Media and lawmaking: a case study analysis of the media’s role in legislative processes

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Abstract
Despite the ongoing debate about role the media play in democracies, there is little empirical research on its role in lawmaking. Yet such studies conducted at the micro-level could provide insight into the influence journalists exert on this fundamental aspect of politics. This case study analyses the role of media attention in the legislative process that resulted in the legal regulation of (semi-)public officials’ remuneration in the Netherlands. The theory-building process tracing approach adopted provides insight into the media-politics dynamics regarding lawmaking. Media attention was utilized by members of parliament in development of the legislative proposal, to place the issue on the legislative agenda and to influence the content of the bill. The chronological in-depth analysis of the claims made in the media and in parliament shows that during the legislative process, political actors responded to media attention both directly and indirectly. The incident-driven coverage served as a source of parliamentary questions that subsequently contain references to the bill, and is used by members of parliament in legislative debates to substantiate or illustrate their standpoint. More indirectly, several changes that were proposed and passed can be traced back to long-term trends in media coverage.
1. Introduction

The media are a heavily and increasingly discussed subject, both in scientific and public debates on the functioning of politics. Although media effects on politics are a growing subject of empirical research, scholarly attention for media influence on the legislative process is rare. There is in particular a lack of studies showing the mechanisms through which the media affect lawmakering. As a result there is little knowledge of the role media attention plays in the behavior of legislators and its consequences for the content of laws. In general, we know politicians adjust to the way journalists operate and anticipate on the media attention their performance may generate (Davis, 2009; Strömbäck, 2008; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011). The contact between political journalists, members of parliament and members of government is defined as a complex interaction (Cook, 2006; Davis, 2009; Sellers, 2010) and their power relationship turned into a reciprocal one (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2011). Considering the scholarly consensus about the media’s increasing power, one would expect it to play a role in all parts of the political arena. Yet what the media-politics dynamic looks like when it comes to developing new legislation, a fundamental aspect of politics, remains largely underexplored.

Because media and politics have become so intertwined, it is quite plausible that media attention matters for lawmaking as well. It is reasonable to expect that policymakers and parliamentarians will closely follow what is being written and said about legislative processes they are involved in. As a result, we might expect them to be susceptible to the things they read in the newspapers, hear on the radio and see on television. On the other hand, legislative processes are often considered to be rather lengthy and technical, and therefore not very much in line with the logic of the media. Prior research about the Netherlands shows that most legislative processes remain out of the media’s spotlights. Only 10% of all bills debated in parliament receives substantial media attention (Van Aelst, Melenhorst, van Holsteyn, & Veen, forthcoming). The question is what happens if the subject of a bill is covered extensively. A topic that is debated in the Netherlands as well as in many countries, especially since the rise of the economic crisis and the cuts and reforms that are carried out accordingly, is the issue of top incomes (Dekker, 2013). There is growing public dissatisfaction with the fact that managers, directors and top-ranking public officials (continue to) receive high salaries, sometimes including bonuses, while a lot people face the direct consequences of the crisis such as the freezing of wages or even losing one’s job.

In the Netherlands has been ample public debate about and media attention for top salaries, especially those earned with public money. After more than a decade of
public unrest, in January 2013 a law was enacted that regulates the remuneration of senior officials in the public and semipublic sector (’Wet normering topinkomens’). Did the ample media attention for top incomes affect the legislative process? And if so, in what manner(s) did it play a role? I use a theory-building process tracing method to study whether the process itself, as well as the fundamental changes in the content of the bill are inspired by, or a response to, claims in the media. The content analyses of media attention and parliamentary documents, as well as the interviews with political actors and journalists involved in the process, show that the media attention indeed trickled into the legislative process. However, even in this most likely case, media coverage rarely has a direct effect, and it is mainly used to underline or reinforce political parties’ existing positions.

2. Theoretical framework
The processes of news making and policymaking have become increasingly intertwined (Cook, 2006). Political actors anticipate on media attention in their daily thinking and behavior (Davis, 2007). Over the last decades various large-scale studies have showed that the media can set and influence policy agendas (e.g. Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Soroka, 2002; Tan & Weaver, 2009). For instance, comparative studies show that media attention for example influences parliamentary questions (e.g. Van Aelst & Vliegenthart, 2013). Politicians consider the media as the most important political agenda setter (R. Andeweg & Thomassen, 2007; Van Aelst et al., 2008). Whereas some scholars assert the media’s political agenda setting impact is limited, others however claim it is strong. These inconsistencies are explained by stressing the complexity of the interactions and the contingency of the media’s influence on politics (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006; Wolfe, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2013, p. 13).

Media attention may play a role in lawmaking as well, not only as an agenda setter, but also during the legislative process. Once an issue is on the political agenda, media attention may influence political debates and eventually also the resulting policies or legislation. Studies indicate that the media can set or constrain political agendas by shifting policymakers’ attention to a policy problem or a particular solution (Wolfe et al., 2013, p. 21). A longitudinal study of the Belgian legislative agenda suggests that media attention as an indicator of external pressure sometimes plays a role in policy change (Walgrave, Varone, & Dumont, 2006). The interaction between the media and policy actors can lead to policy change because the news media are an important source of information (Brown, 2010). Media attention attracts policy attention to public problems, and creates a sense of urgency to come up with short-term solutions (Yanovitzky, 2002).
A study of US decision-making argues that media influence on international interventions occurs when policy is uncertain and media coverage is critical and emphatic with people that are suffering (Robinson, 2000); however, Gilboa (2005) argues this effect is often exaggerated.

Although the media have no power to pass laws themselves, journalists may influence the behavior of legislators by paying attention to a bill (Wolfe, 2012, p. 123) with potential consequences for the content of bills (Melenhorst, 2013). Interviews with political actors in the UK show that they themselves think legislative debates are influenced by journalists and media attention (Davis, 2009, p. 214). The impact may for example be in amplifying debates, forcing the speed of response or even changing policy directions. A study of legislators in Switzerland argues that in decision-making processes parliamentarians, especially those in an opposition role, are mediatized in the sense that they are oriented towards the audience (Landerer, 2014). This suggests that during legislative processes, political actors anticipate the requirements of the media (Landerer, 2013).

What is lacking in previous research is how specific news stories impact the behavior of politicians, and what the resulting consequences for bills under consideration are. Because lawmaking touches the heart of the democratic process it is relevant to know whether the behavior of journalists indeed matters for legislative work. A quantitative study of media effects on bills in the Netherlands showed that legislative processes are indeed influenced by the media. If bills receive more media-attention, more amendments are introduced by both members of parliament and members of government (Melenhorst, 2013). This suggests that media coverage can encourage political actors to propose amendments to bills, which confirms the suggestion that the media can shape the contours through which policy moves (Wolfe, 2012). How this mechanism works is unclear, because in-depth case studies are lacking. What happens to bills when the media report on the legislative process and/or the subject of the bill? Does media attention matter for lawmaking, and if so, in what way?

