

Do parties and voters pursue the same thing?

Policy congruence between parties and voters on different electoral levels

Cees van Dijk, André Krouwel and Max Boiten

2nd European Conference on Comparative Electoral Research

Rhodes, 11-14 April 2013

Word count: 7249 (tables, figures, appendices and references excluded)

Abstract

This study looks at the policy congruence between, on the one hand, voters and, on the other hand, political parties. Following the logic of proximity voting, representatives in parliament should at least to some extent, reflect citizens' opinions. Unique large-N data from the VAA Kieskompas (Election Compass) is used to assess the congruence between the policy positions of voters and those of political parties in the Netherlands. This dataset is particularly suitable for this type of research as VAA questionnaires typically include more items that tap into issue positions than traditional election surveys. Very few studies incorporate data from two electoral levels and even fewer from three or more administrative levels. Our study includes five elections in the period from 2009 to 2012 at four different electoral levels. Several hypotheses on policy congruence are tested with regard to electoral levels, propensity to vote patterns, extremism of parties and political dimensions.

1. Introduction

One of the key elements of modern representative democracy is the election of people to make political decisions instead of making every decision with the entire population of the country (Urbainati, 2011: p. 23). However, it is necessary that these chosen representatives in fact represent the ideas of the people. There are different views on the amount of independence the representatives should have, but there is a broad consensus on the fact that there should be some coherence between the wishes of the people and the wishes of the political elite who represent them in parliament. The heart of representative democracy lies in the appointment of representatives by the people to make political decisions on behalf of the people. However, research has shown there are significant differences in the level of congruence between the policy positions of citizens and those of representatives and their parties (for example: Costello, Thomassen, & Rosema, 2012; Irwin & Thomassen, 1975; Mattila & Raunio, 2006).

There are still several gaps to fill in this body of research, though. Studies on policy congruence have mainly focused on national elections (because they are perceived to be the most important) and on elections for the European Parliament (because the differences in levels of congruence are relatively large there). This study expands the scope of the literature policy by looking at the policy congruence between voters and parties at different electoral levels. Five Dutch elections are selected and analyzed from four electoral levels: two parliamentary elections (2010; 2012), one European Parliament election (2009), one local election (2010) and one provincial election (2011).

Furthermore, another way to expand the current field of research is to look at the propensity to vote (PTV) for specific parties instead of the actual vote (Van der Eijk et al., 2006). This study uses data extracted from hundreds of thousands of citizens who have registered their propensity to vote for different parties. This allows testing hypotheses focusing on parties people dislike or like, where other studies focus on actual votes. Also, the respondents have answered a wide variety of questions concerning their preferred policies. Using this data, tests can be done on differences between political dimensions and policy areas, differences between party families, and, most fundamentally, differences between policy positions of voters and those of political parties.

This study is structured as follows. In the next part the body of literature on policy congruence between voters and parties will be reviewed to come to testable hypotheses. The subsequent section will focus on the methodology that is used for the analysis. After that, the results will be presented and analyzed, which also permits to answer the previously formulated hypotheses. The study will end with a concluding section in which recommendations for future research are given.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the literature on policy congruence is reviewed. However, it is important to first get a larger picture concerning this subject. Therefore, the first paragraph focuses on the emergence of the 'responsible party' and democratic representation. Then the focus will be on the voting behavior of citizens. The last paragraph of this chapter will focus on generating the hypotheses that will be tested in this study and on the literature supporting these hypotheses.

2.1 The larger context of policy congruence

At the end of the nineteenth century parties that were externally oriented towards society emerged. Formerly, parties served to connect representatives within parliament, but now parties took up another function: organizing citizens outside parliament (Dalton, 1985: p. 269). With the emergence of these new sorts of parties a new form of representative democracy developed: the responsible party model. Dalton mentions four important features of this model (Dalton, 1985: p. 270). First, multiple parties contest for political power through elections. Second, these parties have distinct policy programs between which the voters can choose. Third, voters have to have enough information to judge the incumbent parties on their actions. Fourth, parties control the government and the parliament and the citizens recognize this. In sum: "The choice of parties provides the electorate with indirect control over the actions of individual legislators and the affairs of government. If the public is satisfied or dissatisfied with government performance, the next election offers the opportunity to implement these evaluations (Dalton, 1985: p. 270)." This model is the model of governance for multiple European countries, including the Netherlands. The model implies that the public can choose between different political parties with distinct policy preferences. However, there is a certain misfit between the policies citizens prefer and the policies the parties they vote for prefer. Most of the time people take other factors into account when deciding which party to vote for. Important in this respect is the personalization of politics, as people seem to pay more attention to the party leaders nowadays than in the past (McAllister, 2007; Karvonen, 2010). Therefore, it is questionable to what extent citizens are really represented concerning their policy preferences by the representatives they have selected.

