a preliminary indication that news coverage may not have such a narrow domestic focus as often assumed.

**10.1.2 Part Two**

In the second part of the study, the interest shifted from determining the reciprocal flows of agenda-building influence under a variety of circumstances, towards explaining why certain results about the power balance were found in a European vs. domestic context. The role of two variables, the visibility of European actors in the news and political conflict, was investigated in two separate studies (chapters 8 and 9), each with its own methodology.

**Hypothesis 7:** Higher visibility of EU actors or member-state actors in the national public debate increases the influence of the media agenda on the parliamentary agenda. The issue-specific agenda-building models (H4) left a puzzle regarding unexpectedly strong Dutch parliamentary influence in the case of the pillar-one issue environment, as well as the unanimous evidence of media dominance in the case of the pillar-three issue immigration, which had yet to be resolved. To this end, a modified, functional conceptualisation of European prominence was put forward. It was hypothesised that it is the true contribution of European actors to national issue discussions, rather than EU’s formal pillar-based authority, that moderates national agenda building.

**Methodology.** This functional version of the ‘Europeanness’ of the issues was made operative by counting the number of references to EU and member-state actors in the news, in an automated content analysis similar to the methodology of part 1. The resulting time series of actor visibility in the news were first explored by ranking the issues according to the level
of European visibility and by relating this rank order to the level of media power as found in the issue-specific SEM models. Finally, the moderating effect of European visibility on the power of the media agenda over the parliamentary agenda was tested with regression-based interaction models.

**Results.** The nature of the key events in the news and debates of the Dutch environment and of British and Dutch immigration, described in chapter 6, suggested that we were on the right track to consider the actual involvement of Europe in political discussions to classify issues as European or not. European events and actors do not play a role of importance in the case of the environment, whereas the predominance of Europe is high in the case of immigration. In line with these observations, the rank order of issues revealed for all countries that agricultural news involves the highest visibility of EU and member-state actors, followed by immigration news, in which member-state actors are highly visible. Environmental news merely involves a modest level of European visibility, combined with highly visible national actors. Lastly, news about drugs shows very little European visibility. This rank order matches the rank order according to media power as found in the SEM models (H4). Finally and most importantly, it was statistically confirmed for all countries that media’s control over the parliamentary agenda indeed increases with the visibility of European actors in the news, in support of H7.

**Hypotheses 8 & 9:** European actors are relatively more often associated with conflicts in national news than national actors (H8). Conflicts involving European actors enhance the influence of the national media agenda on the national parliamentary agenda (H9). An attempt was made to determine whether the moderating role of Europe is partly attributable to political conflict. Europe was expected to increase the opportunities for political conflict; conflicts open the circle of debate to less elite stakeholders, which leads to higher competition among authoritative news sources and increases media’s freedom to choose among news sources, at the expense of national MPs.

**Methodology.** The aim was to build an interaction regression model with scores for the co-occurrence of European actors and conflicts. Conflict is a concept that negatively values a relationship between actors, and is therefore more linguistically ambiguous and context sensitive than factual objects and actors. A different technique was needed to detect conflict in the news, while ensuring semantic and predictive validity (e.g., Krippendorff, 2004). Rather than counting word hits with pre-established (though validated) wordlists, a bottom-up approach was chosen by having human coders indicate expressions of conflict in the news. These manually extracted conflict indicators were used to validate a classifier following a machine-learning approach. The resulting classifier should able to automatically identify conflict in a future media corpus. Unfortunately, the classification performance of the final model proved insufficient. Time restrictions of the current research project prevented us from improving the classifier, although this
should be very well feasible in the longer run. Our efforts to test the moder-
ating effect of conflict had to be ceased.

10.1.3 Conclusion
National MPs are presently more responsive to the national media agenda
than approximately a decade ago. Though the evidence was lacking until
now, neither the agenda-building scholar, nor the MP or the journalist will
be blown away with surprise by this result of increased media power just
yet, since it is commonly assumed that the political game has changed in
our global information societies and that everyone has had to adapt to the
new rules. The assumption of the primacy of politics widely shared among
scholars is not necessarily undermined by this single result just yet. How-
ever, the present study has come up with an additional, more provocative
finding. In the majority of issue domains here investigated, the tables have
turned, as parliament finds itself unable to exert influence on the media
agenda. Hence, media power is not just increasing, but the media even often
prevail. Our results showed that especially a strong European flavour in
news discussions enhances the empowerment of the media, or the disarma-
ment of parliament. In answer of the central research question, the balance
of agenda-building power most frequently favours the media agenda. The
media now often determine what politics is about; so much for the primacy
of parliamentary politics.

10.1.4 A closer look at country differences
The findings of media dominance are similar, but not equally outspoken
across the countries. In general it applies to all three countries that issue
domains with higher European activity trigger more media influence on the
parliamentary agenda. The primacy of politics has survived in the Nether-
lands, but merely on some occasions. Whereas the French democratic proc-
cess appears to move in mysterious ways, as no short-term agenda building
was established, the political representation of the British people seems
extremely mediated by the British press. These differences in the degree to
which the media have taken over the agenda-building process in the three
countries might very well be the legacy of the Liberal political and media
systems of the UK, the Democratic Corporatist systems of the Netherlands
and the French Polarised Pluralist systems, as described in Hallin and Man-
cini Comparing media systems (2004). Let us see if we can find more clues
with which to understand the differences.

The conclusion that the authority of the parliamentary agenda in the face
of the media is most solidly anchored in the Netherlands compared with the
UK or France, is supported by a series of other findings than parliament’s
agenda-building dominance in the case of domestically rooted issues. First,
media dominance was found to be of a later date in the Netherlands than in
the UK. This suggests that the Dutch media may not have had the time to
adopt the habit of intervening in the political process as the British media have; but also that they might increasingly do so in the future. This may just be reflected by the differences in political and journalist styles between Democratic Corporatist and Liberal countries, which Hallin and Mancini (2004) have inventoried, and which they have argued to be ever declining. Second, the Dutch parliament has shown itself sufficiently autonomous to adjust its agenda of immigration to actual trends in asylum applications, and not merely to the media agenda. In contrast, in the UK this RWC may reach the parliamentary agenda only because the media agenda happens to pick them up. This points to a certain amount of self-sufficiency of the Dutch MPs, and lack thereof among British MPs. Third, Dutch media devote much more coverage to national actors, at least in relative terms, than either the British or French media, at the expense of European actors (see chapter 8). Earlier research has shown this lack of attention for Europe in Dutch media to be true as well (e.g., De Vreese, 2003; Pfetsch, 2005). This can be a cause as much as an effect of better agenda-building opportunities for parliament. Either way, the more domestic the news frame of issues, the less reason media have not to turn to domestic institutions such as parliament, to produce news. Fourth, the interaction effects established between the media agenda and European actors, showed that much more European visibility in the news is required to convince Dutch MPs of the need to follow the media agenda than is the case in either the UK or France. Therefore, the conclusion regarding agenda building in the Netherlands should be that the agenda of parliament is dominant as the natural state of affairs. However, only when the European context of a political issue can no longer be ignored, parliament has recourse to the media agenda.

The British parliament loses out to the British press on practically all imaginable fronts investigated in this study, and has done so from the earliest years on. Consequently, the British results are more concurrent and need less specification. Still, if one looks hard enough, one can find parliamentary influence. During elections, the media make a complete turnabout and take many of their cues from the parliamentary agenda. Parliamentary influence also shows up as a slowly emerging long-term effect on the media agenda, and precisely in the case of the issues regarding which short-term media dominance is weaker or absent in the first place, i.e. the environment and drugs. Note that these are again the same two domestically framed issues (modest visibility of European actors and high visibility of national actors, see chapter 8) that trigger Dutch parliamentary dominance. Hence, parliament’s reliance on the media agenda may be more outspoken in the UK, but the pattern across issues is remarkably similar in the UK and the Netherlands. Those who have never doubted the primacy of politics should be especially amazed at the results of British agenda building: the media lead as the natural state of affairs. When the European context of issues gains ground in public discussions, the media lead even more.
It is difficult and hazardous to draw conclusions about the lack of short-term agenda building between the press and parliament in France on the basis of the present results. We will nevertheless try to make some sense of the few results we have. We know that parliament is not an interesting source of news for the French press. If it were, we would have seen some movement from the parliamentary agenda in the direction of the media, since the French press seems as flexible as any in picking up issues that catch its attention. We also know that either the media are not an interesting source of information for French MPs, or that French MPs are incapable of responding to the media agenda. Three reasons will be presented as to why the latter is chosen as the more plausible option. First, parliament does not only ignore the media agenda, but it is also unaffected by real-world information in the case of asylum applications. A parliament might voluntarily refrain from following the media, but what are the odds that MPs would in addition voluntarily ignore actual trends in policy domains? Second, indications of long-term media influence on the parliamentary agenda were twice found, in the cases of agriculture and immigration. Hence, the French parliamentary agenda may not immediately adjust to media cues, but it can if it is given enough time. Third and most tellingly, the constitution of the Fifth Republic, by the authority of President Charles De Gaulle, has curbed the competences of the French National Assembly, which subsequently assigned the French executive extensive control over the content and scheduling of the parliamentary agenda. There remains limited room for MPs to set their own agenda, and the little room they eventually choose to fill with issues from the media agenda may be too incidental to be recognised as causality in our models. In sum, as a natural state of affairs, democracy in France cannot be adequately defined by a power play between the French press and parliament. They appear to operate in separate territories. However, similar to the other two countries, as the European context of political issues gains ground in the discussions, the balance of power tips over to the side of the media.

We will now have a shot at explaining these country differences, although it is important to emphasise that these suggestions are not supported by hard empirical evidence. A parallel emerges between the country variations and the position the countries assume on some central political and historical dimensions discussed in chapter 5. First, the scope of parliament’s institutional mandate appears to be reflected in the extent to which it is able to build the media agenda. Starting with the least successful of parliaments, the constitutional subordination of parliament to the executive in France (Elgie & Griggs, 2000; Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001), is a plausible explanation for the lack of parliamentary authority in the eyes of the media as well as for parliament’s limited opportunities to react to outside cues such as the daily news. Since the British and Dutch parliaments are both central institutions in the national political game (e.g., Andeweg & Nijzink (with
respect to the Netherlands), 1995; Döring, 1995; Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002; Wiberg, 1995), why should the agenda-building opportunities of the British MPs be any less than those of their Dutch colleagues? The answer may lie in looking at their performance rather than at their competences. As outlined in chapter 5, effective opposition marks the multi-party coalition system of the Netherlands, whereas in the two-party system of the UK the majority party tends to accommodate its affiliate members of government if push comes to shove (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Carter, 2001). The fact that the truly decisive battles are fought in the Dutch parliament, whereas this often happens in the cabinet in the UK, might yield the Dutch MPs extra credits as sources of news. Additionally, more than Dutch MPs, British MPs face the challenge of a journalistic culture renowned for its loud and critical outspokenness.

Second, the degree to which the EU is politicised in the political and journalistic arenas may help to understand the differences in readiness of the parliaments to respond to Europe-related news content, as indicated by the interaction models in chapter 8. Remember that the attention of British and French MPs is already triggered at the lowest levels of European news coverage and increases with every higher level, whereas the Dutch media only influence the parliamentary agenda when the European dimension of the news reaches levels well above average. The stoicism that Dutch MPs apparently manage to maintain towards European news may be traced to the lack of politicisation of European integration, the silent consensus, which traditionally characterises Dutch politics (e.g., De Graaff, 2003; Voerman, 2005). It has been discussed how little Dutch MPs take advantage of their formal competences in the area of European politics (Boerboom, 2004; Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002). Poor knowledge and lack of interest may cause MPs to ignore the European topics arising in the media for as long as they can. The lack of politicisation has affected the Dutch media as well, as clearly underlined by the poor media attention for European actors found in this study, and for European issues as found by De Vreese (2003) and Pfetsch (2005). Research has shown that elite polarisation about European issues increases media attention (Adam, 2007; De Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003a); similarly, a lack of politicisation induces a lack of interest. Consequently, the (EU tolerant) indifference of the Dutch media may in turn cause them to accept the MPs as familiar and efficient news sources for as long as they can. Only when a European topic is so manifest that its importance can no longer be brushed aside, the lack of professionalism of the MPs in this area may break them up as useful news sources.

Contrary to Dutch politics, the EU has been and still is fiercely politicised in the UK and France (Allen, 2005; Cross & Golding, 1997; Elgie & Griggs, 2000; Evans & Butt, 2007; Flood, 2005; Geddes, 2004). The EU being a topic that draws the lines of party division, British and French MPs can be expected to have a greater interest in taking notice of what the news
reports about Europe. But whereas both Eurosceptics and Europhiles have constructed the debate in the British and French political arenas, the media landscape in the UK has been overwhelmingly Eurosceptic (Baisnée, 2000; Cross & Golding, 1997; Geddes, 2004), and fanatically so, while the French press has largely been supportive of the EU, until recently (Baisnée, 2000; Cabedoche, 1997). The level of media attention for the EU is relatively high in both countries (see chapter 8 of the present study), although Pfetsch (2005) and Trenz (2004) clearly show that EU news is more frequent in France than in the UK. We repeat that elite polarisation increases media coverage of the EU (Adam, 2007; De Vreese, 2003; Peter, 2003a). A sufficient amount of negative news coverage asks for a more urgent political response as it suggests that a problem exists (e.g., Baumgartner, Jones & Leech, 1997). This may explain why both British and French MPs eagerly respond to the considerable levels of European coverage, but also why the negative British press has a slightly greater effect on the parliamentary agenda than the French press: British MPs have been more fiercely challenged by the media regarding their EU stances than their French counterparts have. Concluding, if the varying eagerness of parliamentary response to European news in the three countries can indeed be attributed to the level of EU politicisation, this would certainly agree with our theory on the moderating effect of political conflict on media’s agenda-building power as outlined in chapter 9.

10.2 Limitations of the study
With the current study an original effort was made to put the contingency of the agenda-building dynamics to the test. Lately, the agenda-building contingency has become a subject of speculation but hardly of empirical assessment. To allow for a theoretically comprehensive approach of the parliament-media interaction, in which the balance of power is allowed to change with the conditions under which it emerges, the data set should necessarily be equally comprehensive. But however elaborately and carefully constructed the methodological framework of the present research may be, every choice during data collection implied a selection. This section will outline limitations of the research design, and look for ways of future improvement.

Cross-national comparative design. This is one of the few agenda-building studies to focus on Europe and the first study that uses a cross-national comparative design. As has been explained, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France were chosen according to a most different systems approach (Przeworski & Teune, 1970), which allows for generalisations based on a more narrow collection of countries. Although the three countries have very distinct political, economic and public cultures (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and relationships with the EU, and thereby cover a fairly broad spectrum of available identities in the EU, they also typically represent the ‘old Europe’. It is not likely that the current research design has bridged the
cultural gap between the ‘old Europe’ and the ‘new Europe’ as represented by the old member states of the West and the recent member states (formerly communist) of the East. The question immediately arises whether the media in the more premature democracies stand the same chance of gaining control over the parliamentary agenda as the media in the long-established democracies of the enlarged EU.