**Exploratory analysis**

The aim of this exploratory study is to develop a tentative answer to this question. An in-depth study of the claims voiced in the media about the topic of a bill and the claims made during the legislative process in Parliament, combined with interviews conducted with both the political actors and journalists involved, could provide insight into the interaction between journalists and political actors and its consequences for legislation. I have developed a heuristic model as a fundament for the exploratory analysis (see
The starting point of the analysis is the media attention for the (subject of) the bill. On the one hand, political actors may act in response to this media attention. On the other hand, their behavior may generate (more) media attention. The complex interaction between politicians and journalists may ultimately have consequences for the content of the bill. In this section I explain the model and develop research questions that guide the case study analysis.

When studying the media attention for (the subject of) a bill, the salience is important, because more media attention means there is a stronger incentive for political actors to respond. The content consists of the claims made and the arguments used. Not all actors will be equally visible in media, members of government for example tend to have easier access than other political actors. In addition, what is relevant is which media outlets paid attention and to what extent the coverage is congruent. Because of what is known as ‘intermedia agenda setting’, radio and newspaper coverage are expected to influence television reporters (Bartels, 1996; Butler, 1998; Roberts & McCombs, 1994) and media effects are expected to be stronger if the various media focus on the same issue, frame it in a similar way and cover it persistently (Eilders, 1997, 2000, 2001).

Media attention does not directly influence the content of bills: political actors are the ones that can respond to what is said or written in the media. This behavior might then have consequences for legislation. Politicians may either explicitly refer to media attention, or respond to it more implicitly by copying or mirroring – parts of – the media content. They can act ad hoc, by asking parliamentary questions, requesting an interpellation and/or introducing a motion. Previous studies have shown that many oral and written questions are a response to media coverage (Van Aelst & Vliegenthart, 2013; Van Santen, Van Aelst, & Helfer, 2013). Although parliamentary questions are not part of legislative processes in the narrow sense, they can be so in practice when they concern the topic of the bill under consideration. Political actors may also respond to coverage in their contribution to legislative reports and debates. The former mainly serve to ask questions about the bill, the latter are used to ask further questions, but mainly serve as a platform to communicate the standpoint of one’s party concerning the bill to the minister and other parties, as well as to the wider public. Politicians can also introduce an initiative during the legislative process. The minister involved can directly change the content of the bill by sending a government amendment to Parliament. Members of parliament can introduce an amendment (a proposal to change the actual...
content of the bill) or a motion (a request to take something into account concerning for example the implementation or evaluation of a bill). To take force, they need the support of the majority: a final way for political actors to respond to media attention is therefore their decision (not) to support a proposed change.

These responses are not mutually exclusive, in fact they can occur at the same time or successively. They may not only have consequences for the legislative process, but might also trigger the attention of journalists, thereby evoking even more media attention. For this reason the relationship between 'behavior of political actors' and 'media attention' is modeled as a feedback loop. Political actors may, for example, ask parliamentary questions or introduce an amendment to gain media attention. On the other hand, journalists can reveal problematic issues by paying attention to them, with the aim of triggering a political response. The interaction between media attention and political actors may eventually affect the content of the bill. Whether it changes depends on the votes on the change proposals as well as on the vote on bill in both houses of parliament.

Research questions
The main question to be answered in this case study is whether media attention has influenced the legislative process, and if so, in what manner. Because of the exploratory nature of the study, sub questions instead of hypotheses guide the analysis. The first sub question concerns the period preceding the introduction of the bill to parliament, the phase in which the legislative agenda setting takes place. Legislative proposals do not just appear out of nowhere: in principle they are a response to public as well as political debate about a topic. This means that media attention may play a role in the decision to develop a bill in the first place, as well as in parliamentary debates about the content of the legislative proposal. Therefore the first research question is: did media attention play a role in the development of the legislative proposal, and if so, in what manner?

Once the bill is introduced in Parliament, the actual legislative process starts. Media attention may be used explicitly by members of parliament in the course of this process. Even if members of parliament do not refer to a broadcast or newspaper article explicitly, the coverage may trickle into the legislative process. They may for example echo claims that were voiced in the media previously, respond to information they received via the media, or feel pressured by (anticipated) media coverage. Therefore the second sub question is: has media attention played a role in the legislative process, and if so, in what manner?
Media attention may however also have consequences for legislative outcomes. Information provided via the media can be a reason for political actors to introduce or support changes in the content. Therefore the third sub question is: has media attention influenced the content of the bill, and if so, in what manner?

3. Method and data
This in-depth case study is conducted to contribute to a preliminary yet empirically grounded theory about the media's influence on lawmaking processes. A theory-building process tracing method is adopted to gain insight in the reciprocal process, by combining content analyses of media coverage and parliamentary documents with semi-structured interviews. In terms of research methods, I distinguish the period preceding the introduction of the bill in Parliament from the subsequent parliamentary legislative process. First a content analysis of media coverage and parliamentary action of the long-term period prior to the introduction of the legislative proposal is conducted. Second, I do an in-depth claim analysis of the legislative process and the media attention in this period. Both analysis are focused on changes in the content of the bill. The interviews with political and journalistic actors involved concern the period as a whole.