A distinction can be made between two fields of research on democratic representation (Powell, 2004: p. 274). The first focuses on the proportionality of the electoral system; thus on the relationship between the number of votes political parties get and the amount of seats in the parliament they receive. The normative assumption is that a higher level of democratic representation is reached with a higher level of proportionality. However, a second and more

substantive field of research on the topic of democratic representation focuses on the degree of issue-congruence between citizens and the policy makers. An important milestone in this field is the Miller and Stokes article from 1963. This article looks at the issue congruence between citizens from different U.S. congressional districts and the representatives from these districts (Miller & Stokes, 1963). Mostly, later studies had a different approach in that they did not link citizens and representatives through their district but through their party (Powell, 2004: pp. 283-284). This makes sense since outside the United States voters are often not connected with their representatives through their districts as strongly as in the U.S. In other countries, the link is often stronger through parties (ibid.). This is especially the case in countries where the whole country is a single district, e.g. the Netherlands. Moreover, in countries as the Netherlands representatives have less freedom in voting since they have to follow the party line to a larger degree (Andeweg, 2004: pp. 575-579).

Central in studies on policy congruence is the concept of issue voting; to what extent do voters base their vote on their issue preferences and those of the political parties? Downs famously argued that voters vote for the party that is closest to them on policy issues (only on the left-right dimension, because another assumption is that this dimension is the only one) (Hindmoor, 2006: p. 41). This implies that the only thing voters care about is policy and not, for example, the personality of the leaders. However, there have been numerous critiques on the idea that citizens' votes are based on the issue proximity of parties (for example: Stokes, 1963). One of the major critiques comes from authors advocating a directional model of voting (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989). They argue that voters do not weigh all issues equally but that it is important whether both voter and party are on the same 'side' (negative or positive). Furthermore, when the voter and/or the party have a more extreme position on the issue the effect of the issue will be larger (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989: p. 96). A situation where this deviates evidently from the spatial model of issue voting is when both voter and party are neutral on an issue; their policy positions are very close to each other but still it will have (almost) no effect on the vote. This directional model of voting argues that this also leads to more extreme policy positions of parties. For if a voter has a slightly 'positive' take on an issue and a party has a very 'positive' take on an issue, the effect will still be quite strong, as both voter and party are on the same side of the dimension. Empirical analyses also show that this indeed is the case in multiparty systems (Belchior, 2010: p. 129; Lutz, Kissau, & Rosset, 2012: p. 10; Valen & Narud, 2007: p. 309); a finding the spatial model of voting behavior cannot account for. Iversen (1994) argues that this effect is caused by voters who prefer politicians who have "clear and intense policy alternatives" and not politicians who simply have exactly the same policy positions as the voters have (Iversen, 1994: pp. 46-47). This is called issue leadership; an idea that Iversen combines with the idea of policy representation to present a combined model of

representational policy leadership. Others argue that the 'extremism' in policy positions of parties is caused by party activists who advocate a more radical position (Belchior, 2012: p. 7).

When trying to explain party choice, both theories focus on the policy preferences of voters. This study also looks at policy preferences of citizens and parties. The goal, however, is not to explain the party one votes for, but to assess to what extent people are represented by the party they vote for. So this study does not test the traditional proximity model and the directional model of voting. However, the theoretical background on voting based on policy preferences is very useful for this study as the policy congruence between parties and people is the subject of this paper. Surely, there are other factors that determine the choice of voters (such as income, gender and candidate personalities) (Iversen, 1994: p. 49), but this paper focuses on whether people are really represented by the representatives when it comes to the desired policy.

2.2 Hypotheses

In this paragraph six hypotheses are formulated which will be tested in the next chapter. To structure the discussion, a distinction is made between four categories. Within each category the causal mechanisms where the hypotheses are based upon will be elaborated.

2.2.1 Electoral levels

Reif and Schmitt (1980) use the term second-order election to describe elections that are of less importance to voters, parties and media. They focus on elections for the European Parliament, but the term also covers local elections. Elections for the national parliament and/or for the president are considered to be first-order elections. At these elections, the attention from the voters, parties and media is the highest. An important effect of this distinction manifests itself in lower levels of turnout in second-order elections than in first-order elections (Schakel, 2011: p. 5). But also with regard to the level of congruence between voters and parties an effect can be expected. There are a number of reasons. First, since voters pay more attention to first-order elections than to second-order elections, it can be expected that they have a clearer picture of the competing parties in first-order elections than in second-order elections. People inform themselves more on the positions parties take in first-order elections, in second-order elections they put in less effort to gain more knowledge on the views of parties. Second, leading up to the elections there probably is more campaigning and media attention in first-order elections than in second-order elections. Campaigning and media attention contribute to a better understanding of what parties' policy positions are and how they relate to a voter's preferences. These causes can result in a higher level of congruence in first-order elections than in second-order elections. The following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: "The level of congruence is higher in first-order elections than in second-order elections."