Cross-sectional design. Unlike a cross-national comparative design, a multiple issue design is quite common in agenda-building research. Since the four issues in this study were selected according to their different classification in the three-pillar system of the EU, this particular selection of issues is not a random selection. The Europeanness attribute of the issues was expected to influence the agenda-building outcome per issue. Hence, we are dealing with a fixed rather than random effects issue design (Hayes, 2006), which means that the results cannot be generalised to the entire population of political issues. The results can merely be generalised to political issues with sufficiently similar attributes to the issues in this study. Expanding the current selection of issues in future research would not only test the robustness of the results, but also provide an opportunity to control for other potentially interesting issue attributes. One might start by controlling for issue attributes that have been shown to enhance media’s agenda-setting effect on the public, such as non-obtrusiveness (e.g., Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Lee, 2004; Zucker, 1978), human-interest value (e.g., Graber, 1988; Valkenburg et al., 1999), or ‘newness’ (Kingdon, 1984/1995; Sheafer & Weimann, 2005), which might thereby indirectly influence the agenda-building process.

Longitudinal design. Five to fifteen years of press-parliament relations were investigated. There are not many examples of agenda-building research based on such extended time series, and with continuous day-to-day observations rather than agendas with limited periodicity such as speeches of throne of party election programmes. A strong point of the present longitudinal design is its capacity to reliably establish causality. With every observation that is added to the series, the chance that causal inferences are based on coincidence diminishes. Additionally, the data offer an historical perspective not before offered by an agenda-building study. This study is the first to identify changes in the media-politics balance of power through time, as a result of changed political or media systems. Much to our regret it proved unfeasible to gather data during an equal period of time for all three countries. This limitation especially applies to the French time series. Future research might complement the early years missing from our data set, in the event European countries make a retroactive effort to get their digital archives up to date.

Political agenda. A first important though conscious limitation of the current study is the choice to focus on the agenda of parliament. Parliamentary debates rather than statements from government representatives out-
side parliament were used as a measure of the political agenda. Therefore, one cannot be sure that the media have not become increasingly responsive to the government agenda. Since national executives are more involved in European politics and can be assumed to suffer less from a lack of knowledge about and interest in the EU than MPs, the convergence between the agendas of European media may be less a result of media’s choice for a more autonomous or more international outlook, than of stronger governmental influence on the national media agenda. However, from this perspective the conclusion should be that parliaments, which ought to scrutinise our governments, are not only under the spell of the media, but are also failing to control the national executives. And as was emphasised in the introduction of this book, this study did not set out to assess and will not draw conclusions about media’s political power in terms of decision making, but in terms of democratic control.

Agenda-building theory would strongly benefit from knowing where exactly media’s agenda-building power as presently observed, reaches its boundaries. Further research is needed that focuses on the executive agenda. Moreover, since a direct link was established between European actors and media power, the next step is to include data on European agendas as well. Future studies may want to include the agenda of different political actors to identify the sources that still or increasingly manage to build the national media agenda. Are they national? Are they European? Or, do media autonomously go out and find new issues themselves in a revival of investigative reporting? This would not just be valuable for scholars who wish to understand agenda building in contemporary Europe, but also for those interested in the democratic performance of media from the perspective of pluralist media content. As long as MPs fill the pages, a certain degree of pluralist vision in news content is guaranteed. If government actors expand their share as sources of news, the diversity of sources and subsequent visions might be impaired.

As a second limitation, the fact must be acknowledged that debates in parliament are not an ideal source of data to cover parliamentary activity during elections. During elections, parliament as an institution transforms into a collection of competing parties (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Whereas MPs are to be seen everywhere, they hardly attend regular sessions in parliament. Here, data that have earlier been qualified as less opportune for our research objective, such as party programs, party press releases and debates of party leaders in the media, probably have more potential than the debates. Still, debates may be less problematic as an indicator of the British election agenda than of the Dutch or French election agendas. It is likely that the British two-party system offers more opportunity to fight the electoral battle along the same lines that separate the opposition for the government. In the multi-party systems of the Netherlands and France, political campaigning is directed at other opponents (it is easier to steal voters from
parties whose ideology is closest to one’s own) than the political opposition during routine debates (opposition versus government). Never before has a direct comparison of agenda building inside and outside election times been made. Our model allowed us to take the first step in this direction. We suggest further research to tackle this contingency of agenda building with more appropriate means.

We would finally like to take the opportunity to respond to a strand of political communication research, which criticises the practice of using media content for the exclusive purpose of measuring the media agenda (Asp & Essaiasson, 1996; Kleinnijenhuis, 2003, 2004). They argue that all quotes attributed to political actors in the media should collectively form the political agenda. The reasoning is that if politicians’ quotes are attributed to the media, then discussions initiated by MPs in interviews with journalists are wrongfully equated with media initiative. There is some definite sense in this criticism, and it might add to an explanation why previous research has not found an equally strong media agenda in the Dutch context (Kleinnijenhuis, 2003). Nevertheless, it is evident that only measuring the parliamentary agenda from news content dismisses the importance to the agenda-building process of initiatives by MPs that are not (directly) covered in the media. Moreover, if MPs increasingly use the media rather than parliament as the first platform to express their agenda, our conclusion remains that MPs are awkwardly fixated on the media. Whereas there is no denying that parliamentary debates are not an exhaustive measure of parliamentary activity, a more encompassing forum has yet to be suggested.

Media agenda. The absence of television in the research design limits the scope of the present conclusions. Much can be said in favour of using the press agenda, though. First of all, newspapers have regularly been identified as the main agenda setters for television news (Golan, 2006; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2003; McCombs & Min, 2006). Also, print media are the best platform for in-depth coverage of complex political matters. As the present study focused on media effects on politicians rather than on the general public, the known objection against newspapers for their more restricted access to a mass audience, is less pertinent here. These arguments do not alter the fact that television is the key source of information, political or otherwise, for the wider public. It has been remarked earlier that the sheer impression of media influence on public opinion is at least as pivotal to attract the attention of politicians as actual media influence is (Schudson, 2002). Whereas politicians may turn to newspapers for their personal information needs, they will most certainly monitor television news to see what information the voters receive. Ideally, future studies should assess the influence of both newspaper and television coverage on political actors. This may be especially relevant for agenda-building research interested in elections, as campaigning seems to have become a byword for appearing on TV shows. That said, it is unlikely that this study’s conclusions regarding media dominance would
need attenuating, as soon as the allegedly even more powerful TV agenda is added to the model.

Real-world cues. An effort was made to confront the question of real-world cues, by controlling for the number of asylum applications in the agenda-building model of immigration. It would have been preferable if we could have controlled for RWC in each of the models. However, it was shown that an RWC as asylum applications, which is so central to the policy area of immigration, does not account for any of the media’s autonomous effect on the parliamentary agenda. It is therefore rather unlikely that controlling for any other RWC will wipe out the equally significant flows of influence (in whatever direction) in the other three cases. Still, research as the present one would improve by including suitable real-world indicators in the agenda-building models.

Content analysis. We would like to bring to attention that this study was not exclusively based on automated content analysis. The most important discussions over the years, which would have been nothing but dead numbers of keyword hits if only automated content analysis would have been performed, have been brought to life in a descriptive chronology of issues (see chapter 6). But of course, the core methodology for hypothesis testing was automated content analysis. As emphasised early on, the difficulty of computer-assisted content analysis is not the reliability but the validity of the coding (Krippendorff, 2004; Namenwirth & Weber, 1987). Whereas even the more sophisticated examples of quantitative agenda-building studies that relied on wordlists to measure issue attention (Soroka, 2002; Wood & Peake, 1998) used no more than about ten keywords to globally identify the objects, in the first part of this study much was invested in creating an ontology that is as accurate as possible. The resulting research instrument included between 41 and 79 issue keywords per issue per country, between 60 and 363 actor keywords, as well as an elaborate set of coding rules for disambiguation.

Detailed wordlists have two important advantages. First, they more accurately determine levels of attention in terms of how many words are spent on an issue. Drop half of the keywords and one will capture only half of the attention, whereas it is impossible to overestimate attention by extending a properly disambiguated list. Second, terminology is subject to changing fashions. For instance, in the early nineties the environmental issue was regularly discussed by referring to the importance of recycling household waste, which has currently run out of fashion. In those days no environmentalist had heard of Al Gore, who has dominated environmental discussions ever since the release of his documentary ‘An inconvenient truth’ in 2006. Wordlists composed of multiple synonyms and hyponyms, covering as many aspects of an issue as possible, are much less vulnerable to variations in terminology, and therefore better suited to assess long-term trends.
An eye-catching limitation concerns the failure of the automated bottom-up approach in part two to identify conflict in the news. Applying machine learning to our political communication problem was a leap into the unknown. Whatever the reason may have been for the lack of success of the current attempt, combining human intelligence with artificial intelligence still seems a promising way forward to automatically identify affectively charged meaning in texts. Here is an excellent challenge for a future study.

*Time-series analysis.* Simplicity is the strength of the statistical approach to the agenda-building problem taken in this study, i.e. structural equation modelling. But although this technique was chosen for its efficacy and simplicity, this does not imply that the true methodological complexity of the research objective was underestimated. The current study has combined multiple techniques for time-series analysis, thereby taking advantage of the strengths of each. Notably, the analysis benefited from using multiple techniques regarding the question of the time span of influence. Rather than relying on an intuitive ad hoc impression of the interaction speed of the press and parliament, as happens quite often in agenda-building research, VAR analysis was relied on to pinpoint a maximum time span of crossover influence of two months.

Nevertheless, a consequence of the choice to focus on the flows of influence within two months is that interactions in the longer run are inevitably neglected by SEM models, which are deductively constructed with a predetermined choice of variables and time lags. Our idea of and interest in agenda building as a short-term ongoing process has resulted in a deliberate focus on immediate influences as defined by their natural speed of interaction. Slow and incremental adaptation or incidentally delayed reactions are not at the heart of the power play over the political initiative. Note that this long-term incremental process was separately assessed with Granger causality tests in this study as well, which nearly always turned out to be a reinforcement of the short-term influences. Although parsimonious SEM models are well suited for our purpose, one should certainly opt for VAR models if one is more interested in the precise time structure of the causality than in the balance of power. With VAR analysis one could, for example, establish whether the interaction speed between the political and the media agenda has accelerated over the years, which would be a logical consequence of the technological advancements of the past decades. This question is a particularly interesting way forward as more and more MPs and other political actors find their way to the Internet.
10.3 Lessons for theory: crossing national and academic boundaries

10.3.1 Agenda building amidst political communication

The agenda-building tradition is largely made up of studies that stick together like grains of sand. The same question has been repeated over and over in mutual isolation and with contradictory results. A first theoretical step to overcome this deadlock was taken by Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006), who explicitly confront the lack of advancement in agenda-building research: “Most bewildering, though, was that these mixed outcomes did not spark a scholarly debate about the reasons for these inconsistent findings” (2006, p. 89). This study joins the authors in their integrative effort by redirecting the debate away from the question of which agenda is most powerful, towards the question of which agenda is most powerful under which circumstances. A static approach towards the agenda-building process was replaced by a dynamic and contingent approach, both theoretically and empirically; and successfully so, since agenda building’s contingency proved both measurable and tenable for the factors time and European integration, and might turn out to be for the factor elections.

The present study has been able to show that different times come with a different distribution of power between the press and parliament. This finding suggests that a theory of agenda building would benefit from research that ceases to be as ahistorical as it predominantly has been. Research designs that allow the balance of power between media and politics to be contingent upon time, make use of the explanatory potential of historical developments. The theoretical framework of agenda-building studies may too often have been embedded in the findings of previous influential agenda-building studies, with disregard for differences in research periods, which may be several decades apart. In the wake of the 21st century, the norms, values, and routines that determine how MPs and journalists go about their daily business are different from those in the eighties. Consideration for the historical is inherently linked with consideration for the cultural. Agenda building is contingent upon the socio-political context of the interacting political and media systems. This study provided evidence that scholars who are interested in the power play between European media and political institutions, cannot ignore the European topicality of issues. A theory of media power, and thus of agenda building, should be about news values and source use (e.g., Schudson, 2002), about who has the most interesting story and the opportunity to get his word across. This study has given the initial impetus by highlighting a possible determinant of news values and source use. European integration as such may not impose itself on the news as a story with high news value, but it may rearrange the authority of potential news sources, as illustrated by the waning influence of the British, Dutch and French parliaments on the media agenda the more...
European actors give ‘acte de présence’. The (functional rather than formal) status of national parliaments in the new multilevel order of alternative news sources in the EU, explains part of the agenda-building differences between issues, which would have been missed if only more customary issue features, such as obtrusiveness or human-interest value, were taken into account.

Taking a more historical and socio-political approach as a way of grasping the contingency of agenda-building dynamics is no radical or unachievable objective. Changes in news values and source use have been quite elaborately researched and described in political communication traditions, amongst them framing, issue-ownership and public opinion research (see chapters 3). Borrowing more generally from literature on political communication might offer useful hypotheses in addition to some often-cited but dated and context-specific agenda-building studies. Hence, this is not a call for agenda-building research to reinvent the wheel. It is a call to move beyond generating more idiosyncratic results and to explain them by relating the specific conditions of their design to the theoretical knowledge widely available.

10.3.2 A European public sphere due to news sources?
As was demonstrated, the EU is not only of interest to communication researchers because it produces important political events awaiting coverage, but also because it represents a new institutional structure, which may impact the performance of every politically engaged actor, including MPs and journalists. This conceptualisation of the EU connects two formerly strictly separate traditions within communication science: one that appreciates the media as an institution with less or more political power, of which agenda building is an example, and one that starts with the EU and investigates if and how it finds resonance in the various, primarily national, media. Whereas our study has indirectly focussed on the European democratic deficit defined in terms of national parliaments’ surrender to the media agenda, more conventional accounts of the European democratic deficit by media scholars revolve around the lack of a European public sphere. This latter body of research starts from the principle that the media are the platform for the expression of the public sphere and that their role is increasingly indispensable the further the object of debate and of participation is physically removed from the people. The continuing absence of successful and independent transnational media outlets (Chalaby, 2002; Schlesinger, 1999; Semetko et al., 2000), the fact that the visibility of EU institutions and politicians in national media does not keep up with their decision-making competence, as well as the absence of facilities for the exchange of ideas from civil society (Adam, 2007; Baisnée, 2001; Gerhards, 1993; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Meyer, 1999), have been its core research concerns and are held responsible for the continuing isolation of the national public spheres.
It is one thing to conclude that Europe still does not appeal to national editors and audiences, and is conspicuous by its absence in the media, it is quite another to brush aside the possibility that European sources are in fact increasingly contributing to national news coverage of issues with high European relevance (such as agriculture and immigration). Note that the latter may occur behind the scenes, irrespective of whether or not the story carries a European frame or ends up on the European pages. The point is that Europeanisation takes many forms, some of which may remain more hidden to the public eye. For example, our results in chapter 8 correspond to what Koopmans and Erbe (2004) conceptualised as (the weak versions of) vertical and horizontal Europeanisation of the public sphere. The fact that EU actors enter the stage most often in news about agriculture (pillar one) is an indication of vertical Europeanisation, which the authors define as EU-level actors communicating with national-level actors. Likewise, the result that EU member states are highly visible in news on immigration (pillar three) and agriculture point in the direction of horizontal Europeanisation, which is defined as a stronger focus on events and political actors from partner member states. Had we merely looked at the issue of European integration itself (such as news about the Euro, about European enlargement or about the European Constitution), rather than at agriculture and immigration, these trends would not have been noticed. However, since the analyses were indeed designed for a different purpose, and according to Silke Adam (2007) the sheer visibility of transnational actors is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a European public sphere, these are merely provisional suggestions of Europeanisation.