Case selection
To explore the complex interaction between journalists and political actors I focus on lawmaking in one specific case in the Netherlands. The Dutch political system is a multiparty system that is typically characterized as a consensus democracy (Lijphart, 2012). Parliament has a bicameral structure, and as in most parliamentary democracies, both cabinet ministers and members of the Lower House of parliament can initiate legislation (R. B. Andeweg & Irwin, 2009). The vast majority of bills however originate in cabinet (Bovend’Eert & Kummeling, 2010, p. 198) and private member’s bills hardly ever become formal laws. For this reason it is appropriate to study a bill that has been introduced by the government. The legislative process starts when the minister sends the bill to the House of Representatives. In this phase, legislative proposals can be amended by members of government and by members of the Lower House. When the House of Representatives passes a bill, it is sent to the Senate. Whereas the House of Representatives is more engaged in day-to-day politics, the Senate is typically referred to as a ‘chambre de réflexion’. Members of the Upper House can only reject or accept the bill, and focus more on amongst others (technical) judicial aspects, the relationship to international law, the bill’s suitability and its feasibility (Knippenberg, 2002). When the
Because of the unequal distribution of media attention to bills, it makes sense to study a bill that has been covered extensively by the media. If there would be any indications of media influence on legislative processes, one should be able to find it in a highly mediatized, and thus most likely case. In part because of the absence of the legislative discontinuity principle in the Netherlands, bills do not die after a dissolution of Parliament (Van Schagen, 1997) and are only very rarely rejected, therefore the bill under study should be passed. The bill ‘regulation of the remuneration of top-ranking officials in the public and semipublic sector’ (Wet normering bezoldiging topfunctionarissen publieke en semipublieke sector) suits all above-mentioned criteria. In this case all conditions for potential media influence are present, therefore it is a most likely case (but compared to other bills passed in the same period not an outlier, both in terms of media attention and proposed amendments). The bill legally regulates the remuneration of senior officials in the public and semi-public sector, and is the outcome of more than a decade of public and political debate about the top incomes of high public officials. This is an issue that is subject to discussion in many countries, as one can see in Dekker’s (2013) philosophical evaluation of the arguments used in the political discourse concerning this question in 17 liberal democracies. This case thus finds resonance in many countries besides the Netherlands. The bill was introduced into Parliament by the minister in January 2011 and the legislative process took two years. The act of law was published in the law gazette in November 2012 and took effect as from January 2013. In the meantime four government amendments, 17 parliamentary amendments and three motions were introduced, of which eight amendments and two motions were passed. This lead to fundamental policy changes concerning the bill’s scope and application, its transition period, and the type of salary maximum applied to specific sectors.

Data
Parliamentary documents have been retrieved from the governmental website ‘Officiële bekendmakingen’, as well as the website of both the Ministry of the Interior and the Lower House. All documents that are part of the legislative process¹ are studied, which adds up to a total of 178 documents, as well as all 271 parliamentary documents that deal with the issue of (semi)public officials’ remuneration in the 10-year period.

¹The bill and the accompanying explanatory memorandum, government amendments, parliamentary amendments, motions, letters from the minister, the proceedings of the legislative debates and votes on the bill.
preceding the introduction of the bill. For studying media attention, as a rule of thumb, all articles and items that discuss the remuneration of officials, working either in the public sector or in a semipublic sector, are taken into account, whether they specifically deal with the bill or not. Articles published in all national newspapers and magazines (searched using LexisNexis) as well as radio and television broadcasts are taken into account. I chose to study the media-attention prior to the introduction of the bill for the period 2007–2010, because a preliminary analysis of the parliamentary documents showed the actual build-up to the bill started in 2007. In this period 1291 newspaper articles were published about the bill, as well as 24 radio and television items. To study the media-attention during the legislative process, I analyzed all coverage from the 1st of January 2011 (two weeks before the introduction of the bill) until the 1st of December 2012 (two weeks after the law was published). This includes 946 articles in national newspapers and 81 published in magazines, as well as 32 radio and television items.

Content analyses
I conducted content analyses of the media attention for the (subject of the) bill and of all parliamentary documents. The data from the period of the legislative process was analyzed using MAXQDA, a software program for qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis. It allows both to code the text of the documents, as well as assign values to variables at the document-level. The study contains a deductive element, as is common in theory-building (Beach & Pedersen, 2013, p. 17), with the heuristic model and sub questions serving as a grid to detect patterns in the empirical material. The codebook is however developed inductively, which means that claims, arguments, actors, documents, developments et cetera that are mentioned in the documents are coded as they pop up. To start off with, a basic codebook was developed by scanning through a sample of 100 newspaper articles and reading the explanatory memoranda of the introduced amendments. By continuously adding new codes to the codebook and reorganizing them I made sure to end up with an exhaustive overview of all sorts of claims made on the topic of the law. The theory building process tracing is Y-centric, meaning that I look at

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2 This includes the proceedings of other meetings of the parliamentary committee, letters from the government, the documents from the public consultation of the draft bill, advisory reports and parliamentary questions since 2001.
3 See Appendix I for the search strings and media outlets analyzed.
4 Radio and television broadcasts have been searched using the catalogue of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, which includes all television and radio programs broadcasted by the national channels, the website of the Dutch Public Broadcast Organization and the websites of the various broadcast organizations/television programmes. The analysis includes only public broadcasts because the (only) commercial news show RTL Nieuws was unable to provide data for this study.
5 All coding was done by the author, except for the coding of the 2007-2010 newspaper coverage. A coder was trained by the author and the data were checked at random by the author.
the outcome and work ‘backward’ to study to what extent changes in the bill can be understood as a consequence of prior debates in the media (and in parliament). Although the focus is on changes in the content, also content that has was not amended is taken into account, to make sure all debates (including those that eventually did not result in changes) are included in the analysis.

The content analysis is directed towards claims, defined (inspired by Koopmans & Statham, 2010) as a verbal expression of a political opinion. Coding is done at the level of the (quasi)sentence, which is coded as a claim if it is an expression of a political opinion. Once a claim-code is ascribed to a text segment, also the actor(s) making the claim, justifications mentioned, parliamentary instruments referred to, and addressees to which the claim is directed are coded. Actors can be individuals (for example a politician), but also groups of individuals (f.e. a political party or – a majority of – the Lower House). Justifications are arguments brought up to substantiate a claim (f.e. ‘because their salaries are paid out of tax money’). Because the codebook is developed inductively, all expressions of political opinions that have to do with the issue of top incomes are coded as claims. Besides a large variety of ‘substantive claims’ there are a lot of ‘naming and shaming-claims’: whereas the former contain a position on what to do (f.e. ‘There should be a complete ban of bonuses in the public and semi-public sector.’), the latter only argue a remuneration is undesirable (f.e. ‘My party thinks it is ridiculous that directors of housing corporations receive bonuses’).

In addition a content analysis of the data from the period preceding the introduction of the bill is done, however because of the longer timespan and the fact that this has more the character of a ‘pre study’ to the actual legislative process, the analysis is less detailed. All parliamentary documents were analysed and the claims made by all actors were summarized per document. The media attention in the period preceding introduction of the bill was analyzed via a content analysis at the document level as well. The analysis concerns articles in 12 national newspapers6 and newspaper and radio broadcasts searched using the same method applied to the media coverage during the legislative process.