2.2.2 Propensity to vote

It is important to repeat that the policy congruence between voter and party is not measured by the actual vote in this study. The party people 'choose' is measured by looking as to what extent they are inclined to vote for different parties. It is true that the parties people give a high propensity to vote (PTV) do not necessarily have to be the parties they actually vote for. However, it is a very good indicator of how positive or negative they judge all parties. Furthermore, using this measure there is no need to make a distinction between the party one has voted for and all other parties one has not voted for. It is not realistic to assume that citizens only have one party that they like and that they vote for. Often, people doubt between multiple parties, and if not, they still not dislike all other parties equally. Thus, using the measure of PTV more details are taken into account.

The traditional proximity model assumes that citizens will vote for parties that are closest to them ideologically (Hindmoor, 2006: p. 41); so the parties that share their policy positions the most. This leads to the statement that voters give some parties a bigger chance for getting their vote than other parties before an election. The directional model of voting argues that it matters which side people take considering an issue and the intensity of the policy positions (Rabinowitz & Macdonald, 1989: p. 96). However, both models focus on the role of policy. Therefore, it is expected that the level of congruence between the citizen and the political party is higher when the citizen gives this party a high propensity to vote than when he or she gives it a low vote-propensity. To test this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: "The higher the propensity to vote, the higher the level of congruence."

When a voter has a high PTV for one specific party, it is likely that this party has policy opinions that fit well with the opinions of the voter. This means that the chance of having a high level of congruence increases. However, when a voter has a high PTV for multiple parties, it is likely that this congruence between the voter and the preferred parties is lower. The voter is not sure which party to vote for and cannot find all of his/her preferred policy opinions at one party. It is likely that the policy opinions of voters with a high propensity to vote for multiple parties are a combination of the policy opinions of those parties. With regard to some issues the voter prefers party A, with regard to some other issues the voter prefers party B (or maybe even a third party or more). To test this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: "Voters with a clear preference for only one party will have a higher congruence than voters with high propensities for multiple parties."

2.2.3 Parties

It is not likely that all parties have the same policy congruence with their voters. Several studies have paid attention to variations between different parties. Belchior (2010: p. 125) hypothesizes that Green parties have committed themselves to post-materialist ideas of grass-roots democracy and therefore have higher levels of congruence than other types of parties. Irwin and Thomassen (1975: p. 416) test the proposition that the level of congruence is especially high on issues that led representatives to break away from their original party and to form their own party. In the Netherlands, this could be the case with the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*; PVV) which split from the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*; VVD). The main issues of this party are the Islam and the European Union, so it can be expected that there is a high level of congruence between the party and the voters on these issues (Lucardie, 2013). However, both Belchior (2010: p. 138) and Irwin and Thomassen (1975: p. 416) reject their hypotheses as a result of their findings. Therefore, this will not be tested.

A more promising direction is the difference in the level of congruence between different types of parties. Mattila and Raunio (2006) find that both leftist and rightist (but especially leftist) parties have a higher level of policy congruence with their voters than centrist parties. Also Katsanidou and Lefkofridi (2011) find support for the claim that parties with extreme ideological profiles have a higher degree of congruence than parties from the centre. Dalton (1975) also confirms this picture by ascertaining that the centrist parties show the largest gap between the opinions of parties and their voters. He states that leftist parties have a high level of congruence on issues concerning economics and issues such as civil rights and the environment. Rightist parties are more representative on issues concerning security and foreign aid. So it seems that parties that position themselves in a distinctive manner (either by a distinctive leftist position or a distinctive rightist position) have higher level of congruence than parties that try to appeal to a larger group of centrist voters. The authors that are mentioned above only look at extremism on socioeconomic dimension. However, they do not give substantive reasoning for why this effect could not be the same on other dimensions; such as the cultural dimension and the dimension of European integration. Parties can also distinguish themselves on issues from these dimensions parties to appeal to a specific set of voters. Following this line of argument the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: "The more extreme parties are, the higher the level of congruence."

According to the traditional proximity model, citizens vote for parties that are closest to them on their policy positions. However, there are also authors that do not agree with this. Rabinowitz and Macdonald argue that voters vote for parties that are more extreme in their opinions than they are themselves (1989). This picture is confirmed by several recent empirical analyses on policy congruence (Belchior, 2010: p. 129; Lutz, Kissau, & Rosset, 2012: p. 10; Valen & Narud, 2007: p. 309). Belchior (2010) argues that the main reason for this is that citizens like to vote for parties that position themselves more extremely on the issues that are important for the citizens, the same explanation that is given by Iversen (1994: pp. 46-47). It is also possible to turn this argument around and to argue that parties take strong stands, because taking weak stands only has a limited effect on citizens who focus on a specific issue when deciding for which party to vote (Valen & Narud, 2007: p. 299). Although most studies ascertain the extremism of the party by looking at left-right issues, there are no theoretical reasons for why the expectation that political parties are more extreme than their voters should not be valid for other dimensions. This argument leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: "Political parties take more extreme policy positions than their potential voters do."