What would be required to truly anchor the current study within the European communication literature, is an analysis of the news sources that have replaced the national parliaments in EU areas. Is the loss of parliamentary control over the public debate predominantly attributable to a strengthened role of the national executive? Or, is the visibility of European actors in chapter 8 in fact an indication of European source use by national media, and are MPs in some areas primarily replaced by EU-level sources (vertical), by member-state actors (Intergovernmental/horizontal), or perhaps by foreign colleague media according to the self-referential media momentum (horizontal)? If so, a European public sphere is created after all through these European contributions to national news coverage. However, since these communicative linkages with the EU and other nation states are not necessarily about the EU as a news item, but established through European actors as news sources in specific policy areas (e.g., agriculture and immigration), this European public sphere may at first glance not be recognised as such. Note that Europe’s sphere of influence may not even be limited to issues that fall within its formal domain of supranational authority, as suggested by our findings regarding immigration, in contrast to our initial assumption in accordance with Koopmans and Erbe (2004) and Adam (2007). As these
issues are not manifestely European, news may not instantly inform European citizens about the European Union, but it can inform them about the viewpoints available across Europe about any (whether or not domestically framed) issue. In this case, the European communication deficit may not be as obstinate as supported by evidence from a tradition that conceptualises the European public sphere exclusively as communication about Europe, rather than as communication about, by and with Europe.

To put it boldly, our findings of the moderating effect of Europe on national agenda building invite scholars of European communication to look beyond the single keyword European Union when collecting media data, and to complement analyses at the level of news content with analyses at the level of news sources. Really, this implies no more than to link up with the uncontested view (at least in liberal accounts of media performance) that media should not just inform, but also provide a platform for the exchange of ideas (e.g., Koopmans and Erbe, 2004; McQuail, 1992; Siebert, Peterson en Schramm, 1956). A European public sphere also emerges as a result of the increased contribution of European actors to the national exchange of ideas.

10.3.3 The media in multilevel governance
This paragraph jumps from intradisciplinary cooperation, proposed in the previous two sections, to the synergetic opportunities of interdisciplinary theory building between communication and political science. The theoretical view currently taken on the consequences of European integration for agenda building was drawn from the multilevel governance (MLG) perspective in political science. In the light of the outcome that the EU is at least partly responsible for the distribution of agenda-building power between parliament and media, we believe even more strongly that such interdisciplinary research should be pursued more frequently and that it needs not be one-sided: it has often appeared a bridge too far in many political studies to consider the media as an institution with political influence of its own (e.g., Bartels, 1996; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006).

The focus in our agenda-building study on changing within-state dynamics between parliament and the media is an original contribution to the political Europeanisation literature. Political Europeanisation studies have predominantly focused on trends in the policy choices of member states (e.g., Bulmer & Radaelli, 2005; Cowles, Caporaso & Risse, 2001; Harcourt, 2002) or on the adaptation of single domestic-level institutions (e.g., Anderson, 2002; Hix & Goetz, 2000; Mair, 2000). Although Europeanisation already is a widely used denominator in studies that aim at tackling the domestic consequences of European integration in whatever form (e.g., Olson, 2002), also popular in the field of media research as has been discussed in the previous section (Adam, 2007; Baisnée, 2000; De Vreese, 2003; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004; Morgan, 1995; Peter, 2003; Pfetsch, 2004, Trenz, 2004; Semetko et
al., 2000), the concept will now be stretched a bit further still. Two mechanisms will briefly be sketched through which incorporating the agenda-building power of the news media in MLG provides a valuable approach to the question of political Europeanisation.

First, MLG research has ignored the media as independent players in the multilevel competition for political influence. The core assumption of MLG is the distribution of political power across multiple layers in politics and society. Importantly, the multiple levels thought to share in the political power formerly attributed to the national executive are not limited to the official governmental institutions of the EU, the state, the region and the city, alongside a vertical axis of levels. The innovative idea of MLG research is that also non-governmental actors, such as the industry, social movement organisations or citizens, participate in this competition for effective political influence or governance. They can take their lobby directly to Brussels rather than to their home capital. Not once is it suggested that the media might position themselves on this horizontal axis amidst these challengers to central state authority. Nevertheless, this study showed that the state institution responsible for democratic control loses part of this function to the media. As a consequence of the Europeanisation of policy discussions, the governance opportunities of the media are increased in terms of political agenda building. These results would especially comply with the MLG assumptions if the future analysis proposed in the previous section could establish that the media indeed have immediate recourse to European news sources, while limiting media access of the national executive on top of the already restricted access of MPs.

Second, MLG studies have ignored the media as a platform that furthers the political ambitions of other governmental and non-governmental actors. Since it would be too bold to conclude that the agenda-building advantage of the press is entirely caused by autonomously operating media in areas of European relevance, we have preferred to assume that the press has begun to look elsewhere than in parliament for its sources of information. The previous section speculated about whether various European sources, besides governmental sources, have strengthened their position vis-à-vis the MPs as news sources. If, as MLG scholars argue, the EU grants political vigour to subnational players, notably local governments, businesses and SMOs, one might look into the possibility that this enhanced political influence rubs off on their access to the media. In a self-reinforcing cycle, their increased visibility in the media improves their bargaining position in the face of decision makers. For instance, the present findings indicate that national MPs increasingly take notice of and act upon the discussions that emerge in the news. Therefore, he who nowadays succeeds in getting his message across in the media, stands a better chance of getting his message across in parliament. Certainly for political scientists who generally prefer not to conceptualise the media as a political institution, this option of media merely
performing one of its tasks, i.e. facilitating civic engagement by offering a platform to a plurality of individuals and groups (e.g., Koopmans & Erbe, 2004), might have more appeal.

10.4 Lessons for parliament

There are two ways of looking at the balance of agenda-building power that emerged from this study, and whichever way one looks at it, it does not show national parliaments in a favourable light. First, national MPs increasingly rely on the daily news agenda to decide which issues are worth a political debate. Second, national MPs no longer manage to raise the interest of the media as much as they used to.

With regard to the first aspect, it is one thing for the people’s representatives to aim at keeping in touch with public sentiments and with how the country is doing, it is quite another to trust the media, without an official mandate, to do this for them. The main functions of national parliaments in European democracies are to scrutinise government, to legislate and to represent the electorate. The electorate may expect an MP to know how to distinguish between a lot of hot air and true social abuses, regarding which he must either hold his government accountable or propose legislative improvements. Admittedly, it can be far from easy for MPs to retain this cool-headed attitude in their dealings with the media, since they are well aware that today’s news may be tomorrow’s election outcome (Schudson, 1996). Nevertheless, any MP can imagine, and the majority of the citizenry will agree, that it is often not in the general interest to call a minister to the House and interrogate him on individual cases, which the media happen to have singled out as key events. That is not to say that MPs should ignore distressing incidents – if the media are right, they are right, and let us hope they often are – but rather that they refrain from impulsiveness and take the time to analyse the underlying problems. Politics can never keep up with the pace at which news stories come out, so why keep up appearances? Still, MPs are regularly seduced to lapse into casuistry, as is illustrated by the fact that in 2006 parliamentary debates on immigration policy in the Netherlands jumped from the story of 17-year-old Taida Pasic from Kosovo, to the story of MP Hirsh Ali from Somalia, to the story of eight-year-old Hue from China; three persons whose personal lives the Dutch public has come to know everything about. So, our suggestion for MPs is to turn the populist tide that has set in and that has won over other than just the confirmed populist parties. This certainly is no plea for going back to the times of the regency in its ivory tower, but for MPs to start taking matters into their own hands and stop underestimating their own relevance to journalists. Their recent initiatives to take the pulse of the rank and file through alternative means of communication, notably through the Internet, therefore seem well worth pursuing more elaborately.
The second aspect concerns the fact that MPs have a hard time getting their own message across in a competing news environment with competing news sources. One can hardly blame the media for sidelining parliament, if they have a wide range of other relevant and interesting sources from which to pick and choose. Media’s obligation to society is to cover the entire spectrum of political activity and opinion, which is assumed to reflect the spectrum of ideas among the electorate (Kleinnijenhuis, 2004; Schudson, 2002). However, if parliament chooses to refrain from acting on European matters, then there is nothing there to report about. It is parliament’s responsibility to be important; it is not media’s responsibility to grant it unconditional attention. To say that it is undesirable that national MPs seem almost equally oblivious about the ways of Europe as journalists are, would be quite an understatement. Too often MPs appear to have the luxury of ignoring the EU and its ever-widening sphere of influence, simply because it is either too complicated, too uninteresting, or would not score them bonus points with the media (Boerboom, 2004; Carter, 2001; Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002; Szu-kala & Rozenberg, 2001). Therefore, a suggestion made by De Vreese (2003) to improve the skills of journalists regarding European politics, might be very useful for MPs as well: include European politics as a standard subject of training during an MP’s career in his or her party, both in terms of knowledge and skills. First, MPs need to educate themselves in the historical, socio-political, institutional and procedural facts of the EU and its member states. Second, MPs need to master the art of explaining in clear and honest terms to journalists and the electorate what the relevant European developments and their implications for domestic policy are. Furthermore, it is important for the national parliament to acknowledge where its authority ends, as well as where the influence of European actors in domestic debates starts. The EU should not be used as a scapegoat for parliament’s failures, if the EU is not also given credit for parliament’s successes. If parliament acknowledges the true contribution of the EU in national politics, the interest of journalists and citizens might be raised, giving them the opportunity to understand Europe’s reach in daily politics and evaluate it beyond face value (e.g., Adam, 2007; Koopmans & Erbe, 2004).

Such enhanced familiarity of MPs with European affairs will prove sheer impossible if the organisational structure of national parliaments is not adapted. Although the parliamentary practices are much better adapted to the new multilevel political reality in some countries than in others (see chapter 5), overall one would benefit from closer cooperation between national MPs and affiliates from the European Parliament. Regarding the inter-parliamentary deliberative body COSAC, it seems recommendable to replace the MPs of general EU committees with MPs who are specialised in the COSAC policy areas, in order to improve its expertise, its effectiveness, and thus its use to national parliaments (Maurer, 2002, see section 3.5.3.2). One could make earlier and more serious use of information delivered by
The democratic deficit closer to home

the official liaison officer that most parliaments have installed in the EP, in order to transmit the majority opinion in parliament on new developments to the national governments before rather than after policy decisions are negotiated. More practical advice could be given here, which we are happy to leave up to political scientists specialised in EU politics. We will conclude by saying that national parliaments should take advantage of the legal competences that the 'Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments in the European Union' (PNP) has given them. They should use these competences to enhance their information position in an early stage to measure up to the national executives. Such reform is not only indispensable to close the communication deficit between national citizens and Europe, but also to regain some of the democratic control over European politics, which national parliaments stood by and watched seep through their hands, and so perhaps simultaneously regain some of its former authority in the eyes of the media.

10.5 Lessons for journalism

One might say that the media have won the battle for power regarding the definition of what politics is about. Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that political journalists across Europe will be flushed with victory. Although they will be very pleased to know that their work is taken seriously, such political power is just not one of their ambitions (e.g., Smith, 1999). News media's contributions to the public debate, driven as much by genuine political engagement of the individual journalist as by the commercial challenge to appeal to a large audience, are now not as non-committal as they were before. Of course, it is not and should not be the journalist’s responsibility to step into the shoes of the MP; it remains the responsibility of the MP to do what our tax money pays him to do. Therefore, the following plea for social responsibility on the part of the media is not meant as criticism of current journalistic practices (such criticism has abundantly been expressed by others), but as an attempt to safeguard quality standards in the public debate.

Some journalistic routines, used to judge the importance of issues and events as news stories, no longer fit in the professional manual of media with serious agenda-building power. For instance, media often seek legitimisation for the choice to give an issue extensive coverage in the outcome of events, without acknowledging that the coverage itself may have had a great part in directing the chain of events. The self-fulfilling prophecy of media attention can easily be confounded with political importance, while it is impossible afterwards to disprove the political importance. A striking example of this mechanism can be found in the 2002 general election in the Netherlands where the major electoral success of the new party Lijst Pim Fortuyn proved the media right in having given it inexhaustible coverage over the past six months (Kleinnijenhuis, 2004). Zaller and Hunt (1994) expose...
the same mechanism in the case of Ross Perot’s electoral success in the US presidential election of 1992. Another habit of journalism is to give meaning to events by connecting them to a familiar frame of knowledge (Klein-nijenhuis, 2004). Whether these events are no more than incidents, events are turned into key events to symbolise a social problem. A web of remotely related incidents is spun, through which future events can be more easily explained to the public (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000). A single key event, such as the molestation of a homosexual couple, has a more immediate appeal to an audience than a statistical account of the trend in homophobia. Moreover, a chain of seemingly related key events carries a huge suggestion of urgency. The media run a serious risk of blowing an issue out of proportion, of creating a social problem rather than reporting it (Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995).

The solution to the problem of parliamentary subordination to the media is not in asking journalists to patiently wait until some MP comes forward an interesting statement on a subject on which he has little value as a news source. Besides being unrealistic, it would be just as devastating for the quality of the public debate to have journalists freely hand back their agenda-building advantage to irrelevant news sources. What one can ask of journalists is to be aware of the political role they play. It is all too easy for media to deny political influence as an excuse for not having to change their daily routines. Journalists could make an effort to ensure that the choices they make during news selection are based on conscious decisions. Does publishing this hot item really provide an informative service to the public or does it merely buy an audience, while wasting political resources once parliament goes on about it for days or weeks? In evaluating the priority of the different issues that compete for attention in the newsroom, journalists and editors could invest more in the public interest as one of a set of criteria against which the news value of stories is routinely measured.

So far, this lesson for journalism has been little more than a moral appeal to media’s good manners. Considering media’s particular influence in areas of European relevance, it is here that our call for socially responsible journalism becomes more insistent. Although journalists discard initiatives from national MPs the more the real action involves European actors, to date this has not been picked up as a signal that it might pay to invest in Brussels as a locus of news. Political journalists still flock together around the national political headquarters in London, The Hague or Paris. Consequently, the gaps in their professional knowledge of Europe will not cease to grow. This is alarming, because this study has just demonstrated that the political power of these journalists increases as Europe’s significance increases. It is known from chapter 5 that a shallow socialisation of British journalists into the European culture has prevented the cultivation of a full understanding of EU procedures, backgrounds, national bargaining positions, etc. The problem with the Dutch political journalists is primarily
a lack of interest and a subsequent lack of presence in Brussels. The French journalists largely evade this criticism. However, it is doubtful whether the younger generations of French journalists display a devotion to and knowledge of the EU that is equally thorough as their reputed predecessors.