*Interviews*

After the content analyses were finished, interviews were conducted with political actors participated in the legislative process (both members of the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as ministers and their assistants) and journalists

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6 The national newspapers taken into account are AD/Algemeen Dagblad, Dagblad De Pers, De Telegraaf, De Volkskrant, Het Financieele Dagblad, Metro, Nederlands Dagblad, NRC.NEXT, NRC Handelsblad, Reformatorisch Dagblad, Spits, and Trouw.
that reported about the (topic of) the bill. For an overview of all interviewees, see Appendix II. They are semi-structured, meaning that the exact course of the interview and formulation of questions is flexible, but that the topics discussed are similar per type of actor. The main subjects in the interviews with political actors are: the prior parliamentary and public debate about top incomes, the course of the legislative process, their preparation, their own role in the process, motivations for action, sources of information, media-attention for the topic and for the bill, contact with journalists, their perception of the role of media attention in this legislative process, and their perception of (the role of) media attention when it comes to legislation more general. The main subjects in the interviews with journalists are: the development of, reasons for, timing and aim of the article(s)/item(s) they contributed to, its relationship to the political debate about top incomes and/or the bill, its perceived (political) consequences, their perception of the newsworthiness of the issue and the legislative process more specifically, as well as their more general thoughts on the relationship between media attention and lawmaking.

4. Results

To answer the first research question (did media attention play a role in the development of the legislative proposal, and if so, in what manner?) we first take a look at how the media attention for the issue relates to the key moments in parliament in the period 2007-2010. Figure 2 shows a strong correlation between the peaks in the total amount of media attention per month and the key moments in Parliament (marked with numbers 1-10). In sum, 60% of all articles (792/1291) in the whole period name and shame the remuneration of either a specific official, of officials in a specific sector, or the (semi)public sector as a whole. 237 articles contain a claim in favor of regulation of top incomes, and 289 articles refer to developments in parliament.

Figure 2 about here

In February 2007 the coalition agreement of the Balkenende IV-government was presented (1): it announces that incomes in the (semi)public sector will be regulated. The media coverage up till September is mainly incident-driven, naming and shaming the salaries of various officials in the semipublic sector. This corresponds to the parliamentary debate at the time, which was mainly about incidents concerning various top-ranking officials that were paid with public money. Once the advisory committee set

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7 The interviews are still in process: at this moment 20 interviews have been conducted.
up by the government publishes its advice on regulation of top incomes (2), this is extensively reported on and commented to in the media. The small peak in attention at the end of the year are articles about the annual ministerial report, a result of legislation that came into force in 2006, that obliges all organizations in the (semi)public sector to publish all salaries paid that exceed the ministerial salary.

Then media attention wanes up till June 2008 (3), the moment the government presents its policy line towards the regulation of top incomes and announces that a bill will be developed, in response to various reports by the advisory committee and multiple motions passed by the House of Representatives over the years to develop legislation. This in part explains the peak in media attention, however there is also a lot of naming and shaming of salaries at public broadcasting organizations and in the education sector, which leads to emergency debates and governmental action, that are then reported about in the media again. During the summer, there is a lot of incident coverage, in part fueled by a report published by the SP about top salaries in the health care sector. In response to that, in the fall of 2008 (4-5-6) there are two extensive debates in parliament and a letter from the minister that further explains the cabinet’s policy decisions. The Lower House requests the government to change their proposal and apply a stricter norm to the health care sector and housing corporations. Media attention served as input for debates in this period, but also reported on the main outcomes, thereby sometimes referring to the bill as well.

In the first months of 2009 attention is again highly incident-driven, largely because of two scandals at housing corporations. This fuels political debate again, and leads to a proposal by the Minister of Housing in April to apply the strictest norm, instead of self-regulation, to this sector. In June 2009 (7) the Minister of the Interior, responsible for the regulation of top incomes, announces that indeed the housing corporations will be moved to the strictest remuneration regime of the bill. This is reported by the media, while in the meantime the naming and shaming-coverage continues. In September (8) the minister announces that she is preparing the legislative proposal, which is the reason another extensive debate is held in Parliament. Like the year before, this leads to some coverage about the bill, in addition to the ‘regular’ incident coverage. In October (9) the draft bill is published for public consultation. Both political and media attention wanes somewhat as the PvdA resigns from government in February 2010. The bill is discussed by the Council of Ministers in April and sent to Council of State in May (10), which leads to a tiny peak in media attention again. After the election period in June the naming and shaming coverage concerning various sectors
increases again, besides in the newspapers also in investigative television programs such as Zembla. Parliament responds to this in (emergency) debates.

All political actors interviewed agree that media attention played a role in the development of the legislative proposal. As one of the MPs argues: “If there wouldn’t have been media attention for top salaries, the bill would never have been developed.”\(^8\)

It revealed that in a broad range of sectors that are public or semipublic, top-ranking officials were paid salaries that exceed the ministerial salary, an unofficial salary norm. This increased societal awareness as well as dissatisfaction, and was used by proponents of legal regulation to call for action. Media attention served as a source of multiple parliamentary questions, interpellations and emergency debates. According to various interviewees, in this phase the personal interaction between political actors and journalists played a role, with the politicians themselves trying to get the issue on the political agenda (more prominently) via the media. Sometimes this means politicians passed through information they received from individual citizens or organizations, but some parties also did research themselves and managed to receive media coverage of it, like the SP did multiple times with reports of top earners in health care. An opposition MP explains: “For us, those incidents were very important to get the subject on the agenda.” Motions were introduced in this phase not only to call for quick legal regulation, but were also a means to attract journalistic attention. Several parties (opposition parties GroenLinks and the SP, but also D66 whilst in the coalition) even announced that if the government was not willing to come up with legislation, they would introduce a private member’s bill to regulate top incomes themselves. Although none of them have actually introduced one, they were also a means both to put political pressure on the government and, because of their rarity in Dutch politics, a successful way to gain media attention.

The naming and shaming in newspapers, magazines and on television was also frequently used in parliamentary debates to underline the necessity of imposing a maximum salary and to argue that the existing law that enforced publication of top salaries did not have a moderating effect. In these various ways the incident-driven media coverage as a whole has played a role in legislative agenda setting as it contributed to the political willingness to develop a legal salary maximum. In terms of the content of the concept bill, the decision to apply a stricter salary maximum to the housing corporations is a direct response to the incidents that were highlighted in the media. According to various political actors interviewed, the ample coverage of incidents increased the cabinet’s willingness to comply with the motion passed in the Lower

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\(^8\) Quotes are translated from Dutch to English by the author.
House that requests for adjusting the legislative proposal. However, the media coverage in the years preceding the bill also increased the political support for legal regulation in a more general sense. As one of the interviewees says: "The idea for a bill was latently present, and when social unrest arises, it comes to a climax." The ongoing media attention for incidents has contributed to the gradual process in which parties that used to oppose government intervention with salaries transformed into proponents of legal regulation. An MP explains: "The mechanism came into force that the media start searching for incidents; if one medium scores with a case, the others start doing the same thing." (..) “Then they all did it, and then there turned out to be a lot of cases, and there were so many of them that actually nobody was willing to defend it. And if nobody defends it anymore, the pressure gets so high that as a government you have to do something.” In sum, media coverage played an important role in the legislative agenda setting phase of the regulation of top incomes.