2.2.4 Policy dimensions

Often, the cultural and the socioeconomic dimensions are discerned as the dominant political dimensions. It is expected that the level of policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the cultural dimension; this because of developments that have transformed the cultural dimension multiple times. Häusermann and Kriesi mention two major transformations (2011: pp. 7-12). The first is the rise of self-expression values focusing on quality-of-life and subjective well-being, in a period from late 1960s until the 1980s. Häusermann and Kriesi mention secularization, improved living conditions, tertiarization, the rise of the welfare state and more access to higher education as processes that have caused the upspring of these values. A variety of issues are attributed as being part of these values, such as human rights (including gay rights), protection of the environment, peace and the emancipation of women. Processes that are thought to have caused another transformation in the 1990s and 2000s are globalization and denationalization. These processes have led to an increase in immigration and cultural diversity. Related to these issues is the process of political integration, for example the process of European integration. Supranational and intergovernmental institutions take decisions formerly taken nationally. All in all, the cultural dimension has encompassed and encompasses a wide variety of issues that alternative with each other. This

seems to be less the case with the socioeconomic dimension. Therefore, this definition is formulated:

H6a: "Policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the cultural dimension."

In European elections, another dimension is mostly taken into account; that of European integration. However, when national parties compete in elections for the European Parliament the focus does not necessarily lie on "European issues" such as European integration. Parties tend to shift their attention towards the dimension with which they are most familiar: the socioeconomic (left-right) dimension (Katsanidou & Lefkofridi, 2011). Furthermore, the position of the party on the left-right dimension serves as an indicator for voters how the parties will react with respect to European issues (Mattila & Raunio, 2006). Costello, Thomassen and Rosema (2012), Thomassen and Schmitt (1997), and Vasilopoulou and Gatterman (2012) confirm this argument. They find that the level of congruence in European Parliament elections is higher on the left-right dimension than on the EU-dimension. This results in the following hypothesis:

H6b: "Policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the EU dimension."

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method and case selection

Five recent Dutch elections are selected to analyze. These five elections encompass elections at four different electoral levels: two national parliamentary elections (2010; 2012); one European Parliament election (2009); one local election (municipalities) (2010); and one regional election (provinces) (2010). This selection is made for pragmatic reasons, as this are the elections for which all necessary variables are included in the VAA. Due to the Dutch VAA Election Compass unique data is available to assess the level of congruence on a large number of issues for a large number of citizens. The number of cases varies per analysis as different elections, parties and issues are included in different analyses. However, due to the popularity of the Dutch VAA Election Compass there is an exceptional high number of cases in each of the analyses. Clearly, this research method used is quantitative comparative research. With this method, only correlation and not causation can be proven. Therefore, theory is used to identify the causal mechanisms. As people themselves choose to become respondent, there is the risk of a selection bias. It is imaginable that the people participating are generally more politically involved than those who do not.

3.2 Operationalization

In this paragraph the concepts used in this study are operationalized. First, the dependent variable will be operationalized. Second, the concepts used in the different independent variables are operationalized.

3.2.1 Policy congruence

There are several ways to measure the level of policy congruence between voters and parties. Achen (1977) criticizes measuring it by looking at the correlation coefficient. He points out alternative measures in his 1978 articles (Achen, 1978: pp. 481-494; Dalton, 1985: pp. 280-281). One of the alternatives is the concept of centrism; the closer the view of the party is to the center of those of the voters, the higher policy congruence. The assumption is that parties locate themselves towards the center of the opinion positions of their voters. This concept is used when testing hypothesis 1, 4, 5 en 6. Since hypotheses 2 and 3 require variable measured on the individual level, another measure is used testing them; that of proximity. This concept measures how close the view of the party is to that of the voters. While the dispersion of the opinions matters when policy congruence is measured using his concept, it does not matter when it is measured using the concept of centrism.

3.2.2 Other concepts

First-order and second-order elections – The two national parliamentary elections (2010; 2012) are classified as first-order elections, the other elections are classified as second-order elections (Schakel, 2011: p. 5).

Propensity to vote – After respondents have answered thirty questions on policy preferences they are asked to indicate their propensity to vote (PTV) for the parties included in the VAA. Answers can range from zero to ten, with zero being highly unlikely and ten being very likely. Respondents are considered being supporters of a party when they give that party the highest out of all possible parties. This is a better measure than considering respondents supporters of a party when they give this party an eight, nine or ten; as they then can still give other parties equal or higher scores. Also, people are then not included when their highest score is seven, while they are still likely to vote for the party they give this score. The measure is also better than only selecting people who give a party a PTV of ten, since this leads to a selection of citizens who are totally certain which party to vote for and who probably will have a higher level of issue congruence with the party. To test hypothesis 3 it is necessary to operationalize “multiple high PTV’s”. In this paper a distinction is made between respondents who give their next favorite party one point less than their favorite party and respondents who give their next favorite party two or more points less than their favorite party.

Dimensions – Three political dimensions are used. For all elections the position of a party or voter on the X-axis is determined by their socioeconomic position (left-right). For the European Parliament elections the position on the Y-axis is determined by the extent to which a party or person is pro or anti EU integration. For the other elections this axis represents the extent to which a party or person is conservative and progressive.