Communication scholars have frequently expressed their concerns about media’s insufficient knowledge in relation to how European integration gets portrayed in national news and how this negatively affects public opinion (e.g., De Vreese, 2003, 2007). We suggest that this criticism be taken even more seriously now that there is evidence that it also applies to media’s ability to adequately inform citizens about topics beyond European integration and its key issues such as the Euro or the European Constitution. Journalists should also be able to visualise and explain the contributions of European actors to developments in areas such as agriculture and immigration, or other seemingly domestic matters, so that the public is offered a chance to judge them at their true value. As domestic and European politics become increasingly entangled, the expertise of the few European specialists on a newspaper’s pay role cannot be reserved exclusively for the European pages. Therefore, the earlier suggestion to MPs to include European politics in their standard training package, most definitely applies to journalists (De Vreese, 2003).

In sum, if the communication deficit persists as European integration progresses, it is the citizenry of Europe that is twice duped. Firstly because citizens are less thoroughly informed about the concerns and actions of national MPs than they used to be. Secondly because the media fill this vacuum left by MPs with alternative sources, including European sources, regarding whom contacts are less well established and understanding is insufficient. The media lack competence in the area of the EU, thereby doing wrong to EU politics, and again to their obligation to adequately inform the citizens. In the worst-case scenario, European citizens will always be behind the times, in Europe and increasingly so at home. This section will be concluded by briefly acknowledging that the problem of a public that has drifted away from politics and that is not adequately served by news coverage, has been picked up by representatives of journalism themselves. Adherents of civic or public journalism promote news that enables citizens to view themselves as participants rather than as mere spectators of civil society (Carey, 1987; Nichols, Friedland, Rojas, Cho & Shah, 2006; Rosen, 1999). Complex matters might become digestible for the public if the media present them in direct relation to citizens’ everyday lives (Drok & Jansen, 2001). However true the mechanism and praiseworthy the effort, in the case of EU reporting the solution is far from easy. As long as journalists do not understand the news topic themselves, they will not succeed in interpreting it in terms of its significance to the public.
Concluding remark

This study has demonstrated that national parliaments exert remarkably little control over the national political debate. The media are now pulling the strings even more than a decade ago. As an explanation for this phenomenon, we would like the core message to be that the media are still followers by nature, but that their power lies in designating those who lead. Media follow authority, but they have the choice to decide who has authority in which context (Bennett, 1997; Cook, 1998; Niven, 2005; Robinson, 2001). As long as there is one uncontested political authority in a certain policy area, one may expect a flow of influence from politics to the media. Media’s political influence expands whenever more authorities enter the scene, who are given access to the media according to journalistic preferences. This means that traditional sources may lose this privilege. Therefore media power also manifests itself in the choice to ignore. As a result, media may themselves become authoritative sources of information for those actors (such as national MPs) who just saw their political message ignored by journalists in favour of others. In this case political influence may also be expected to flow from media to politics.

Even if the media are not more powerful thanks to their own entrepreneurship, but still follow some political source, the fact remains that parliament could once use the media to turn politics into news, whereas it now often finds itself turning news into politics. This frustrates a healthy performance of democracy. Once every few years, the members of parliament are elected and parliament is composed with care to reflect the political colours in society. Since it would be utterly undesirable and senseless to elect a new representative body every other day, parliament should be trusted with the political agenda for as long as its mandate lasts. The media increasingly work under the pressure of commercialisation, they have no electoral mandate, they do not necessarily represent the electorate and they cannot be held accountable for their journalistic performance.

Modern times in Europe bear many features that predict ever-increasing media influence on politics for the future. This study showed that the media are the driving force behind parliament’s priorities especially when issues move away from the domestic level and embrace a certain level of European interference. The effectiveness of the official democratic institutions within the nation state has weakened, and not as a result of a deliberate transfer of the formal authority of national parliaments to the European Parliament. The present indications of an extension of Europe’s lamented democratic deficit towards the national arenas might be better understood as an unintentional spin-off of the creation of this additional political European layer. Since the European Union is still a faceless creature to the public and the media, and its democratic institutions do not yet match those of the individual member states, our findings reinforce the fear of many that European societies may be headed for a democratic vacuum. Apparently, the media are
prepared to follow national politicians when their competence and status are unchallenged, but inclined to take the lead when politics becomes merely symbolic.
References


References


The democratic deficit closer to home


The democratic deficit closer to home


Table A.1: Examples of British keywords and disambiguation rules for each issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Final string with keywords and disambiguation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
<td>intensive agriculture</td>
<td>(intensive and not fisher*) w/30 (agricultur* or agrarian or farm*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bio-industry</td>
<td>bio-industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>battery</td>
<td>(battery) w/100 (food or meat or agricultur* or agrarian or farm* or chicken)</td>
<td>pesticide?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>herbicides</td>
<td></td>
<td>herbidic*? or weed killer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>growth promoters</td>
<td>(growth promoter?) w/100 (food or meat or agricultur* or agrarian or farm*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>growth hormones</td>
<td>(growth hormone?) w/100 (food or meat or agricultur* or agrarian or farm*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>genetic modification</td>
<td></td>
<td>(genetic* w/5 manipulat*) or gen tech or (genetic* w/5 modific*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>the environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>climate</td>
<td></td>
<td>(climate) w/100 (earth or pollution or nature or environment* or weather)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>greenhouse effect</td>
<td></td>
<td>greenhouse effect? or hothouse effect?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ozone layer</td>
<td></td>
<td>ozone layer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>global warming</td>
<td></td>
<td>global warming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clean development</td>
<td></td>
<td>clean development mechanism?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustainable energy</td>
<td></td>
<td>sustainable energy or renewable energy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>green power</td>
<td></td>
<td>green power or green current or green electricity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>green energy</td>
<td></td>
<td>green energy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>biomass</td>
<td></td>
<td>biomass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>terrestrial heath</td>
<td></td>
<td>terrestrial heath</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>windmills</td>
<td></td>
<td>windmill*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hydro-electric power</td>
<td></td>
<td>hydro-electric power or waterpower or water power or hydropower</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>(drug? or narcotic?) and not (patient? or experimental or medicine or medication or the pill or pharmac* or practitioner? or GP? or specialist?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(traffic*) w/5 (drug* or narcotic*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A
| Drug Runners | (runn*) w/5 (drug* or narcotic*) |
| Drug Smuggling | (smuggl*) w/30 (drug* or narcotic*) |
| Drug Transport | (transport*) w/30 (drug* or narcotic*) |
| Drug Dealing | (deal*) w/30 (drug* or narcotic*) |
| Drug Tourism | (touris*) w/30 (drug* or narcotic*) |

| Immigration | immigrat* |
| Integration | (integrat*) w/100 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner*) |
| Language Skills | ((skill* or knowledge) w/5 (English or language)) w/50 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner* or integration or multicultur* or assimilat*) |
| Language Course | (language course*) w/50 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner* or integration or multicultur* or assimilat*) |
| Language Deficiency | (language deficiency) w/50 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner* or integration or multicultur* or assimilat*) |
| Double Nationality | double nationality |
| Keeping Own Identity | ((keep* or hold* or attach*) w/5 identity) w/100 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner* or integration or multicultur* or assimilat*) |
| Assimilation | (assimilat*) w/100 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner* or integration or multicultur* or assimilat*) |
| Multicultural | multicultur* |
| Cultural Differences | cultural difference* |
| Segregation | (segrat*) w/100 (allochton* or minorit* or asylum or newcomer* or immigra* or refuge* or stranger* or foreigner* or integration or multicultur* or assimilat*) |

Note: Accents have been removed from the XML-files prior to the keyword search. Keywords are case-insensitive. Hits of keywords composed of 2 or more words are corrected by dividing the attention score by the number of words. Double hits due to related keywords (notably in the case of abbreviations) being separately included as keywords are corrected by subtracting 1 hit from the score if both appear simultaneously within 5 words. Four levels of the keyword hierarchy are presented for illustrative purposes. The list of issue keywords includes up to 5 levels.
### Table A.2: Examples of Dutch keywords and disambiguation rules for each issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Final string with keywords and disambiguation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>intensive agriculture</td>
<td>bio-industry</td>
<td>pesticides</td>
<td>(intensive) w/30 (landbouw* or agrari* or boer* or akkerbouw or veeteelt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>battery</td>
<td>herbicides</td>
<td>legbatterij</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>growth promoters</td>
<td>groeibevordering*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>growth hormones</td>
<td>hormoonprepara* or groeihormo*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>genetic modification</td>
<td><em>manipul</em> w/5 genetisch* or <em>modific</em> w/5 genetisch*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>climate</td>
<td>greenhouse effect</td>
<td>ozone layer</td>
<td>(klimaat*) w/100 (aarde or <em>vervuiling</em> or <em>verontreiniging</em> or natuur or milieu* or het weer or weersomstandigheden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>global warming</td>
<td>clean development</td>
<td>opwarming w/5 aarde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sustainable energy</td>
<td>clean development mechanism*</td>
<td>duurzame energie or hernieuwbare energie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green power</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>groene stroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>green energy</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>groene energie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>biomass</td>
<td>terrestrial heath</td>
<td>biomassa or aardwarmte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>windmills</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>windmolen*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hydro-electric power</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>waterkracht* or hydraulische kracht or hydraulische energie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drugs

- drug trafficking: traffic
- drug runners: koerier
- drug smuggling: smokkel
- drug transport: transport
- drug dealing: deal
- drug tourism: toeris