**Media influence on the process**

The second sub question is whether and how media attention explicitly played a role during the legislative process. The results of the analysis of the media attention for the (topic of the) bill during the legislative process demonstrate that the period as a whole is dominated by congruent, incident-driven coverage that contains claims ‘naming and shaming’ the salaries paid to specific public officials (such as the president of a university), by a specific organization (such as a housing corporation) or in a sector as a whole (such as the health care sector). About half of all claims in newspaper articles were naming and shaming, and radio and television items also all contain such claims.

*Figure 3 about here*

At the moment the bill was introduced in the House of Representatives (1) and the first amendments were introduced (2), some media paid attention to the legislative process. However, most of the coverage during the legislative process is still incident-driven. All coverage contains a lot of naming and shaming. There is no attention for the ministerial response to the Lower House committee report (3) nor for the various amendments introduced in July and August (4). In October the first legislative debates took place (5), where most amendments were introduced. The media paid very little attention to this, especially compared to the total amount of coverage for the issue of top incomes. There was another legislative debate, accompanied by the introduction of multiple amendments and motions, in December (6). The next week the vote in the Lower House
was taken. Again there was some, but relatively little, attention for the legislative process. The incident-driven coverage increased a little bit in this period, however increased in the first months of 2012, right after the bill was sent to the Senate. In February 2012 additional advice from the Council of State was requested (7). In the following weeks there are some media references to the bill, although there are no legislative developments: this includes letters from interest groups that are published in the media, as well as short references in articles that are incident-driven. There was no media coverage for the bill when the preparatory study took place (8-9). The small peak in bill-related coverage in September is due to a short article that was published in many newspapers about a decision concerning housing corporations a minister needed the bill for. When the legislative debates were held in November, and the bill was passed, by the Senate (10), there was relatively little incident-coverage and quite some attention for the bill, but almost exclusively in relation to a passage in the new coalition agreement that announced an amending bill to lower the maximum salary and broaden the scope.

The claims that are visible in the media during the legislative process are predominantly unidirectional, in favour of regulation. Actors opposing the bill as a whole are not visible in the media, and debates about whether to regulate or not only concern the question whether more sectors and elements should be added to the bill. A lot of the naming and shaming comes from journalists. By doing so they amplify the idea that public opinion is very hostile towards top incomes. There is frequent media attention for reports on top salaries published by interest groups and by investigative journalists. Top incomes are (in voting research terminology) a ‘valence issue’ instead of a ‘position issue’ because most people agree that excessive salaries in the (semi)public sector are undesirable and that it is the task of the central government to regulate them. By naming and shaming journalists contribute to this impression and thereby reinforce the ‘spiral of silence’ concerning arguments against regulation and the justification of high incomes. Media attention is sometimes used by interest groups to voice their opinion, but predominantly by unions revealing or criticizing high salaries. In 2011 there is only one letter published in which the association of directors and supervisors in health care oppose the intention of the Lower House to apply a stricter remuneration regime. The Senate is addressed more often in media coverage, by associations of directors that criticize the classification of their sector, but also in opinion pieces by journalists that incite passing the bill.

The manifold incident-driven coverage remains constant over the course of the two years, irrespective of the phase of the legislative process. In this context journalists sometimes refer to parliamentary questions; some announce questions asked in
response to an incident they report on, some discuss the answers of the government. However, there is only very little coverage that is either specifically about the bill, or that contains a reference to the legislative process. In 2011, as the bill is under consideration in the House of Representatives, only 45 articles (9%) contain a reference to the bill and only 14 refer to a legislative debate, mainly prospective in announcing a debate will take place. Sometimes journalists report on debates, but do so by writing ‘…a majority in the Lower House wants to..’ without mentioning the specific debate or amendment. There is no coverage whatsoever of the three motions introduced with the bill and only four articles pay attention to six out of seventeen amendments, mainly summarizing them in one or two sentences.

The incident coverage and coverage of the bill are often separate articles, mainly because of a practical separation of labour. As is confirmed by journalists in the interviews, the former are mainly produced by investigative journalists and editors with a specific area of expertise, such as health care or education, whereas the latter are produced by political journalists that focus on what is happening in Parliament. Change proposals are mostly covered in the context of plenary debates, which does not necessarily coincide with the moment they were introduced. A political journalist explains: “We report very little on the discussion in the Lower House as such. It is more about, what does the reader get out of it? We are not a ‘party horn’.” Amendments are also only covered when (expected to be) passed and/or when there is some kind of conflict involved. In newspaper articles as well as reports on the radio it is for example explained that the PVV, the party supporting the minority government at the time, made a deal with the opposition party PvdA to pass two amendments, and that a majority in the Lower House supported diverse change proposals, although the minister strongly advised against them.

All political actors interviewed agree that journalists are usually not interested in legislative processes, let alone specific amendments, and that they will only report on them if there is some type of conflict involved, especially when it concerns the coalition parties. A political journalist of a quality newspaper confirms that legislation might only be interesting at the moment when it is announced, and when it is passed, but only if it ‘changes the world’. Because this bill was a response to more than a decade of societal unrest about top incomes, he reported on the bill after it was passed by the Senate. “Legislative debates are usually very predictable and not something the average reader is interested in,” he explains. In line with this, various Members of Parliament explained that they did not even try to arouse journalistic interest in the amendment(s) they introduced, because it would be pointless. This means that traditional news values, such
as conflict, impact and unexpectedness, are important for the newsworthiness of legislative processes. The mere fact that parties disagree about a part of the bill is in principle not enough to get media attention. However, if there is political conflict, for example within the coalition, a lawmaking process may attract journalistic attention. A bill's chances of being covered by the media is also higher if it has consequences for peoples' daily lives. Third, the legislative behaviour of a party can be newsworthy if it is surprising, either because the standpoint is perceived as weird by the journalist, or because it is unexpected to be proposed or opposed by the party that is acting. In any case, MPs monitor media attention for the issue. Most of them keep an eye on what is in the media themselves, and are helped by their assistants, colleagues and even by individual citizens or party members, who e-mail them about things they read or saw in the media. Most MPs explain that they keep a dossier about every legislative process they are involved in, that includes media coverage, as well as parliamentary documents, letters and e-mails they received about the issue et cetera. The media thus sometimes function as a source of information, however always in combination with other sources, both the written sources just mentioned and personal contact with interest groups and lobbyists.