Position in the political spectrum – The position of the parties in the political spectrum is determined by the position they take on the thirty major political issues included in the VAA. To avoid that parties pretend to take (popular) positions when they really do not, their positions are determined by looking at their party programs. The respondents register to what extent they agree or disagree with the thirty statements. It is possible (both for parties and respondents) to completely agree, to tend to agree, to be neutral, to tend to disagree, to completely disagree and to have no opinion.

4. Results and discussion

In this chapter the results of the empirical analysis will be presented and discussed. The chapter is organized on the basis of the order the formulated hypotheses have been discussed in the theoretical framework.

4.1 Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis is the following: *“The level of congruence is higher in first-order elections than in second-order elections.”* In table 1 the average difference in positions is displayed.¹ This difference per party is measured by calculating the average position a party takes and the mean position the supporters of that party take.² The higher the distance between party and voters, the lower the level of congruence is.

Table 1: Average Distance per Election

Election	Distance	
	Socioeconomic	Cultural
Local Elections 2010	0.42	0.46
Regional Elections 2011	0.52	0.53
National Elections 2010	0.58	0.46
National Elections 2012	0.72	0.55
	Socioeconomic	EU
European Parliament Elections 2009	0.40	0.70

When a division is made between first-order elections and second-order elections (see table 2) it shows there are clear differences between first-order and second-order elections with regard to the socioeconomic dimension. All differences on this dimension are significant at a level of $p \leq 0.001$ (see Appendix II). In first-order elections there is an average distance of 0.65 on a four-point scale, in second-order elections this is 0.45 on the same scale. On the Y-axis there is less of a difference; in first-order elections the difference is 0.51; in second-order elections this is 0.56. However, the Y-axis includes two different dimensions; anti/pro European integration for the European Parliament elections and the cultural dimension (conservative – progressive) for the

¹ To see if different results arise with a different operationalization of potential voters (a PTV-score of 8, 9 or 10 instead of the highest PTV score), a test has been done with several parties from several elections. Overall, the distance between voters and parties increased, but it did not change the overall pattern.

² As not every party has an equal number of potential voters, the N is corrected for.

four other elections. When the European Parliament election is taken apart, the results change significantly. With regard to the socioeconomic dimension, the distance does not change that much for the four second-order elections. However, the distance for the European Parliament elections is smaller than for the other second-order elections. It is clear that the hypothesis as formulated in the theoretical framework cannot be confirmed for the left-right dimension. The distance in first-order elections is larger than in second-order elections, especially the European Parliament elections.

Regarding the Y-axis differences are larger in second-order elections. However, when one excludes the difference in the European Parliament elections these results change and first-order elections show a somewhat larger distance than second-order elections. This is caused by the large distance there is in European Parliament elections on the EU dimension. This means the hypothesis can also not be confirmed for the Y-axis. Only with regard to European Parliament elections the distance is larger than in the first-order elections.

Part of the explanation might lie at the different levels of turnout of the elections. The turnout percentage is generally lower in second-order elections than in first-order elections. It can be expected that the people who do vote in second-order elections are generally politically more involved and interested. This may result in a more accurate image of the competing parties and in a higher level of issue congruence.

Table 2: Average Distance per Sort of Election

	Distance on the Socioeconomic Dimension	Distance on Cultural or EU Dimension
First-order elections	0.65	0.51
Second-order elections	0.45	0.56
Second-order elections without European Parliament Elections	0,47	0.50
European Parliament Elections	0,40	0.70

4.2 Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis is the following: *“The higher the propensity to vote, the higher the level of congruence.”* This hypothesis is tested by looking at the correlation between the propensity to vote a citizen has for a party and the spectrum distance this citizen has to that party in the political spectrum. The results can be found in table 3.³ To make sure, if the spectrum distance decreases the policy congruence increases. This means that a negative relation between PTV and spectrum distance confirms the hypothesis.

³ The N has been corrected for.

Table 3: Mean Correlation between PTV and Spectrum Distance⁴

Election	Mean Pearson Correlation Coefficient	N (parties)	N (cases)
All Elections	-0.346	525	16.951.369
Local 2010	-0.294	399	1.681.185
Regional 2011	-0.323	93	3.271.905
European 2009	-0.291	11	1.184.141
National 2010	-0.368	11	5.651.203
National 2012	-0.367	11	5.162.935

As can be seen in table 3 this is the case for all elections. No results for the different party groups are included in the analysis, as the numbers are not comparable. An extreme party gets a strong correlation more easily since the possible distance between the party and potential voters is larger than for centrist parties. However, there also is a negative correlation coefficient for all parties and party groups. The results in table 3 support the idea of proximity voting insofar that at least to some extent citizens consider parties that are ideologically close to them. The results do not differ vastly per election, however, the relation between the PTV a respondent gives to a party and the spectrum distance that respondent has to that party is most strong in the national elections, namely -0.368 for the 2010 elections and -0.367 for the 2012 elections. The correlation is least strong in the local elections (-0.294) and the European elections (-0.291). This means that in national elections the party preferences of citizens are ideologically most coherent. This seems to contradict the results of testing hypothesis 1, where it was found that the policy congruence is not at a higher level in first-order elections. However, there only the most preferred party of the citizens is taken into account. In this analysis the total pattern for all parties is included. Concluding, hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