Immigration

- integration
  - language skills: kennis
  - language course: taalcursus
  - language deficiency: taalachterstand
  - double nationality: dubbele nationaliteit
  - keeping own identity: behoud
  - assimilation: assimilatie
  - multicultural: multiculture
  - cultural differences: cult
  - segregation: segregatie
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Final string with keywords and disambiguation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>agriculture* or agricola*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intensive agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>agriculture intensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bio-industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>elevage intensif or elevage industriel or elevage hors sol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>battery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>batterie? de ponte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pesticides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pesticide?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>herbicides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>herbicide?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth hormones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hormone? de croissance or hormone? or somatotrope? or somatotrophine? or somathormone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>genetic modification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>manipul* w/5 genetique* or modif* w/5 genetique* or ogm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(l’environnement or d’environnement) not w/5 (humaine or industriel or social or economique or politique or financier or local or familial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>climate</td>
<td>greenhouse effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>effet? de serre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ozone layer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>couche d’ozone or ozonosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>global warming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>redaufflement climatique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clean development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mecanisme? pour un developpement propre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>energie? w/5 (durable? or renouvelable?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustainable energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(electroit or courant) w/5 vert?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>green power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>energie w/5 (propre or verte)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>green energy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>biomaass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>biomass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>geotherm*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>terrestrial heath</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>moulin? a vent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>windmills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>eolien*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hydro-electric power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>energie? hydro-electrique? or energie? w/5 hydraulique?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drogue or drogues or stupefiant or stupefiants and not (patient? or experimental* or medicament? or pharmac* or la pilule or medecin? de famille or omnipratien* or medecin? generaliste?)</td>
<td>integration* w/100 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(trafic* or traffic*) w/10 (drogue* or stupefiant or stupefiants or narcotic? or (came* and not camera)) or narcotic? or (came* and not camera))</td>
<td>(connaissance?) w/10 (linguistique? or francais)) w/50 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug trafficking</td>
<td>(connaissance? de la langue ou acquisition de la langue) w/50 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traffic*</td>
<td>(cours de langue) w/50 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug runners</td>
<td>(retard linguistique ou retard langagier) w/50 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(courrier?) w/10 (drogue* or stupefiant or stupefiants or narcotic? or (came* and not camera))</td>
<td>double nationalite?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug smuggling</td>
<td>double nationalite?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(contrebande) w/30 (drogue* or stupefiant or stupefiants or narcotic? or (came* and not camera))</td>
<td>keeping own identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug transport</td>
<td>(garder* ou tenir ou tien* w/2 propre identite) w/100 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(transport*) w/30 (drogue* or stupefiant or stupefiants or narcotic? or (came* and not camera))</td>
<td>assimilation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug dealing</td>
<td>assimilation w/100 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(trafiquant?) w/30 (drogue* or stupefiant or stupefiants or narcotic? or (came* and not camera))</td>
<td>multicultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug tourism</td>
<td>multicultural*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(touris*) w/30 (drogue* or stupefiant or stupefiants or narcotic? or (came* and not camera))</td>
<td>cultural differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>immigration</td>
<td>differenc*? culturelle?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>segregation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>segregation* w/100 (immigr* or refugie* or allochtone? or nouveau? venu? or demand* l'asile or (etranger? and not l'etranger?) or integration)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Final string with keywords and disambiguation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Government not w/5 (Ireland or Irish or Germany or German or France or French or Belgium or Belgian or Denmark or Danish or Sweden or Swedish or Finland or Finish or Luxembourg or Luxembourgian or Luxembourg or Austria or Austrian or Spain or Spanish or Portugal or Portugese or Italy or Italian or Greece or Greek or Netherlands or Dutch or America?) or United States or Russia or Russian or China or Chinese or India or Indian or Pakistan or Pakistani or Iraq or Irak or Iran or Iranian or Afghanistan or Afghan or Canada or Canadian or Japan or Japanese or Switzerland or Swiss or Poland or Polish or Yugoslavia or Yugoslav or Croatia or Croatian or Slovenia or Slovenian or Serbian)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cabinet not w/5 (Ireland or Irish or Germany or German or France or French or Belgium or Belgian or Denmark or Danish or Sweden or Swedish or Finland or Finish or Luxembourg or Luxembourgian or Luxembourg or Austria or Austrian or Spain or Spanish or Portugal or Portugese or Italy or Italian or Greece or Greek or Netherlands or Dutch or America?) or United States or Russia or Russian or China or Chinese or India or Indian or Pakistan or Pakistani or Iraq or Irak or Iran or Iranian or Afghanistan or Afghan or Canada or Canadian or Japan or Japanese or Switzerland or Swiss or Poland or Polish or Yugoslavia or Yugoslav or Croatia or Croatian or Slovenia or Slovenian or Serbian)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Thatcher</td>
<td>Viscount Whitelaw</td>
<td>John Major</td>
<td>Tony Blair</td>
<td>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Thatcher) w/30 (government or prime minister or premier or minister or secretary of state or cabinet)</td>
<td>(Whitelaw) w/30 (government or prime minister or premier or minister or secretary of state or cabinet)</td>
<td>(Major) w/30 (government or prime minister or premier or minister or secretary of state or cabinet)</td>
<td>(Blair) w/30 (government or prime minister or premier or minister or secretary of state or cabinet)</td>
<td>(Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) or (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) or DEFRA or MAFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Home Office or Home Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentary not w/5 (Ireland or Irish or Germany or German or France or French or Belgium or Belgian or Denmark or Danish or Sweden or Swedish or Finland or Finish or Luxembourg or Luxembourgian or Luxembourg or Austria or Austrian or Spain or Spanish or Portugal or Portugese or Italy or Italian or Greece or Greek or Netherlands or Dutch or America?) or United States or Russia or Russian or China or Chinese or India or Indian or Pakistan or Pakistani or Iraq or Irak or Iran or Iranian or Afghanistan or Afghan or Canada or Canadian or Japan or Japanese or Switzerland or Swiss or Poland or Polish or Yugoslavia or Yugoslav or Croatia or Croatian or Slovenia or Slovenian or Serbian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House of Commons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td>Conservative Party or Conservatives or Tories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hague</td>
<td>(Hague and not (minister or secretary of state)) w/30 (House of Commons or parliament or MP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>Liberal Democrats or Libdems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senat</td>
<td>House of Lords</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental organisations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs Strategy Directorate</td>
<td>Drugs Strategy Directorate or DSD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides Safety Directorate</td>
<td>Pesticides Safety Directorate or PSD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>EU or EEC or European Union or European Community or European Economic Community or Brussels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>European Commission or EC or EU Commission or EU-Commission or Euro-Commission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commissioner</td>
<td>European Commissioner* or Euro Commissioner* or Eurocommissioner* or Euro-Commissioner* or EU Commissioner* or EU-Commissioner*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delors</td>
<td>(Delors) w/100 (EC or EU or EEC or commission* or commissioner)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>European Parliament or EP or EU Parliament or EU-Parliament or Euro-parliament or Euro-Parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pflimlin</td>
<td>(pflimlin) w/100 (EP or European parliament)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU parties</td>
<td>EU party or EU parties or European party or European parties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDR</td>
<td>(ELDR or ALDE) w/100 (EP or European parliament)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU institutions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of the European Union</td>
<td>Council of the European Union or Council of Ministers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solana</td>
<td>Solana w/30 (high commission* or European Council or EU or CFSP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
<td>European Central Bank or ECB or Duisenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political EU organisations</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Food Safety Authority</td>
<td>European Food Safety Authority or EFSA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia</td>
<td>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia or EUMC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.4: Examples of British keywords and disambiguation rules for each group of actors (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member states</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Martens</th>
<th>Dehaene</th>
<th>Vethofstadt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(member state?) w/100 (EU or Europe*)</td>
<td>Martens w/30 (prime minister or premier)</td>
<td>Dehaene and not (European Convention or European Commission) w/30 (prime minister or premier)</td>
<td>Vethofstadt w/30 (prime minister or premier)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The level-3 keywords represent a random and very limited selection of actors. For example, all European commissioners were included, as well as all party leaders. Accents have been removed from the XML-files prior to the keyword search. Keywords are case-insensitive. Hits of keywords composed of 2 or more words are corrected by dividing the attention score by the number of words. Double hits due to related keywords (notably in the case of abbreviations) being separately included as keywords are corrected by subtracting 1 hit from the score if both appear simultaneously within 5 words. Three levels of the keyword hierarchy are presented for illustrative purposes. The list of issue keywords includes up to 6 levels.
Table A.5: Examples of Dutch keywords and disambiguation rules for each group of actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Final string with keywords and disambiguation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruud Lubbers</td>
<td>(Lubbers and not (UNHCR or VN or hoge commissaris)) w/30 (regering or premier or minister-president or partijleider or fractievoorzitter or lijsttrekker or minister or staatssecretaris or kabinet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wim Kok</td>
<td>(Kok) w/30 (regering or premier or minister-president or minister or staatssecretaris or kabinet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Peter Balkenende</td>
<td>(Balkenende) w/30 (regering or premier or minister-president or minister or staatssecretaris or kabinet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Bot</td>
<td>(Bot) w/30 (regering or premier or minister-president or minister or staatssecretaris or kabinet)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs</td>
<td>Ministerie van Landbouw of LNV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Office</td>
<td>Ministerie van Binnenlandsle zaken or BZK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table A.5: Examples of Dutch keywords and disambiguation rules for each group of actors (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Actors</th>
<th>Example Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>Tweede kamer*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVDA</td>
<td>Partij van de Arbeid w/30 (Tweede kamer* or parlement* or PVDA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senat</td>
<td>Eerste Kamer or Senaat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental organisations</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voedsel en Waren Autoriteit</td>
<td>Voedsel en Waren Autoriteit or VWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algemene Inspectiedienst</td>
<td>Algemene Inspectiedienst or AID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>EU or EG or EEC or Europees Unie or Europese Gemeenschap or Brussel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>Europese Commissie or EC or EU-Commissie or Eurocommissie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commissioner</td>
<td>Europese Commissaris* or EU-Commissaris* or Eurocommission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delors</td>
<td>(Delors) w/100 (EC or EU or EG or EEC or Europese commiss* or commissaris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>Europees Parlement or EP or EU-parlement or Europarlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pflimlin</td>
<td>(pflimlin) w/100 (EP or Europees parlement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU parties</td>
<td>EU partij or EU-partij* or Europese partij*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELDR</td>
<td>(ELDR or ALDE w/100 (EP or Europees parlement))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of the European Union</td>
<td>Raad van de Europese Unie or Raad van Ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solana</td>
<td>Solana w/30 (hoge commissaris or Europese Raad or EU or CFSP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
<td>Europese Centrale Bank or ECB or Duisenberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political EU organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Food Safety Authority</td>
<td>European Food Safety Authority or EFSA or Europese Autoriteit voor Voedselveiligheid or EAV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia</td>
<td>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia or EUMC or Europees Waarnemingscentrum voor Radisme en Vreemdelingenhaat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member states</td>
<td>(lidstat*) w/100 (EU or Europa or Europees or Europese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Belgie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martens</td>
<td>Martens w/30 (premier or minister-president)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehaene</td>
<td>(Dehaene and not (Europese Conventie or Europese Commissie)) w/30 (premier or minister-president)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verhofstadt</td>
<td>Verhofstadt w/30 (premier or minister-president)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.6: Examples of French keywords and disambiguation rules for each group of actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Final string with keywords and disambiguation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National actors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>gouvernement not w/5 (Irland* or Alleman* or Angleterre or Anglais* or Royaume Unie or Grande-Bretagne or Belg* or Danemark or Danois* or Suee or Sueoise* or Finland* or Luxembourg* or Autrich* or Espagn* or Portuga* or Italie* or Grece or Grec? or Grez? or Pays-Bas or Holland* or Neerland* or Amerique or america* or etats-unis or Russie or Russia? or Chine or Chinois* or Inde or Indien* or Pakistan* or Irak or Iraquien* or Iran or Iranien* or Afghanistan* or Canada or Canadien* or Japon or Japonais* or Suisse? or Pologne or polonais* or Yougoslav* or Croatie or Croate? or Slovenie or Slovène? or Serbie or Serbe?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>cabinet not w/5 (Irland* or Alleman* or Angleterre or Anglais* or Royaume Unie or Grande-Bretagne or Belg* or Danemark or Danois* or Suee or Sueoise* or Finland* or Luxembourg* or Autrich* or Espagn* or Portuga* or Italie* or Grece or Grec? or Grez? or Pays-Bas or Holland* or Neerland* or Amerique or america* or etats-unis or Russie or Russia? or Chine or Chinois* or Inde or Indien* or Pakistan* or Irak or Iraquien* or Iran or Iranien* or Afghanistan* or Canada or Canadien* or Japon or Japonais* or Suisse? or Pologne or polonais* or Yougoslav* or Croatie or Croate? or Slovenie or Slovène? or Serbie or Serbe?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francois Mitterrand</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Mitterrand) w/30 (gouvernement or president or ministre or Secretaire d’etat or cabinet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Chirac</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Chirac) w/30 (gouvernement or president or ministre or Secretaire d’etat or cabinet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Cresson</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Cresson and not (UE or commissaire)) w/30 (gouvernement or president or ministre or Secretaire d’etat or cabinet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Office</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ministere? de l’interieur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>parlement not w/5 (Irland* or Alleman* or Angleterre or Anglais* or Royaume Unie or Grande-Bretagne or Belg* or Danemark or Danois* or Suee or Sueoise* or Finland* or Luxembourg* or Autrich* or Espagn* or Portuga* or Italie* or Grece or Grec? or Grez? or Pays-Bas or Holland* or Neerland* or Amerique or america* or etats-unis or Russie or Russia? or Chine or Chinois* or Inde or Indien* or Pakistan* or Irak or Iraquien* or Iran or Iranien* or Afghanistan* or Canada or Canadien* or Japon or Japonais* or Suisse? or Pologne or polonais* or Yougoslav* or Croatie or Croate? or Slovenie or Slovène? or Serbie or Serbe?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assemblee Nationale
UMP  Union pour un mouvement populaire or Union pour une majorité présidentielle or UMP
UDF  Union pour la démocratie française or UDF
Valérie Giscard d’Estaing  (Giscard d’Estaing and not (convention Européenne)) w/30 (Parlement or Assemblée Nationale)
Les Verts  Les Verts
Noël Mamere  (Mamere) w/30 (Parlement or Assemblée Nationale)
Senat  Senat or Haute Assemblée

Governmental organisations

- 
Inspection Générale de l’Agriculture  Inspection Générale de l’Agriculture or IGA
Ingénieurs Généraux  Ingénieurs Généraux or IGIR

European Union

US or CEE or Union Européenne or Communauté Européenne or Bruxelles
EU or Commission or Commission UE or Commission-UE
Commission Européenne or Eurocommission or commission UE or Commission-UE
Commissionnaire? Europe? or Eurocommissionnaire? or Commissaire? UE or Commissaire? UE
(Delors) w/100 (IE or CEE or Commission* or Commissaire?)
Parlement Européen or PE or parlement UE or Parlement-UE or Europarlament
Pflimlin  Pflimlin w/100 (PE or Parlement Européen)
EU parties  (parti? or groupe?) w/2 européen?
ELDR  (ELDR or ADLE) w/100 (PE or Parlement Européen)

Other EU institutions

- 
Council of the European Union  Conseil de l’Union Européenne or Conseil des Ministres
Solana  Solana w/30 (Haut Représentant or Conseil Européen or UE or PESC)
European Central Bank  Banque Centrale Européenne or BCE or Duisenberg

Political EU organisations

EU parties  (parti? or groupe?) w/2 européen?
ELDR  (ELDR or ADLE) w/100 (PE or Parlement Européen)
Table A.6: Examples of French keywords and disambiguation rules for each group of actors (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member states</th>
<th>European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia</th>
<th>Observatoire Européen des Phénomènes Racistes et Xenophobes or EUMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>etat? membre? W/100 (UE or Europe*)</td>
<td>Belgie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martens</td>
<td>(Martens) w/30 (premier ministre or premier)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehaene</td>
<td>(Dehaene and not (Convention Européenne or Commission Européenne)) w/30 (premier ministre or premier)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verhofstadt</td>
<td>(Verhofstadt) w/30 (premier ministre or premier)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B.1: Vector autoregression analysis with weekly data of the British parliamentary and media agendas

| Issue    | Influence | Lag        | t-1 | t-2 | t-3 | t-4 | t-5 | t-6 | t-7 | t-8 | t-9 | t-10 | t-11 | t-12 | t-48 | t-49 | t-50 | t-51 | t-52 | t-53 | t-54 | t-55 | t-56 | $R^2$ |
|----------|-----------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Agriculture | Parliament | Parliament | *   | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.43 |
|          | Media     |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.63 |
|          | Media     | Media      | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.63|
|          | Parliament |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.43|
| Environment | Parliament | Parliament | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.38 |
|          | Media     |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.38|
|          | Media     | Media      | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.38|
|          | Parliament |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.63|
| Drugs    | Parliament | Parliament | *   | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.38 |
|          | Media     |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.38|
|          | Media     | Media      | *   | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.38 |
|          | Parliament |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.63|
| Immigration | Parliament | Parliament | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.25 |
|          | Media     |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.63|
|          | Media     | Media      | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 0.34 |
|          | Parliament |            | *   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | -0.63|

Note. The symbols in the cells reflect that VAR identified the indicated autoregressive or crossover relationships as being significant. $F$-values indicating Granger causality, which are often included in VAR tables, are reported in the separate section on Granger causality (section 4.3.1.4). Empty cells indicate insignificant effects. * $p < 0.05$; < $p < 0.10$; *-, <-: the significant effect is negative.
Table B.2: Vector autoregression analysis with weekly data of the Dutch parliamentary and media agendas

| Issue     | Influence | Lag       | t-1 | t-2 | t-3 | t-4 | t-5 | t-6 | t-7 | t-8 | t-9 | t-10 | t-11 | t-12 | t-48 | t-49 | t-50 | t-51 | t-52 | t-53 | t-54 | t-55 | t-56 | $R^2$ |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Agriculture | Parliament | Parliament | <   | <   | <   | <   | <   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | 0.22 |
| Media     | *         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Media     | * *       |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Parliament| <         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Environment| Parliament | Parliament | *   | *   | *   | <   | <   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | 0.30 |
| Media     | <         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Media     | *         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Parliament| <         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Drugs     | Parliament | Parliament | *   | *   | *   | <   | <   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | 0.21 |
| Media     | *         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Media     | * *       |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Parliament| <         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Immigration| Parliament | Parliament |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Media     | *         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Media     | * *       |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Parliament| <         |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

The democratic deficit closer to home
Table B.3: Vector autoregression analysis with weekly data of the French parliamentary and media agendas

| Issue        | Influence | Lag        | t-1 | t-2 | t-3 | t-4 | t-5 | t-6 | t-7 | t-8 | t-9 | t-10 | t-11 | t-12 | t-48 | t-49 | t-50 | t-51 | t-52 | t-53 | t-54 | t-55 | t-56 | $R^2$ |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Agriculture  | Parliament* | Parliament* | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | 0.46 |
|              | Media     |            |     | *   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Parliament |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
| Environment  | Parliament* | Parliament* | *   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.43 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.35 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.43 |
|              | Parliament |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
| Drugs        | Parliament* | Parliament* | *   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.33 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.18 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Parliament |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
| Immigration  | Parliament* | Parliament* | *   | *   | <   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | *   | 0.43 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Parliament |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Media     |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
|              | Parliament |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 0.46 |
## Appendix C

### Table C.1: Top 25 most annotated predicates in British and Dutch news articles as indicators of conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Word</th>
<th>MWU</th>
<th>Dutch Word (lemma)</th>
<th>Dutch MWU (lemma)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>against</td>
<td>accused/of</td>
<td>tegen</td>
<td>tegen/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accused</td>
<td>failed/to</td>
<td>beschuldigen</td>
<td>actievoorders/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pressure</td>
<td>under/pressure</td>
<td>kritiek</td>
<td>tegenwerken/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criticism</td>
<td>war/against</td>
<td>verwijten</td>
<td>zogenaamd/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>row</td>
<td>charged/with</td>
<td>kritisch</td>
<td>verdenken/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>battle</td>
<td>criticism/from</td>
<td>discussie</td>
<td>verzet/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict</td>
<td>responsible/for</td>
<td>verzet</td>
<td>beschuldigingen/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>failed</td>
<td>pressure/to</td>
<td>klacht</td>
<td>falen/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discrimination</td>
<td>fear/of</td>
<td>actie</td>
<td>verontsturen/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controversy</td>
<td>forced/to</td>
<td>strijd</td>
<td>weigeren/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sanctions</td>
<td>guilty/of</td>
<td>verwijt</td>
<td>verbolgen/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attack</td>
<td>attacks/on</td>
<td>oorlog</td>
<td>schrikken/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attacks</td>
<td>guilty/found</td>
<td>wijten</td>
<td>wapen/en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allegations</td>
<td>had/against</td>
<td>protest</td>
<td>kritiek/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controversial</td>
<td>away/from</td>
<td>ernstig</td>
<td>druk/onder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsible</td>
<td>campaign/against</td>
<td>onjust</td>
<td>infiltreren/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criticised</td>
<td>challenge/to</td>
<td>strafrechtelijk</td>
<td>bespioneren/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caused</td>
<td>force/to</td>
<td>beschuldiging</td>
<td>opzettelijk/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack</td>
<td>insult/to</td>
<td>falen</td>
<td>beschuldigen/in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charged</td>
<td>justice/to</td>
<td>verdenken</td>
<td>hebben/tegen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corruption</td>
<td>discrimination/against</td>
<td>schade</td>
<td>weigeren/te</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guilty</td>
<td>sack/to</td>
<td>radicaal</td>
<td>verzet/tegen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>violence</td>
<td>failure/to</td>
<td>streek</td>
<td>waarschuwen/van</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disputes</td>
<td>have/against</td>
<td>boete</td>
<td>strijd/met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hostile</td>
<td>of/against</td>
<td>conflict</td>
<td>protest/tegen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The top 25 includes predicates, which have at least been annotated three times, and excludes words and MWUs that are ambiguous between conflict and support. The lists of MWUs exclude word pairs that merely add to single words by adding an article. Importantly, MWUs that are combinations of only non-substantive words, such as prepositions, articles or auxiliaries, are also excluded from this top 25. These non-substantive MWUs are a technical consequence of the way in which the word pairs were extracted from the annotated predicates: every word in a predicate is combined with every other word in that predicate, and most words in British and Dutch are non-substantive. Usually these combinations are ambiguous regarding support and conflict and thus are not decisive for the classification of texts. However, the fact that these types of MWUs are very frequent, especially in the Dutch wordlist, may contribute to an explanation of the disappointing results of the conflict-analysis. Further research is needed to establish the implications of these MWUs for the performance of the classifier, and to find ways of avoiding these non-substantive types of MWUs.
Samenvatting