The incident-driven coverage played a role in the legislative process. First of all, a majority of parliamentary questions about top incomes is explicitly based on media attention. The first question is usually whether the minister or state secretary has read the article, the second what his or her response to the main claim is. The questions that do not mention a news item as explicit source do concern incidents that were covered by the media. As a result members of government are forced to respond to claims made in the media and thereby they often explicitly refer to the bill that is under consideration. Sometimes parliamentarians even use questions to draw attention to amendments they introduced with the bill. The SP did this by asking whether the government was willing to accept their change proposals in response to a news item about the salary of a health care director. The PvdA did a similar thing, by asking whether one of their amendments that was passed would in the future avoid excessive salaries reported in the media. The media-inspired questions are thus related to the legislative process, but seem to play only a marginal role in the legislative process as such, as one of the sources of information Members of Parliament have at their disposal.

Second, media attention plays a role in legislative debates. In the Lower House five out of the eight parliamentarians explicitly referred to coverage in newspapers of

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9 An example: a member of the SP asked written questions about the severance pay of a former chairman of housing corporation Woonbron. She referred to the annual report of the corporation as the source of the questions. However, the day before also two newspapers wrote about this severance pay.
that day. As was confirmed in the interviews, they do so to underline the necessity of the bill or a change proposal, to show the topicality of the issue and to show public debate is translated into legislation. It is also a rhetorical manner of making the debate more lively and make the issue recognizable for the larger public. “It is a nice way to underline your argument,” one of the MPs explains. “So you use it more rhetorically, to reinforce your words, than that it is the cause of the content of your plea.” Media coverage is also referred to in a more general way, in both Houses of Parliament. A Member of Parliament argues his amendment will end the damage in the confidence of people ‘when they read that the managers of charities they wanted to give money to earn excessive salaries’. The Minister of the Interior refers to ‘the reporting on and the images of excessive salaries’ to argue that he understands why the debate is dominated by proposals to broaden the scope and strictness. In the preparatory study of the bill in the Senate, his successor argues that the government has noticed that the attention for the salary level of top-ranking officials has increased over the past few years in the Lower House, but also in the public debate and the media. And a senator refers to ‘stories in the media about a director of a housing corporation’ (Handelingen Eerste Kamer, 2012/2013, p. 9) who drove a Maserati paid by public money and received a severance pay of 3.5 million euros. In addition to mentioning media attention explicitly, MPs also often mention excessive salaries at specific schools, hospitals or housing corporations that were covered extensively in the media as examples. This is a way of showing how incidents that became public via the media are become part of legislation. One of them explains: “You can mention examples nobody knows, but they don't make a profound impression. The interesting thing about these examples is that they are recognizable for people.”

Media attention also plays a role in the process via the anticipatory behaviour of political actors. MPs seems to anticipate on media coverage, yet mainly when it comes to the actual vote, because journalists do not tend to monitor legislative processes closely. This explains why some MPs do voice ‘unpopular’ standpoints during debates, such as a MP of the ChristenUnie who proposed to apply a less stringent norm to the housing corporations. Parties also try to be consistent and vote in line with their previous standpoints. Especially in the Senate, where the debate was less about the actual content of the bill and more about its judicial feasibility, a couple of parties were quite critical. Eventually all parties supported the bill, according to a Senator in part because there would be a majority for the bill anyway, but also with an eye on potential media coverage. Various Senators are part-time managers or members of supervisory boards of (semi)public organizations, and therefore opposing the bill could be interpreted as
them being motivated by self-interest, as part of the ‘old-boys network’. Because it was 
also not in line with public opinion, parties that were hesitant realized that not 
supporting the bill could lead to unfavourable media coverage. In sum, media coverage 
is thus used by political actors during the debates to illustrate the context of public 
debate, as well as to justify the introduction of and support for change proposals, but 
also they also take the potential consequences of their behavior for future coverage into 
account. Media attention thus has consequences for the legislative process in various 
ways.

**Media influence on content**

The third question is whether media attention influenced the content of the bill. During 
the process the bill was changed drastically: its scope and application were broadened, a 
transition period was introduced, and the type of remuneration regime applied to 
several sectors was altered. There is congruence between both the claims and the 
justifications as voiced in the media and during the legislative debates. This suggests 
that media coverage may have inspired change. However, in the media naming and 
shaming-claims were predominant, whereas in Parliament mainly substantial claims 
were made. The change proposals in the legislative process are not a direct response to 
media coverage. Most sub debates about salaries in specific sectors, such as the health 
care sector, or remuneration elements, such as bonuses, started well before the bill was 
introduced to parliament, both in the media and in politics. Various amendments and 
motions build further on parliamentary questions that were directly based on media 
coverage, and contain claims that were visible in parliamentary debates and motions 
prior to the legislative process (which were, as discussed before, often responses to 
media coverage). There is for example a lot of incident coverage about the health care 
sector, both before and during the legislative process. Over the years a lot of 
parliamentary questions were asked about media reports on salaries in the health care 
sector, and a motion was passed prior to the introduction of the bill to bring this sector

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10 One of the changes in the content of the bill that was conducted via an amendment in the Lower 
House, was reversed by the minister at the time the bill was under consideration in the Upper House. 
The Council of State was critical in its advice to the Lower House about the fact that the bill would 
apply to all charities with the so-called ANBI-status. The minister therefore announced an act to close 
this loophole, however because of other legal provisions the intention of the law was not changed.

11 Arguments used to justify these claims are the fact that organizations have a public task, work for the 
common good, the current economic situation, that it should not be possible to escape from the norm, 
that organizations are paid with tax money, that they do not operate in a market and therefore encounter 
little competition and risks, that there is no (necessary) relationship between the salary level and 
performance, the (long-lasting) public debate about top incomes, the fact that currently excessive 
salaries are being paid, that there is a disproportional difference with the salaries paid to ‘regular’ 
employees and that self-regulation does not work.
under the more stringent norm. Subsequently, during the legislative process, the same parties (the opposition parties and parliamentary supporter PVV) introduced and supported amendments to realize this. Various interviewees confirm that initially, already before the actual bill was proposed, incident-driven media coverage raised the awareness that top salaries in the health care sector were high and might need regulation. One of them even states that "..it is the rule rather than the exception that public debate leads to amendments".