4.3 Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis being tested is the following: *“Voters with a clear preference for only one party will have a higher congruence than voters with high propensities for multiple parties.”* Tables 4, 5 and 6 show the results with regard to respectively the socioeconomic, the cultural and the EU

⁴ Unfortunately the level of significance cannot be determined precisely, as the table consists out the means of multiple Pearson correlation coefficients. However, only 9 cases were not significant at a $P \leq 0.05$ level. With respect to the elections in the national and European elections all coefficient were significant on a level of $p \leq 0.001$. In the regional elections there was one case that was not significant; the rest was significant on a level of $p \leq 0.001$. In the local elections 8 out of 399 cases were not significant. The N (parties) refers to the number of Pearson correlation coefficients that were included when determining the mean coefficient (this is equal to the number of included parties). The N (cases) refers to the number of relations between PTV and spectrum distance included in each category.

dimension. The One-Way ANOVA tests show that the results within every category are significantly different at a level of $p \leq 0.001$. Furthermore, the Post Hoc Tukey tests also gives almost only significances of 0.000. See appendix II for the full results and the exceptions. In table 4, 5 and 6 gives the first column of numbers the mean distance of respondents with only one party as favorite, the second column does the same but than for respondents who also give another party an almost equal score. The last column gives the difference between the two; if the hypothesis would be correct, this should be a positive number. As can be seen in table 4, the expectations were correct for every election and almost every party group when looking at the socioeconomic dimension. In general, the distance was 0.04 less for voters with clearly one favorite party. On the cultural dimension, distance was also smaller for this group; but only 0.1. Also, several party groups showed negative numbers in the last column. On the EU dimension there was a difference the other way around, mainly due to the liberal party group. The results for the socioeconomic dimension were the only one where the expected pattern was found, but also were the differences between the two groups of voters were the largest.

Table 4: Distances on the Socioeconomic Dimension

	Mean Distance - Multiple High PTV's	Mean Distance - One High PTV	Difference
Election			
All Elections	0.60 (N=347787)	0.56 (N=399396)	0.04
Local Elections 2010	0.44 (N=37984)	0.41 (N=52590)	0.03
Regional Elections 2011	0.53 (N=62543)	0.51 (N=83340)	0.02
National Elections 2010	0.61 (N=119747)	0.54 (N=114754)	0.07
National Elections 2012	0.72 (N=106823)	0.72 (N=118054)	0
European Elections 2009	0.42 (N=20690)	0.39 (N=30658)	0.03
Party Group			
All Party Groups	0.60 (N=347787)	0.56 (N=399396)	0.04
Christian Democratic	0.68 (N=28820)	0.59 (N=29765)	0.09
Social Democratic	0.25 (N=57668)	0.21 (N=53498)	0.04
Liberal	0.79 (N=142798)	0.73 (N=177423)	0.06
Right-Wing	0.33 (N=20920)	0.37 (N=32993)	-0.04
Socialist	0.92 (N=33326)	0.80 (N=35987)	0.12
Green	0.36 (N=41097)	0.30 (N=38392)	0.06
Single-Issue	0.46 (N=7909)	0.49 (N=7430)	-0.03
Christian Conservative	0.39 (N=14994)	0.33 (N=23436)	0.06
Multiple Party Families	0.48 (N=255)	0.46 (N=472)	0.02

Table 5: Distances on the Cultural Dimension

	Mean Distance - Multiple High PTV's	Mean Distance - One High PTV	Difference
Election			
All Elections	0.48 (N=327097)	0.47 (N=368738)	0.01
Local Elections 2010	0.45 (N=37984)	0.44 (N=52590)	0.01
Regional Elections 2011	0.51 (N=62543)	0.51 (N=83340)	0
National Elections 2010	0.43 (N=119747)	0.42 (N=114754)	0.01
National Elections 2012	0.53 (N=106823)	0.52 (N=118054)	0.01
Party Group			
All Party Groups	0.48 (N=327097)	0.47 (N=368738)	0.01
Christian Democratic	0.59 (N=26569)	0.56 (N=26364)	0.03
Social Democratic	0.40 (N=54967)	0.40 (N=50569)	0
Liberal	0.48 (N=135319)	0.46 (N=166995)	0.02
Right-Wing	0.58 (N=19142)	0.59 (N=28532)	-0.01
Socialist	0.49 (N=31065)	0.50 (N=33025)	-0.01
Green	0.50 (N=38279)	0.51 (N=34792)	-0.01
Single-Issue	0.42 (N=7450)	0.45 (N=6821)	-0.03
Christian Conservative	0.41 (N=14051)	0.41 (N=21168)	0
Multiple Party Families	0.40 (N=255)	0.39 (N=472)	0.01