Het democratisch tekort dichter bij huis

Al in 1835 schreef Alexis De Tocqueville dat de massamedia een vitale rol spelen in het smeden van verbanden tussen politici en burgers in een democratie (De Tocqueville, 1835, 1840/1951). Politici, vaak zeer beperkt op de hoogte van de publieke opinie (Dekker & Ester, 1989), struinen de media af op zoek naar een proxy van de stemming onder burgers (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000). Omgekeerd zouden burgers nauwelijks besef hebben van de politieke actualiteit zonder tussenkomst van de media (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1997; Graber, 1988). De media zijn niet zomaar een neutraal doorgeefluik, maar oefenen een autonome invloed uit op de boodschappen die over en weer gaan, zelfs waar het gaat om ogenschijnlijk objectieve sociale en economische feiten (Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Funkhouser, 1973; Hetherington, 1996; Kepplinger & Habermeier, 1995). Onder invloed van training, competitie tussen nieuwswaardige onderwerpen en bronnen, de organisatie van *news beats* en beperkingen van het medium, zullen journalisten sommige onderwerpen onvermijdelijk overbelichten en andere onderbelichten of negeren (Kitzinger & Reilly, 1997). Nog los van de feitelijke macht die de media hebben door hun rol als poortwachters tussen politiek en burgers, politici zijn zonder twijfel overtuigd van de invloed van de media op de publieke opinie. Hierdoor spenderen zij steeds meer middelen aan publiciteitsstrategieën. Als een self-fulfilling prophecy worden de media zo inderdaad in staat gesteld een rol van politieke betekenis te spelen (Schudson, 2002).

Er is tegenwoordig een veelheid aan literatuur over de alomtegenwoordigheid van de massamedia en de trivialisering van de politiek. Binnen het onderzoek naar de politieke invloed van media sluit deze studie aan bij het agenda-buildingonderzoek. Het agenda-buildingproces beschrijft de macht van de media om onderwerpen op de politieke agenda geplaatst te krijgen, en tegelijk de macht van politici om weerklank in de media te vinden voor hun onderwerpen. De politicus en de journalist zijn verwikkeld in een dagelijks strijd. De een strijdt voor een gunstige publieke opinie, de ander voor een omvangrijk publiek. Agenda building verwijst naar het proces dat aan de basis staat van deze machtsstrijd: ongeacht wie bepaalt *hoe* onderwerpen bediscussieerd worden, de eerste overwinning wordt behaald door degene die bepaalt *welke* onderwerpen bediscussieerd worden. In deze studie waren we in het bijzonder geïnteresseerd in de strijd tussen de twee waakhonden van de democratie: nieuwsmedia en parlementariërs. De overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift, gesteld binnen een West-Europese context, is: hoe is de machtsbalans tussen de nationale parlementaire agenda en de nationale media-agenda?
Kennis van deze machtsbalans heeft gevolgen voor ons inzicht in het functioneren van de democratie. Burgers verlenen macht aan volksvertegenwoordigers om in hun belang te handelen. Wanneer dezen zich dan door het nieuws laten leiden op een meer routinematige dan incidentele basis, rijst de vraag of niet de hoofdredacteuren officieel gekozen zouden moeten worden. Persvrijheid is een groot goed, maar betekent ook dat formele mechanismen om de media ter verantwoording te roepen, ontbreken. Toch wordt zelden de vraag gesteld of een nieuwsbericht wel volgens professionele normen tot stand is gekomen – laten we aannemen dat dit doorgaans zo is – laat staan dat sancties opgelegd worden als dit niet het geval is (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Schudson, 2002). Ook nieuws van mindere kwaliteit kan desalniettemin een zogenaamd maatschappelijk probleem in het leven roepen, dat het politieke debat dagenlang in de ban kan houden. Onder criminologen is het bijvoorbeeld bekend dat terwijl de criminaliteitcijfers in Nederland dalen, de roep om hardere maatregelen tegen overtreders almaar luider wordt en deze roep ook door de politiek beantwoord wordt (bijv. De Keyser, Weerman & Huisman, 2006). Voor media is een dramatisch misdrijf zeer aantrekkelijk omdat het makkelijk in een helder en sensationeel nieuwsjasje te steken is. Daarmee worden losstaande incidenten snel uitvergroot en met elkaar in verband gebracht, en ontstaat de illusie van een structureel probleem (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000). Volksvertegenwoordigers kunnen zo een steeds sterkere druk ervaren om een daad te stellen. Kortom, parlementariërs staan voor de keuze hun prioriteiten af te stemmen op hun kennis van de werkelijkheid of op hun kennis van wat de media over de werkelijkheid zeggen. Dit kan tot zeer uiteenlopende uitkomsten leiden.

Hoewel agenda building de meest basale van alle mogelijke interacties tussen de media en de politiek vertegenwoordigt, en een conceptueel eenvoudig proces is, bestaat er in dit onderzoeksveld nog altijd onenigheid over de meest waarschijnlijke machtsverhouding. In een uitgebreide review van de agenda-buildingliteratuur, stellen Walgrave en Van Aelst (2006) de diagnose dat deze uit los zand bestaat, met wijd uiteenlopende antwoorden op een vaak gesimplificeerde vraag. Hoewel met name de meer recente empirische onderzoekers het met de auteurs eens zijn dat agenda building als een contingent proces benaderd zou moeten worden, is het te vaak bekeken als een contextvrij en dus gesimplificeerd proces. Een accumulatie van theoretische en methodologische kennis is uitgebleven. Het doel van deze studie was dan ook een meer sluitend antwoord te vinden op een geconditioneerde agenda-buildingvraag, door de invloedsstromen tussen de parlementaire agenda en de media-agenda niet als een eens-en-voor-altijd-proces te reconstrueren, maar onder verschillende theoretisch relevante condities. De studie bestaat uit twee delen. De machtsbalans onder verschillende condities is het onderwerp van deel 1. In deel 2 wordt door middel van twee aanvullende studies langer stilgestaan bij een van deze condities en de vragen die hieromtrent in deel 1 zijn overgebleven.
De machtsverhoudingen in agenda building: deel 1

Het doel van het eerste en centrale deel van dit proefschrift was om vast te stellen hoe de wederzijdse invloedsrelaties tussen de parlementaire agenda en de media-agenda verlopen: wie leidt wie? Hierbij is geanalyseerd of het antwoord op deze vraag een andere moet zijn onder verschillende condities: voor verschillende tijdsperioden, tijdens en buiten politieke verkiezingen, en voor issuedomeinen met of zonder Europese beslissingsbevoegdheid.

Overkoepelend. Gebaseerd op het gebrek aan sluitend bewijs voor dominantie van zowel de politiek als de media in agenda-buildingonderzoek tot dusver, is beargumenteerd dat het vaak aangenomen primaat van de politiek niet verward zou moeten worden met een politiek monopolie. Er is voldoende aanleiding om uit te gaan van een wederzijdse invloedsrelatie. Vooral recent onderzoek geeft steeds meer indicaties voor media-invloed. Hypothese 1 (H1) stelt dat de parlementaire agenda de media-agenda niet alleen beïnvloedt, maar ook door de media-agenda beïnvloed wordt.

Verkiezingen. Politiekecommunicatieonderzoek heeft van oudsher een bijzondere interesse getoond in campagne- en nieuwseffecten op stemgedrag. In deze traditie hebben verschillende onderzoekers agenda building in de hitte van de verkiezingsstrijd bestudeerd (Brandenburg, 2002; Klein-nijenhuis et al., 2003; Norris et al., 1999; Semetko et al., 1991; Sheafer and Weimann, 2005). Deze verkiezingsstudies hebben veel consistentere resultaten voortgebracht ten gunste van politieke dominantie dan de algehele agenda-buildingliteratuur. Het fundamentele verschil tussen de dynamiek van verkiezingen en die van alledaagse politiek is hierbij echter onvoldoende erkend. Er heeft nauwelijks uitwisseling van inzichten plaatsgevonden tussen deze twee stromingen. Met deze studie is een eerste poging gedaan om een empirische vergelijking te maken van agenda building tijdens en buiten verkiezingstijd. De verwachting is dat de media ontvankelijker zijn voor de overvloed aan campagnepolitiek dan voor alledaagse politiek, omdat campagnes van nature tegemoet komen aan de journalistieke routines van nieuwsproductie. Hypothese 2 (H2) stelt dat de agenda-buildinginvloed van het parlement op de media sterker is tijdens verkiezingen dan in tijden van routinepolitiek.

Tijd. Een aspect van de relatie tussen media en politiek dat in overvloed aan de orde is gesteld binnen de politieke communicatie, maar genegeerd is binnen agenda-buildingonderzoek, is de invloed van tijd. Communicatieteratuur laat herhaaldelijk zien dat het ethos van de journalistiek is veranderd in de hedendaagse informatiemaatschappij gestuurd door technologie en commercie. De interpretatieve journalistieke stijl, opgekomen in Europa vanaf eind jaren tachtig, wordt gekarakteriseerd door competitiviteit, proactiviteit en minder onderdanigheid ten opzichte van politici. Politici hebben hun publicitaire strategieën langs dezelfde lijn aangepast (Altheide & Snow, 1979; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kepplinger, 2002; Patterson, 1993; Tunstall, 2002). Daarnaast hebben de connecties tussen
politici en de burgerij even grote veranderingen ondergaan. Politici hebben te maken met een electoraat dat zowel minder loyaal als minder bereikbaar is (Brants & Van Kempen, 2002). Het zou dus verre van realistisch zijn om ervan uit te gaan dat de controle van politici over de media-agenda onveranderd is gebleven. Volgens hypothese 3 (H3) is de invloed van de media-agenda op de parlementaire agenda met de tijd toegenomen in vergelijking tot de omgekeerde invloed.

**Europese integratie.** Sterk gerelateerd aan het gebrek aan aandacht voor de tijdsdimensie in agenda-buildingonderzoek, is het gebrek aan aandacht voor de institutionele context waarbinnen het proces zich voltrekt. Deze context varieert tussen landen, en ook weer in de tijd. Zeker voor de landen van de Europese Unie kan dit niet genegeerd worden. Een overdracht van beslissingsbevoegdheid van de nationale instituties naar de EU zou door kunnen sijpelen naar een verzwakte invloed van de nationale politieke agenda op de nationale media-agenda. Deze hypothese is deels gebaseerd op agenda-buildingstudies die juist in het geval van internationaal diplomaticie issues een dominante media-agenda vinden (Bartels, 1996; Edwards III & Wood, 1999; Wood & Peake, 1998). Daarnaast is het afgeleid van het multilevel-governanceperspectief uit de politicologie (bijv. Anderson, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2003; Jachtenfuchs, 2001; Kohler-Koch, 2003). De centrale gedachte van multilevel governance is dat Europese integratie leidt tot een verspreiding van politieke macht over verschillende politieke en maatschappelijke niveaus. Belangrijk is dat de diverse niveaus die verondersteld worden te delen in de politieke macht die voorheen uitsluitend was toegedee aan de nationale overheid, niet beperkt blijven tot de officiële overheidsinstituties van de EU, de staat, de regio of de gemeente. Verder is dat ook niet-gouvernementele actoren, zoals het bedrijfsleven, NGO’s of zelfs burgers participeren in de competitie om daadwerkelijke politieke invloed. Deze zouden hun lobby nu namelijk rechtstreeks tot Brussel kunnen richten; de eigen nationale overheid zou daarbij lang niet altijd meer voor poortwachter kunnen spelen.

Deze studie heeft de media als maatschappelijke actor aan bovenstaand rijtje toegevoegd en is daarmee het eerste initiatief binnen de agenda-buildingtraditie dat bestudeert of en hoe de nationale media-politiekdynamiek afhankelijk is van de feitelijke institutionele context waarbinnen het zich beweegt. De politieke omgeving van de EU is er een van onzekerheden en complexiteit voor nationale parlementariërs. In de meeste Europese landen geldt dat zij veelal aan de zijlijn staan van het werkelijke politieke spel, dat aan regeringsleiders overgelaten wordt, en hebben zij – deels door organisatorische inflexibiliteit en desinteresse – een aanzienlijke informatieachterstand opgelopen (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Maurer, 2002). Vergeleken met de nationale politiek met haar vertrouwde routines, zou hun traditionele status als bronnen van nieuws kunnen afbrokkelen zodra issues deel uitmaken van Europese politiek. In deel 1 van dit onderzoek werd EU-betrokken-
heid eng gedefinieerd als de hoeveelheid Europese beslissingsbevoegdheid in beleidsdomeinen of issues volgens het juridische drie- pijlersysteem dat met het Verdrag van Maastricht in 1992 is geïntroduceerd. Hypothese 4 (H4) stelt dat in issuedomeinen met meer Europese beslissingsbevoegdheid de agenda-buildinginvoer van de media toeneemt ten opzichte van de invloed van het parlement.

Onderzoeksontwerp & methode
Een agenda-buildingmodel bevast één centraal concept: de agenda. De agenda is geïntegreerd als de hoeveelheid aandacht die een acteur aan een issue besteedt per tijdseenheid. De parlementaire agenda is onderzocht aan de hand van de aandacht die in parlementaire debatten aan bepaalde issues wordt besteed; de media-agenda door aandacht in de berichtgeving in kranten.