Changes in the content of the bill are thus not caused by specific media coverage, but are a more long-term response to extensive media coverage. Some changes were not preceded by substantial media debates (such as a motion about regulation of the child care sector), some media debates are not related to changes (like the debate about lowering the norm salary) and there are also sectors that were not discussed in the media, nor in parliament (like the pilotage system). That being said, media attention mainly seems to have presented problems, that parliament developed solutions for. A number of interviewees confirm that most amendments were not responses to specific media coverage, but were inspired by coverage at large about the issue at stake. They do however also emphasize that it is the task of the representative to weigh media coverage and make a comparative assessment of all information they have at their disposal, based on their political viewpoints. What is important is to keep in mind that amendments have a general character, whereas media attention is always about (a) specific incident(s). Legislation contains universal rules and is therefore not particularly suitable to respond to media covered incidents. Closest are the amendments that expand the scope of the bill to additional sectors and remuneration elements, however even those are difficult to trace back to incidents that occurred in specific organizations. The long-term trends in coverage however changed the perception of political actors, they argue themselves, from considering excessive salaries as incidents to seeing them as trends.

Towards a preliminary model of media influence on lawmaking

With the aim of theory-building in mind, it is time to develop the outline of a preliminary model of media influence on lawmaking (see Figure 4). It is grounded in specific case study only, so it is unlikely to fully match other legislative processes, but some central mechanisms can be distilled.

*Figure 4 around here*
First of all, I distinguish between the period before and after the introduction of the bill. To start with the former, media attention does play a role in legislative agenda setting. Real world events, in this case mainly salaries paid to top-ranking officials, investigative journalism and action by interest groups lead to incident coverage. On the long term, this coverage contributes to the willingness to development new legislation, in this case to replace the bill that enforces publication of top incomes by a new bill that actually regulates salaries in the (semi)public sector. In addition to this direct, long-term effect, the incident coverage also serves as a source for (ad hoc) debates, motions and parliamentary questions about the issue at stake, in this case salaries, bonuses, and severance pays that are perceived as excessive. In addition, the incident coverage also fuels additional media coverage that contains calls for legislation, by political actors but also by interest groups and journalists. Both the parliamentary action concerning top incomes and the calls for legislation in the media contribute to the proposal of the bill. Important here is that the government introducing the bill takes the wishes of Parliament into consideration when developing the legislative proposal, because ignoring those (especially of the majority) strongly decrease the bill’s chances of becoming a law.

Once the bill is introduced in Parliament, the legislative process starts. In this core political phase media attention also plays a role in various ways. First of all, the introduction of the bill and the accompanying legislative process can be a source of legislation-driven coverage. In addition, this coverage can also be inspired by the actions of interest groups and initiatives of political actors, who try to influence the legislative process via the media. Next to the legislation-driven coverage, there can still be incident-driven coverage of the issue at stake. As in the prior phase, real world events, investigative journalism and action by interest groups can be sources of such incident coverage.

Both types of coverage can influence the course legislative process. First, the media attention can affect the legislative process if political actors refer to media attention. This is what we saw in the case study, with political actors using it rhetorically during debates, to show the topicality of the issue and illustrate their standpoints. Second, media attention can more indirectly affect the content of the bill. This mechanism is a two-step dynamic. First of all, media coverage can serve as a source of parliamentary questions, which can be informative for the legislative process in the narrow sense. Also, it can have a long-term effect on the changes that are proposed by political actors during the legislative process. Political ideas about a bill are shaped in a gradual process, in which media attention can play a role by directing politicians’
attention to problems and form their perception of the public opinion. They can also use favorable coverage strategically, to reach their political goals.

5. Conclusion and discussion

Research on media effects on bills suggests legislative processes are influenced by the media. Because micro level studies are lacking, however, it remains unclear how this mechanism precisely works. Therefore this study analyzed to what extent and in what manner media-attention for a highly mediatized bill has influenced its content. Through a content analysis of all claims that were made both in the media and in parliament concerning the (topic of the) bill, it entangled the role journalists and politicians play in the development of new laws, to answer the main question in what way media attention matters for lawmaking. The most likely case under study is the legislative process that led to the regulation of the remuneration of senior officials in the public and semi-public sector in the Netherlands. The main changes that were carried out concern the stricter regulation of the health care sector, of interim managers, the broadening of the scope to members of supervisory boards and the ban on bonuses, are all issues that were subject to public debate for a long time. Media attention has been important in various respects, but was mainly used rhetorically. This indicates that media coverage has influenced the legislative process, but not the content of the bill, or at least not as directly.

Top incomes in the (semi)public sector was the subject of both public and political debate for years. The interaction between media and politics in this early phase contributed both to the fact that the bill was introduced, and to the actual content of the bill. What followed was a rather autonomous legislative process, in which media attention was sometimes referred to, but mainly to illustrate or underline arguments. There are no indications that the media coverage caused political actors to do things they would not have done otherwise. The ongoing incident-driven media attention contributed to the realization that excessive salaries in specific sectors were not incidents, but were a trend and should therefore be regulated in the bill. Some of the changes in the content of the bill concerned debates that have been inspired or stimulated by media coverage: not so much by specific articles or items, but the congruent media coverage as a whole – not only during the legislative process, but also in the years prior to that – has contributed to the awareness that top incomes needed to be regulated. Some of them were directly part of the legislative proposal, but those that were considered to be lacking or not far-reaching enough were proposed by MPs via amendments. There was however also a lot of coverage of sectors the minister immediately applied the strictest regime to, such as the education sector, and the
maximum level of severance pays. In these cases the reporting could only reinforce the idea that strict regulation of these sectors was necessary and prevented loosening of the proposal. To be clear, this study does not suggest that media attention is a sufficient, let alone a necessary, condition for changes in the content of bills during the legislative process. However, for media attention to have consequences for the legislative process, it is necessary that political actors respond to things they see, hear and read in the media. This case study shows that they indeed do so.

Because the aim of the study was not only to analyse this specific case but also to develop a preliminary theory of media influence on legislation, I developed a model based on the mechanisms in this case (see Figure 4). The inferences made here are based on this specific case, with a very unanimous public opinion and broad support of political actors across the political spectrum. It is likely that in other cases, for example those on a more ethical subject, there are more contrasting opinions. In this case the media seem to have amplified the public opinion. Politicians, especially members of opposition parties such as the SP, PVV, PvdA and GroenLinks have seized the opportunity of the media attention to realize their political goals: broadening the regulation of top incomes.

Because it is a most likely case of media influence, and there are indications that media attention has affected the course of the legislative process, the same type of analysis should be applied to other, less likely cases. If the same patterns occur in multiple cases, this would contribute to the theory-building and strengthen the idea that, at least in the Netherlands, media attention can affect legislative processes in certain ways. It would also give an impression as to what extent the patterns found here are case specific, because there multiple characteristics and context factors that may separate this bill from other bills (the uncontroversial nature of the bill, the economic situation at the time, the specific political situation et cetera). This case study, although only a first attempt to shed light on the media’s role in lawmaking, suggests that legislative processes are on the one hand not immune to media attention, but on the other hand not dominated by the public debate in the media either. In terms of the functioning of democracy, these might be comforting thoughts. When it comes to something as fundamental as lawmaking, political actors are (at least sometimes) visible in and responsive to the media; however, there is little reason to believe legislative processes are confined to what is in the media.
Literature


Handelingen Eerste Kamer, 6-16 (2012/2013).