Table 6: Distances on the EU Dimension

	Mean Distance - Multiple High PTV's	Mean Distance - One High PTV	Difference
Election			
European Elections 2009	0.65 (N=20690)	0.68 (N=30658)	-0.03
Party Group			
All Party Groups	0.65 (N=20690)	0.68 (N=30658)	-0.03
Christian Democratic	0.43 (N=2251)	0.43 (N=3401)	0
Social Democratic	0.50 (N=2701)	0.50 (N=2929)	0
Liberal	0.70 (N=7479)	0.71 (N=10428)	-0.01
Right-Wing	1.23 (N=1778)	1.23 (N=4461)	0
Socialist	0.33 (N=2261)	0.33 (N=2962)	0
Green	0.85 (N=2818)	0.85 (N=3600)	0
Single-Issue	0.53 (N=459)	0.51 (N=609)	0.02
Christian Conservative	0.36 (N=943)	0.36 (N=2268)	0

4.4 Hypothesis 4

The hypothesis being tested is as follows: *“The more extreme parties are, the higher the level of congruence.”* This means that the distance between the mean positions of the voters and the mean positions of the parties gets smaller as the party is more extreme. Table 7 shows the distance between the mean party position and the mean position potential voters have. One-way ANOVA tests showed that the results were significant at a level of $p \leq 0.001$. The post-hoc Tukey test showed that this was indeed the case for the large majority of relations between categories (see appendix II for the complete results). On the socioeconomic dimension the social democratic group (0.23), the green group (0.34), the Christian conservative group (0.35) and the right-wing group (0.35) differ the least with their potential voters' positions. Concerning socioeconomic issues, the social democratic and the Christian conservative group cannot be classified as being extreme. However, the right-wing party group normally is considered extreme, in the political spectrum parties from this group are actually centrist; which is caused by combining leftist and rightist standpoints. The green group takes extreme leftist positions on the left-right dimension. The socialist (0.86) and the liberal (0.75) group show the largest gap with their voters on the socioeconomic dimension. Even though the socialist group takes an extreme leftist position, the liberal group is not that extreme on this dimension.

On the cultural dimension distances are smaller than on the socioeconomic dimension. The multiple party families group (0.40), the social democratic group (0.41), the Christian conservative group (0.43) and the single-issue group (0.44) perform well. The only party group that can be considered extreme is the Christian conservative group, as they take a conservative position. The largest distances are achieved by the right-wing group (0.61), the Christian democratic group (0.61) and the green group (0.56). The Christian democratic group is not extreme on this dimension; however, the right-wing party group and the green group are (respectively extreme conservative and progressive). With regard to the EU dimension, the largest gaps are achieved by the right-wing group (1.29) and the green group (0.89). These groups are respectively extremely anti and pro European integration. The Christian conservative group (0.33), the Christian democratic group (0.45) and the social democratic group (0.51) have the smallest distance between the party's positions and the people's positions. These are all parties that are centrist on the EU dimension.

In total, the conclusions are not the same for all dimensions. On the socioeconomic and the cultural dimensions it were not constantly the extreme parties that were performing well and the centrist parties performing bad. There was a consistent observation on the EU dimension, however, the pattern was not in the expected direction. Parties taking an extreme position showed large distances with their potential voters while parties taking a centre position showed small distances. All in all, the hypothesis cannot be confirmed.

Table 7: Distances between Party Groups and Potential Voters

	Socioeconomic dimension	N	Cultural dimension	N	EU dimension	N
All Party Groups	0.58	750020	0.50	696672	0.70	51348
Christian Democratic	0.63	58989	0.61	53337	0.45	5652
Social Democratic	0.23	11147	0.41	105817	0.51	5630
Liberal	0.75	320562	0.50	302655	0.73	17907
Right-Wing	0.35	53913	0.61	47674	1.29	6239
Socialist	0.86	69438	0.51	64215	0.40	5223
Green	0.34	79733	0.56	73315	0.89	6418
Single-Issue	0.48	15406	0.44	14338	0.55	1068
Christian Conservative	0.35	39771	0.43	36560	0.33	3211
Multiple Party Families	0.47	761	0.40	761		

4.5 Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis is: *“Political parties take more extreme policy positions than their potential voters do.”* To answer this hypothesis three dimensions are distinguished: the socioeconomic dimension (see figure 1); the cultural dimension (figure 2); and the EU dimension (pro or anti European integration (figure 2)). In each graph the Y-axis shows the position a party averagely takes on the dimension, the X-axis does the same but then for the people who give that party the highest chance of getting their vote.⁵ Extreme parties are the parties that are in the upper and the lower part of each graph, as the Y-axes stand for the extremism of the party. When the mean position of the party perfectly corresponds with the mean positions of its voters, this is indicated with a point on the diagonal line. The further the positions differ, the further away the indicators in the graph are from the ‘ideal’ line. The hypothesis can be confirmed when there is a clear pattern that the indicators are further away from the diagonal line as the extremism of the party increases (so for the parties in the lower and upper parts of the graphs).