Landenvergelijkend. De unieke institutionele context van de EU is hier geïntroduceerd als een factor waarvan agenda building in Europa afhankelijk zou kunnen zijn. Dit schiep een aantal verplichtingen ten aanzien van de onderzoeksopzet. De invloed van de EU op nationale systemen, een invloed die overigens hevig ter discussie staat onder politici, is variabel tussen landen, tussen beleidsvelden, en over tijd. Daarmee was het niet langer toereikend om slechts een enkel land te bestuderen, zoals het merendeel van de agenda-buildingstudies tot op heden, omdat de EU tot mei 2004 vijftien lidstaten telde. De landenvergelijkingse opzet van deze studie omvat het Verenigd Koninkrijk, Nederland en Frankrijk, als vertegenwoordigers van moderne West-Europese democratieën. Tegelijk was het volgens een most-different-systemontwerp (Przeworski & Teune, 1970) noodzakelijk dat de geselecteerde landen uiteenlopende relaties onderhouden met de EU. Met deze drie landen doorkruist het onderzoek de nationale kloven die van oudsher bestaan in de EU: van algehele Eurosceptis in het Verenigd Koninkrijk, naar pragmatische welwillendheid in Nederland, tot een ambivalente mix van ideologische angst en voortvarendheid binnen de Franse politiek met enthousiaste media en onverschillige burgers. In de drie landen zijn alle relevante plenaire debatten van het parlement geselecteerd als parlementaire data. Per land zijn drie kranten geselecteerd als media data. In het Verenigd Koninkrijk zijn dit The Times, The Guardian en The Independent. In Nederland gaat het om De Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad en het Algemeen Dagblad. De Franse kranten zijn Le Monde, Libération en Le Figaro. Hoewel deze selectie de yellow press uitsluit, vertegenwoordigen de drie kranten per land een eigen politieke kleur.

Cross-sectioneel. Een cross-sectioneel ontwerp op basis van verschillende issues was in deze studie noodzakelijk om nog een andere reden dan generaliseerbaarheid. Een natuurlijk vertrekpunt om onderscheid te maken tussen de agenda-buildingdynamiek binnen Europese en nationale context, is het vergelijken van issuedomeinen met veel en weinig of geen formele
Europese beslissingsbevoegdheid. Het juridisch kader dat in het leven is geroepen om onderscheid te maken tussen supranationale besluitvorming waarnaar lidstaten zich te voegen hebben (pijler een), intergouvernementele besluitvorming die door onderling overleg tussen lidstaten tot stand komt (pijlers twee en drie), en nationale autonomie (buiten de pijlers), is hierbij richtinggevend. Zo is de machtsverhouding tussen de agenda’s van het parlement en de media getoetst voor de issues landbouw en milieu, waarover de EU supranationale beslissingbevoegdheid heeft (pijler een), drugs, ten aanzien waarvan de lidstaten volledig onafhankelijk zijn (buiten de pijlers), en immigratie, ten aanzien waarvan de lidstaten enkele gezamenlijke initiatieven ondernemen (pijler drie).


Automatische inhoudsanalyse. Samenvattend omvatten de data een paar duizend relevante parlementaire debatten en een paar honderdduizend relevante nieuwsartikelen afkomstig van drie kranten uit elk van de drie landen, over vier issues, gedurende vijf tot vijftien jaar. Op deze data is allereerst een kwalitatieve inhoudsanalyse uitgevoerd voor een inhoudelijke verkenning van de discussies die in de loop van de jaren de belangrijkste aandachtsgolven in de debatten en kranten veroorzaakt hebben. De centrale methode is een geautomatiseerde top-down inhoudsanalyse, waarmee de hoeveelheid aandacht werd vastgesteld die elke agenda aan elk van de vier issues heeft besteed. Aandacht is geoperationaliseerd als het aantal keer dat een issuespecifiek sleutelwoord per maand in de tekst voorkomt, gewogen naar de positie in het artikel (in het geval van kranten). Hiertoe zijn handmatig uitvoerige woordenlijsten met disambigueringregels opgesteld en gevalideerd met iteratieve handmatige inspecties van de resultaten. Deze zijn vervolgens gebruikt om de frequentie van sleutelwoorden te registreren als een maat voor issue-aandacht.

Structurele vergelijkingsmodellen. Met structurele vergelijkingsmodellen (SEM) is vastgesteld of een tijdreeks van issue-aandacht systematisch voorafgaat aan de andere, en is de sterkte van de wederzijdse invloedspaden geschat. SEM is een efficiënte deductieve techniek, gebaseerd op het principe van maximum likelihood, die in staat is om onmiddellijk een antwoord te geven op de conceptueel simpele vraag naar wederzijdse invloed tussen twee agenda’s binnen een vastgesteld tijdskader. Om er zeker van te zijn dat de onderliggende data aan de statistische voorwaarden voor deze deductieve
modellen voldoen, is uitgebreid geïnvesteerd in diagnostische statistische tests, waaronder met name inductieve vector autoregressie en Granger-causalitytests. De laatste hadden nog een andere functie dan uitsluitend het optimaliseren van de SEM-modellen: zij gaven ook een voorlopig idee van de richting van de causale relaties tussen agenda’s en daarmee van de machtsverhouding tussen beide. Volgens Nobelprijswinnaar Granger is er sprake van causaliteit wanneer de geschiedenis van variabele A de beste voorspelling van variabele B op basis van de eigen geschiedenis van variabele B weet te verbeteren (Granger, 1969). Echter, Granger-causalitymodellen negeren instantane invloed (hier: binnen een maand) en identificeerden in deze studie alleen de invloed die de agenda’s (stapsgewijs) in de loop van een jaar uitoefenen. Deze resultaten zijn dan ook het best te begrijpen als incrementele of vertraagde langetermijninvloed, die in het geval van de issuespecifieke modellen als aanvulling dienden op de routinematige korte-termijninteracties, waarop de onderzoeksvragen zich primair richtten.

Resultaten van deel 1
Het meest opmerkelijke resultaat van de kortetermijn SEM-modellen, ongeacht voor welke conditie werd getoetst, is de totale afwezigheid van (significante) invloed tussen de Franse parlementaire agenda en de Franse media agenda. Het wekt de verrassende suggestie dat Franse parlementariërs en journalisten elkaar zeer beperkte autoriteit toekennen als bron van informatie.

Overkoepelend. Het overkoepelende ongeconditioneerde agenda-buildingproces laat in het Verenigd Koninkrijk inderdaad een wederzijdse invloedsrelatie zien waarin de media-agenda de overhand heeft. In Nederland gaat er uitsluitend van de media-agenda invloed uit. De hypothese van reciproque invloed (H1) mag dan alleen overeind blijven voor het Verenigd Koninkrijk, de veronderstelling van media-invloed op de parlementaire agenda is onmiskenbaar zowel voor het Verenigd Koninkrijk als voor Nederland.

Verkiezingen. Alleen agenda building in het Verenigd Koninkrijk komt overeen met de verwachting dat de invloed van het parlement op de media-agenda sterker is tijdens dan buiten verkiezingstijd (H2), in overeenstemming met resultaten van Brandenburg (2002). Helaas bleken de Nederlandse and Franse resultaten onbetrouwbaar, waardoor deze studie een conclusie ten aanzien van hypothese 2 schuldig blijft.

Tijd. Zowel de Britse als de Nederlandse media hebben tussen de jaren ’90 en het begin van de 21ste eeuw aanzienlijk aan invloed gewonnen, terwijl het parlement hier niets tegenover stelt. De bevindingen bieden ruime ondersteuning voor H3. Vooruitlopend op deel 2 van de studie is het in dit verband interessant dat de zichtbaarheid van Europese actoren in het nieuws niet is toegenomen in deze periode. Het idee dat de toename van media-invloed ten dele toegeschreven kan worden aan het toegenomen belang van Europa is daarmee minder plausibel geworden.
Europese beslissingsbevoegdheid. Alle Britse en Nederlandse issues ondersteunen de hypothese dat de media-agenda sterker is in het geval van Europese issues dan in het geval van nationale issues (H4), met uitzondering van het Nederlandse milieu issue. Hier domineert het Nederlandse parlement de media-agenda sterk, terwijl het om een pijler-een-issue gaat. Hoewel immigratie een pijler-drie-issue is, en de EU enige maar bescheiden beslissingsbevoegdheid heeft, is de invloed van de Britse en de Nederlandse media-agenda hier sterker dan voorzien. Kortom, het Nederlandse parlement en de Nederlandse media weten ieder twee van de vier issues te domineren. Het parlement initieert de issues milieu en drugs, en de media de issues landbouw en immigratie. Het Britse parlement komt er bij geen enkel issue aan te pas, terwijl de Britse media drie van de vier issues (landbouw, milieu en immigratie) op de parlementaire agenda zetten (zie onderstaande tabel).

De dominante agenda volgens de SEM-modellen en de Granger-causalitytests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Analyses</th>
<th>Parlement → media</th>
<th>Media → parlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>VK</td>
<td>NL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landbouw</td>
<td>SEM (korte termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (lange termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milieu</td>
<td>SEM (korte termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (lange termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>SEM (korte termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (lange termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigratie</td>
<td>SEM (korte termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Granger causality (lange termijn)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 'x' geeft de gevonden invloedstromen weer, waarbij de drie linker kolommen de parlementaire invloed vertegenwoordigen, en de drie rechter kolommen de media-invloed.

1 Hier wordt duidelijk dat deze issuespecifieke agenda-building resultaten niet te herkennen zijn in de resultaten van de overkoepelende modellen. De SEM-modellen berekenen de overkoepelende machtsbalans niet als de optelsom van de issuespecifieke of de tijdsafhankelijke invloeden, bijvoorbeeld doordat wanneer verschillende inhoudelijk ongerelateerde tijdreeksen bij elkaar worden gevoegd, voormalige pieken en dalen uitgevlakt kunnen worden en een andere volgtijdelijkheid ontstaat. De overkoepelende modellen geven daarom slechts een ruw beeld van de dominante invloedspaden.
Aanvullend op deze SEM-bevindingen over de kortetermijn-dynamiek, hebben de langetermijn Granger-causality-tests laten zien dat Franse parlementariërs en journalisten toch niet compleet geïsoleerd van elkaar te werk gaan. De Franse pers slaagt er op de lange duur toch in de parlementaire agenda van landbouw en immigratie te beïnvloeden, consistent met de Britse en Nederlandse media-dominantie in het geval van deze issues. Voegen we de langetermijninvloeden bij de kortetermijninvloeden, dan toonen ook het Britse en Nederlandse agenda-buildingproces meer gelijkenissen, aangezien langetermijninvloed van het Britse parlement op de media-agenda dan toch opduikt in het geval van de issues drugs en milieu. De tijdspanne even buiten beschouwing latend, is de dominantie van de media-agenda onbetwist voor de issues landbouw en immigratie in het Verenigd Koninkrijk, Nederland en uiteindelijk zelfs in Frankrijk, terwijl de issues drugs en milieu ruimte laten voor Britse en Nederlandse parlementaire invloed.

Het bewijs voor een door het parlement gedomineerd milieudebat in Nederland, alsmede het herhaalde bewijs voor een door de media gedomineerd immigratie-debat suggereren dat het politieke niveau waarop beslissingen worden genomen, een belangrijke maar geen uitsluitende factor kan zijn bij de bepaling van een issue als Europees of nationaal. Hypothese 4 kan in zijn huidige vorm niet worden bevestigd, maar een aangepaste vorm wellicht wel, gezien het feit dat zelfs de onverwachte resultaten over de landen heen in dezelfde richting wijzen. Het was het doel van deel 2 van deze studie om een meer sluitend antwoord te vinden op de voortslepende vraag naar de invloed van Europa.

Controleren voor real-world cues. Om uit te sluiten dat de zojuist beschreven invloedsrelaties tussen het parlement en de media schijnverbanden zijn, vanwege de mogelijkheid dat beide agenda’s eigenlijk reageren op feiten en ontwikkelingen in de werkelijkheid (real-world cues) in plaats van op elkaar, is in het agenda-buildingmodel van immigratie gecontroleerd voor het aantal asielaanvragen. Hoewel RWC een sterke invloed uitoefent op de Britse media agenda en op de Nederlandse parlementaire agenda, veranderde dit niets aan de dominante Britse en Nederlandse media-invloed zoals oorspronkelijk werd gevonden. Het is daarmee onwaarschijnlijk dat we met schijnverbanden te maken hebben.

Een verklaring voor het nog onverklaarde: deel 2
In het tweede deel van het onderzoek verschuift de aandacht van het achterhalen van de wederzijdse invloedrelaties onder verschillende condities, naar het verklaren van de machtsbalans zoals gevonden in de verschillende issues. De rol van twee variabelen, de zichtbaarheid van Europese actoren in het nieuws en politiek conflict, is in twee aparte studies onderzocht (hoofdstuk 8 en 9), elk volgens een eigen methodologie.

Europese betrokkenheid. De issue-specifieke agenda-buildingmodellen lieten vraagtekens staan bij de onverwachte sterke Nederlandse parlemen-
naire agenda in het geval van het pijler-een-issue milieu, en bij de onverwacht sterke Britse en Nederlandse media-agenda in het geval van het pijler-drie-issue immigratie. Daarom is een gewijzigde definitie van Europese betrokkenheid voorgesteld. De hypothese hierbij is dat het de feitelijke betrokkenheid van Europese actoren bij het nationale debat is, en niet zozeer de formele beslissingsbevoegdheid, die het nationale agenda-buildingproces modereert. Hiermee wordt van een verhoogde werkelijke bemoeienis van de EU of lidstaten een sterkere invloed op de parlementaire agenda verwacht.

Method. Deze functionele benadering van de Europese dimensie van issues is geoperationaliseerd door het aantal referenties aan EU-actoren of EU-lidstaten in krantenartikelen te tellen. Een automatische top-down inhoudsanalyse, vergelijkbaar met die uit deel 1, is uitgevoerd door issues in woordenlijsten te vervangen door actoren van EU-instituties, van EU-lidstaten en van de nationale overheid. Het modererende effect van de zichtbaarheid van Europese actoren in het nieuws op de invloed die de media-agenda op de parlementaire agenda uitoefent, is getoetst met regressieanalyse in een interactiemodel.

Resultaten. De inhoud van de belangrijkste discussies omtrent de issues milieu en immigratie in het nieuws en de debatten bevestigde het idee dat we er goed aan deden de werkelijke en niet de formele betrokkenheid van Europa in het nationale debat centraal te stellen. Zo bleken Europese gebeurtenissen en actoren geen rol van betekenis te spelen in het geval van het Nederlandse issue milieu, terwijl de prominentie van Europa hoog is in het geval van het Britse en Nederlandse immigratie-issue. Overeenkomstig met deze kwalitatieve bevindingen bleek nieuws over landbouw van alle issues het meest te refereren aan EU-actoren en lidstaten, gevolgd door immigratie nieuws, waarin de lidstaten hoogst zichtbaar zijn. In nieuws over het milieu zijn Europese actoren slechts beperkt zichtbaar, terwijl nationale actoren juist sterk zichtbaar zijn. Europese actoren zijn nauwelijks zichtbaar in nieuws over drugs. Hieruit kon geconcludeerd worden dat niet milieu maar immigratie een werkelijk Europees grensoverschrijdend issue is, waarbij de lidstaten en niet de EU zelf de discussies domineren.