Appendix I

Written media

The newspapers taken into account are AD/Algemeen Dagblad, Dagblad De Pers, De Telegraaf, De Volkskrant, Het Financieele Dagblad, Het Parool, Metro, Nederlands Dagblad, NRC.NEXT, NRC Handelsblad, Reformatorisch Dagblad, Spits, Trouw. The magazines are both general magazines and specialist journals and include Boerderij, Elsevier, Forum, de Groene Amsterdammer, Nieuwsblad Transport, Quote, Vrij Nederland, Zorgvisie.

The following search string was used to search for articles in LexisNexis:
(topinkomen OR (top! w/s inkomen*) OR topsalar! OR (top! w/s salar!) OR balkenendenorm OR balkenende-norm OR WNT OR bonus! OR ontslagverg! OR gouden hand! OR vertrekpre! OR ((bestuurder* OR topbestuurder* OR topma! OR topfunc! OR interi! OR exorbi! OR voorzitter OR directeur OR toezichthouder*)) w/p (inkomen* OR salar! OR beloni!)) w/p (semi-publieke OR semi-publieke OR publiek-private OR semi-overheid OR publieke sector OR de zorg OR zorginstellin! OR zorgverzekeraar! OR zorgbestuurde! OR onderwijs! OR universite! OR HBO OR hogescho! OR corporatie! OR woningcorporat! OR woningbouw! OR staatsdeelne! OR ZBO OR ziekenhui! OR luchtverk! OR medisch specialisten OR kinderopva! OR publieke omroep OR openbaar vervo! OR vervoersbedr! OR energiebedr! OR ontwikkelingsorganisat! OR ontwikkelingssamenwerking OR ANBI OR staatsbedrijf! OR SNV OR NS OR Schiphol OR Holland Casino OR Havenbedrijf OR GasUnie OR TenneT OR ProRail OR Sanquin OR COA)

Radio and television

The catalogue of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision has been used to search for the relevant radio and television items. It allows searching for terms used in the title or description (and, if available, in the transcription) of all television and radio programs broadcast by the three national television channels and the two national radio channels. The following search terms are used: topinkomen(s), topsalaris(sen), inkomen(s), lonen, beloning, bezoldiging, topbestuurder, bonus, bonusregeling(en), ontslagvergoeding(en), Balkenendenorm, publieke sector, semipublieke sector.

To check whether no items have been overlooked, I have searched for items using the same search words on the website of the Dutch Public Broadcast Organization as well as the website of specific programs (NOS Journaal, EenVandaag, Zembla).
Political news is mainly provided by public broadcasting organizations, but the commercial channel ‘RTL’ does have a news show that covers political news. Unfortunately the archive of this show, ‘RTL Nieuws’, is not open to the public. They were however willing to cooperate, and an employee of the Program & Sales department searched the archive, using the following search terms: topinkomen(s), topsalaris(sen), Balkenendenorm, beloning, bezoldiging, topbestuurder(s). A colleague of the documentation centre repeated the search to make sure no items were missed.

Note: in the year 2011 there was a lot of media attention for the bonuses paid at banks, especially those that were ‘saved’ with money of the Dutch government. However, the debate about remuneration policy in the financial sector is a separate one, that is regulated with separate policy. Therefore the media attention for salaries in the financial sector is not taken into account.
Appendix II

Overview of interviewees.

**Members of House of Representatives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pierre Heijnen (PvdA)</td>
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<td>11-07-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willem de Wildt (SGP, employee of V/d Staaij)</td>
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<td>15-07-2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ger Koopmans (CDA)</td>
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<td>16-07-2014</td>
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<td>Ronald van Raak (SP)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wouter Koolmees (D66)</td>
<td></td>
<td>11-08-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cynthia Ortega (CU)</td>
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<td>12-08-2014</td>
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<td>Brigitte v/d Burg (VVD)</td>
<td></td>
<td>26-08-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ineke van Gent (GL)</td>
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<td>17-08-2014**</td>
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**Members of the Senate**

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<td>Helmi Huijbregts-Schiedon (VVD)</td>
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<td>07-08-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruud Koole (PvdA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hans Engels (D66)</td>
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<td>01-09-2014*</td>
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<td>Sophie van Bijnerveld (CDA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margreet de Boer (GL)</td>
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**Ministers/assistents**

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<td>Guusje ter Horst (minister of BZK, Balkenende II)</td>
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<td>Marte van der Loop and Jan Kenter (assistants of Piet-Hein Donner, minister BZK, Rutte I)</td>
<td>29-09-2014*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maarten Groene and Casper Spiering (assistants of Ronald Plasterk, minister BZK, Rutte II)</td>
<td>27-03-2014</td>
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**Journalists**

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<td>Wouter de Winther (de Telegraaf)</td>
<td>26-08-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marieke van Santen (Zembla)</td>
<td>13-08-2014**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gijs Herderschee (de Volkskrant)</td>
<td>14-08-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wilco Dekker (de Volkskrant)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laurens Berentsen (FD)</td>
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<td>Hans Verbraeken (FD)</td>
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<td>Barbara van Gool (EenVandaag)</td>
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<td>Herman Zaalberg (EenVandaag)</td>
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<td>Peter Kwee (EenVandaag)</td>
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* = Date is in the future
** = Interview conducted over the phone
Figure 1

*Heuristic model: subjects of exploratory analysis*

- **Media attention**
  - Salience
  - Content
  - Congruence

- **Behavior of political actors**
  - Ad hoc action
  - Contribution to debates
  - Legislative initiatives

- **Legislative consequences**
  - Process
  - Content
Figure 2

*Media attention in newspapers per sector per month and key moments in Parliament 2007-2010*
Figure 3

Media attention in newspapers per sector per month and key moments in Parliament 2011-2012
Figure 4

Preliminary model of media influence on lawmaking

PRIOR TO INTRODUCTION OF BILL: LEGISLATIVE AGENDA-SETTING

- Real-world events
- Investigative journalism
- Interest group action

Incident-driven coverage

(Ad hoc) debates/motions/PQ’s

Media coverage of calls for legislation

Introduction of bill in parliament

LAWMAKING: CONSEQUENCES OF COVERAGE

- Real-world events
- Investigative journalism
- Interest group action

Incident-driven coverage

Legislation-related coverage

Legislative process

Content of bill

Initiatives of political actors