Tenslotte kon het voor alle landen ook statistisch bevestigd worden dat de invloed van de media-agenda op de parlementaire agenda toeneemt met de zichtbaarheid van Europese actoren in het nieuws. Dit interactie-effect is het sterkst voor het Verenigd Koninkrijk. De media-agenda beïnvloedt de parlementaire agenda al bij lage Europese zichtbaarheid, maar deze invloed neemt snel verder toe wanneer Europa prominenter in het nieuws komt. Volgens deze regressieanalyse bleek het interactie-effect ook in sterke mate te gelden voor Frankrijk, hoewel de SEM-modellen eerder geen invloed konden opsporen. De Franse pers beïnvloedt het parlement ook bij lage Europese zichtbaarheid, maar nog sterker bij hogere zichtbaarheid. In Nederland ligt de situatie iets anders. De regressieanalyse liet zien dat de Nederlandse pers normaal gesproken – dat wil zeggen in geval van lage tot gemiddelde
Europese zichtbaarheid – geen invloed uitoefent op de Nederlandse parlementaire agenda. Pas wanneer Europese actoren bovengemiddeld sterk aanwezig zijn in het nieuws wil het Nederlandse parlement zijn agenda aan dit nieuws aanpassen.

**Politiek conflict.** Binnen de politieke communicatie is het algemeen geaccepteerd dat de media de grootste kans hebben de politieke besluitvorming te beïnvloeden wanneer de meningen van de politiek betrokkenen verdeeld zijn over de koers van het beleid (bijv. Bennett, 1997; Robinson, 2001; Niven, 2005; Zaller, 1992). Op basis van deze literatuur is beargumenteerd dat naarmate een onderwerp controversieel is, het als nieuwsitem interessanter is, de publiekstechniek van politici kwetsbaarder is, hetgeen betekent dat zij meer vatbaar zijn voor de publieke opinie en media-invloed. In dit proefschrift is politiek conflict naar voren geschoven als een verklarende factor voor de modererende invloed van Europese integratie op het agenda-buildingproces. De logica hier was dat de complexiteit van de politieke netwerken waarbinnen overlegd moet worden, door Europese integratie exponentieel gegroeid is. De verwachting is dat de gelegenheden voor politiek conflict hierdoor zijn toegenomen. Conflict opent het debat onder de politieke elite voor meer marginaal beleeghebenden. Dit leidt tot sterkere competitie tussen nieuwsbronnen en tot een grotere keuzevrijheid voor de media bij de selectie van nieuwsbronnen. Nationale parlementariërs zouden nu minder als vanzelfsprekend geraadpleegd worden.

**Methode.** Het doel was om een interactiemodel te construeren met scores voor de co-occurrencie van Europese actoren en conflict. Conflict is een concept dat verwijst naar een negatief geladen relatie tussen twee of meer actoren, en is daarom linguïstisch meer ambigu en contextgevoelig dan concepten als issues en actoren. Een complexere techniek was nodig om conflict te identificeren in krantenartikelen, zonder kwesties van validiteit te veronachtzamen (bijv. Krippendorff, 2004). In plaats van woorden te tellen met vooraf samengestelde woordenlijsten, is een bottom-up benadering gevolgd door codeurs conflict in het nieuws te laten aanduiden. Deze handmatig verkregen conflict-indicatoren zijn gebruikt om een automatisch classificatiemodel te valideren volgens de *machine-learningbenadering*. Dit model zou in staat moeten zijn conflict in alle mediadata van deze studie te identificeren. Helaas bleken de prestaties van het uiteindelijk model onvoldoende. Door tijdsdruk binnen het huidige onderzoeksproject was het niet mogelijk dit model te verbeteren, hoewel dit in de toekomst zeer wel haalbaar zou kunnen zijn. Onze pogingen om het modererende effect van politiek conflict te toetsen, moesten gestaakt worden.
Conclusie & discussie
Deze studie heeft laten zien dat nationale volksvertegenwoordigers zich vandaag de dag meer laten leiden door de nationale media-agenda dan zo’n decennium geleden. Hoewel het bewijs tot dusver ontbrak, zal de agenda-buildingonderzoeker, noch de parlementariër of de journalist hierdoor van verbazing achterover vallen. Zij zullen het namelijk eens zijn met de algemeen aanvaarde veronderstelling dat het politieke spel nu eenmaal veranderd is in de huidige geglobaliseerde informatiemaatschappij en dat iedereen zich naar de nieuwe spelregels heeft moeten voegen. De aannemer dat het primaat bij de politiek ligt, een aannemer die breed wordt gedeeld onder wetenschappers, wordt nog niet direct ondernijd door enkel dit ene resultaat. Dit proefschrift heeft echter ook een meer provocatieve bevinding opgeleverd. Voor de meerderheid van de onderzochte issues blijken de rollen te zijn omgedraaid en ziet het parlement zich nauwelijks in staat enige invloed op de media-agenda uit te oefenen. Dus, media-invloed neemt niet alleen maar toe, maar vaak zijn de media zelfs de sterkste partij. Deze studie wijst uit dat vooral sterk Europees getinte discussies de macht van de media in de hand werken, of anders gezegd, het parlement ontdoen van macht. De media definiëren tegenwoordig met regelmaat waar politiek over gaat; hoe valt dat te rijmen met het primaat van de parlementaire politiek?

Media dominantie is in elk van de drie landen gevonden, maar niet overal even uitgesproken. In het algemeen geldt dat van issues met een sterke prominentie van Europese actoren een sterkere media-invloed op de parlementaire agenda uitgaat. Het primaat van de politiek heeft overleefd in Nederland. Doorgaans is de parlementaire agenda dominant. Pas wanneer de Europese betrokkenheid bij issues niet langer genegeerd kan worden, neemt de pers het voortouw. Daarentegen is de natuurlijke gang van zaken in het Verenigd Koninkrijk dat de pers leidt en zich ondertussen weinig aan het Britse parlement gelegen laat liggen. Het Franse democratische proces kan niet adequaat worden uitgelegd als een machtsspel tussen de pers en het parlement. Ze lijken hun eigen gang te gaan. Aanvullende analyses wijzen erop dat het Franse parlement, dat zelf volledig door de pers wordt genegeerd, toch sterker onder invloed komt van de media-agenda wanneer Europa een prominente rol speelt.

Een verklaring voor deze nationale verschillen in parlementaire ondergeschiktigheid aan de media-agenda, kan mogelijk gevonden worden in de omvang van het parlementaire mandaat. In 1958 heeft Charles de Gaulle de bevoegdheden van het Franse parlement uitgekleed ten gunste van de uitvoerende macht (Elgie & Griggs, 2000; Szukala & Rozenberg, 2001). De claim die de regering op de parlementaire agenda legt, laat maar weinig manoeuvreersruimte over. Dit zou een plausibele verklaring kunnen zijn voor het gebrek aan parlementaire status in de ogen van de media, en voor de beperkte mogelijkheden van het parlement om op externe signalen zoals het dagelijkse nieuws te reageren. Aangezien zowel het Britse als het Neder-
Samenvatting

Landse parlement volwaardige spelers op het nationale politieke toneel zijn, ligt de verklaring hier wellicht meer in hun feitelijke optreden dan in hun bevoegdheden. Actieve oppositie, zo nodig tot aan een kabinetscrisis, is kenmerkend voor het meerpartijenstelsel van Nederland, terwijl de meerderheidspartij in het Britse tweepartijenstelsel, wanneer puntje bij paaltje komt, geneigd is mee te buigen met de partijgenoten in het kabinet (Auel & Rittberger, 2006; Carter, 2001). Het feit dat de door slaggevende gevechten in het Nederlandse parlement worden geleverd, terwijl dit veelal in het Britse kabinet gebeurt, zou de Nederlandse parlementariërs extra krediet kunnen opleveren als nieuwsbronnen. Hier ligt een vraag voor toekomstig onderzoek.

Ter verklaring van de mate waarin de drie parlementen geneigd zijn te reageren op Europees gekleurd nieuws, zou men in de toekomst kunnen kijken naar de mate waarin Europese integratie een politiseerd issue is in de nationale politieke en publieke arena’s. Het stoïcisme van de Nederlandse parlementariërs tegenover Europees getint nieuws zou het gevolg kunnen zijn van de stilzwijgende consensus die het Nederlandse EU-beleid van oudsher kenmerkt (bijv. De Graaff, 2003; Voerman, 2005). Nederlandse parlementariërs maken nog altijd beperkt gebruik van de formele bevoegdheden die zij op het gebied van Europees beleid hebben (Boerboom, 2004; Hoetjes, 2001; Maurer, 2002). Gebrekkige kennis en desinteresse zou hen ertoe kunnen brengen Europa in het nieuws zo lang mogelijk te negeren. Tegelijkertijd accepteren de evenzeer onverschillige media (De Vreese, 2003; Pfetsch, 2005) het parlement zo lang mogelijk als vertrouwde en efficiënte nieuwsbron. Alleen wanneer de relevante van Europa zo manifest wordt dat het niet meer opzij geschoven kan worden, zou het gebrek aan professionaliteit op dit gebied de Nederlandse parlementariërs als nieuwsbronnen op kunnen breken. Daarentegen is de EU altijd hevig geopolitiseerd geweest in het Verenigd Koninkrijk en Frankrijk (Allen, 2005; Cross & Golding, 1997; Elgie & Griggs, 2000; Evans & Butt, 2007; Flood, 2005; Geddes, 2004). Omdat de EU als issue de lijnen trekt waarlangs de partijen verdeeld zijn, mag verwacht worden dat Britse en Franse parlementariërs een grotere belangstelling hebben voor wat er in de media over Europa verschijnt en eerder geneigd zijn hun agenda op die van de media af te stemmen. Het grote verschil tussen beide landen is dat, terwijl de politieke arena in beide landen door zowel voor- als tegenstanders gekleurd wordt, de Britse media fanatieke Euro sceptici zijn (Bainsnée, 2000; Cross & Golding, 1997; Geddes, 2004) en de Franse pers tot voor kort grotendeels uit Eurofielen bestond (Bainsnée, 2000; Cabedoche, 1997). Negatieve berichtgeving vraagt om een urgentere politieke reactie (bijv. Baumgartner, Jones & Leech, 1997). Dit zou kunnen verklaren waarom de agenda’s van beide parlementen sterk volgen in geval van Europees nieuws, maar ook waarom de negatieve Britse pers een nog sterker effect heeft op de parlementaire agenda dan de Franse pers.
Tot slot, vooralsnog gaan we ervan uit dat de media hun agenda-buil-
dinginvloed niet uitsluitend te danken hebben aan een opleving van de
goeide oude onderzoeksjournalistiek waarmee ze zelf maatschappelijke
issues aan het daglicht brengen, maar de vertrouwde nationale parlemen-
tariërs gewoonweg hebben verruild voor andere nieuwswaardige politieke
bronnen. Dan nog blijft het feit dat parlementariërs eens in staat waren de
media te gebruiken om nieuws van politiek te maken, terwijl ze zich nu vaak
in een situatie geplaatst zien waarin ze politiek van nieuws maken. Dit is
strijdig met een gezond functionerende democratie. Deze studie heeft de
media-agenda geïdentificeerd als drijvende kracht achter de parlementaire
agenda, met name wanneer Europa een prominente rol in het nieuws speelt.
De Europese Unie wordt vaak beklaagd vanwege haar democratisch tekort.
Onze bevindingen van een nieuwsgestuurde parlementaire agenda binnen
de eigen grenzen werpen dan ook de vraag op of Europese burgers een demo-
kratisch tekort dichter bij huis te wachten staat.
Dankwoord

Aan mijn promotor Jan Kleinnijenhuis ben ik veel verschuldigd. Je creatieve manier van denken heeft me enorm geholpen om uit ongelooflijke impasses te komen. In mijn beleving was er een wederzijds begrip waardoor we er samen altijd weer uitkwamen. Niet zelden vervielen we in een vrolijk gekibbel, tot ongenoegen van Dirk, maar voor ons beiden kwam zo de oplossing in zicht. Kwam ik je kamer met vraagtekens binnen, dan kwam ik er met uitroeptekens weer uit. Veel dank dat ik een kijkje mocht nemen in de wondere wereld die Jan heet, en gebruik mocht maken van je verbazingwekkende hoeveelheid kennis en inzicht.

Dirk, copromotor, je enthousiasme kent weinig grenzen en is de motor achter steeds weer nieuwe ideeën. Hoewel ik geregeld dacht op de rem te moeten trappen, heb je me er zo vaak aan herinnerd met wat voor prachtig en belangrijk onderwerp ik ook alweer bezig was. Dank voor je optimisme, de mentale oppeppers en meer specifiek de back-up die je me in de laatste fase gegeven hebt.

Veel dank aan mijn collega- aio Wouter. Toen jij in 2003 op de afdeling verscheen, gloorde er nieuwe hoop aan de horizon. Veel werk had ik voor die tijd handmatig verzet en gezien het vele tijdrovende handwerk dat nog voor me lag, was er wellicht genoeg reden om het project serieus te kortwikkelen. Gelukkig hoefde het met jouw kennis en handigheid op het gebied van informatica niet zo ver te komen. En dan nog alleen maar omdat jij je zo bereidwillig hebt opgesteld. Wat betreft de computertechnische kant van de inhoudsanalyse verdien je veel, zo niet alle eer. Ik hoop dat alle energie die je in het werk van anderen hebt gestoken zich nu zal vertalen in een steengoed proefschrift van jezelf.

Beste Cees, ik denk nog altijd met veel plezier terug aan het congres dat we samen in New Orleans hebben bijgewoond. Ik hoop dat je deur ook voor toekomstige promovendi zo wijd open zal staan. Dank voor je feedback, je ondersteuning samen met Luuk, en vooral ook je humeur. Ivar, kersvers op de afdeling en meteen hangt er een promovendus met een boodschappenlijst om je nek. Ik ben nog altijd zeer gelukkig met je investering in de dataverzameling van mijn onderzoek. Kim, Rens, Guido, Guda en Yoka, kamer- en lotgenoten, bedankt voor de afleiding en veel succes! Mijn nieuwe collega’s van het SCP wil ik bedanken voor de plezierige werkomgeving waardoor ik voldoende motivatie en energie overhield om mijn proefschrift in de avonduren rond te krijgen. In het bijzonder ben ik Richard erkentelijk, die van mijn manuscript belangeloos een mooie uitgave heeft gemaakt.

Typisch aan promotieonderzoek is dat het zich niet tot werk en collega’s beperkt. Je neemt het mee naar huis, mee aan de eettafel, mee onder de douche, mee in bed en mee naar familie en vrienden. Zo ook hebben mijn familie en vrienden hun eigen betekenis voor dit boek gehad.

Tenslotte, lieve Adrian, jouw onmisbaarheid voor mijn promotie bleek al ver voor de eerste werkdag toen je de betreffende vacature voor me in de krant vond. Mijn toekomst was daarmee voor jou een uitgemaakte zaak en een doorslaand succes. In praktisch opzicht heeft je computerkennis me meer dan eens gedurende dataverzameling en dataverwerking uit de brand geholpen. Daarnaast heb je alle figuren en de illustratie op de omslag vormgegeven. Maar uiteindelijk was je het meest onmisbaar door er te zijn, door mee te denken, door de boel thuis draaiende te houden wanneer ik met mijn hoofd elders was, door vijf jaar lang gedachtespinsels aan te horen die vast niet altijd even inspirerend zullen zijn geweest en door met veel optimisme een onbreekbaar vertrouwen in mij uit te spreken. De grootste kus voor jou.