All the graphs show that it is indeed the case that political parties take more extreme positions than their supporters.⁶ Parties that are closer to the center of the political spectrum are averagely closer to the diagonal line than parties that take more extreme positions. This is the case in all elections and for each dimension. However, with respect to the graph which includes the positions towards European integration an interesting observation can be made. If

⁵ Parties are excluded when less than 25 respondents gave that party the highest PTV; 9 parties are excluded.

⁶ To test if different results would show when respondents are considered potential voters when they give a party a PTV of 8, 9 or 10, the same analysis is done for several parties in several elections but then with this operationalization. Overall, the results did not change massively; if there was a pattern it would be that the patterns shown in figure 1, 2 and 3 would be even stronger.

one would draw a trend line in this graph it would show that also here parties are more extreme than their followers. However, this line is heavily distorted by one political party that takes a very extreme position against European integration; a stance significantly more extreme than the voters for that party. When this party is eliminated from the graph the difference in extremism would be less (as the trend line would move towards the diagonal line), but the original hypothesis would still hold. The one party that deviates to the largest extent is the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*; PVV). It takes a position of -1.57 when 2.00 is the most extreme; however, its supporters only take a position of -0.28 on this dimension. Being anti-European integration is one of the two most important features of this party (the other one being anti-Islam) (Lucardie, 2013). This might be an indication that parties are even more extreme compared with their supporters on their core issues. However, this is hard to measure as it is hard to determine what exactly the core issues of each party are, if they have any.

These results show that the hypothesis as formulated in the theoretical framework is confirmed. This is the case for each dimension and election included.

Figure 1: Positions on Socioeconomic Dimension

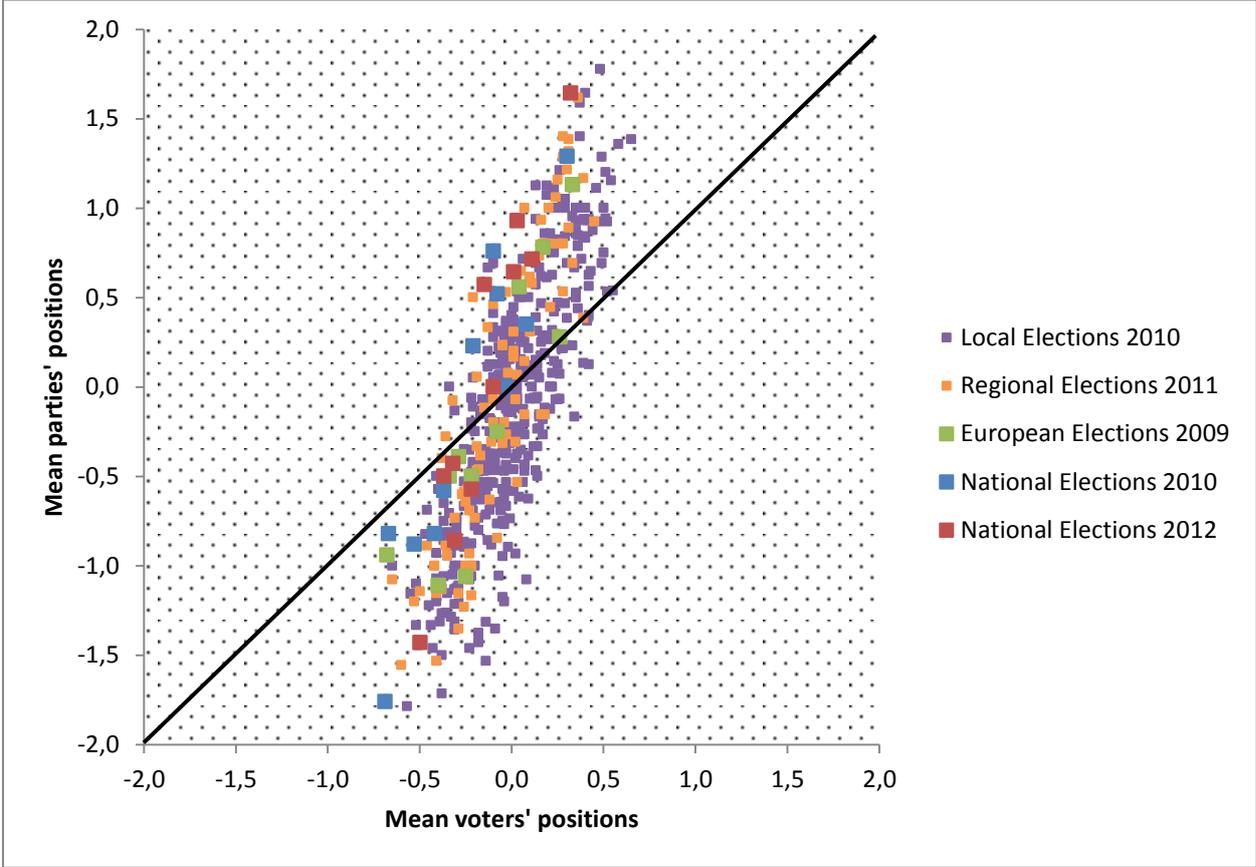
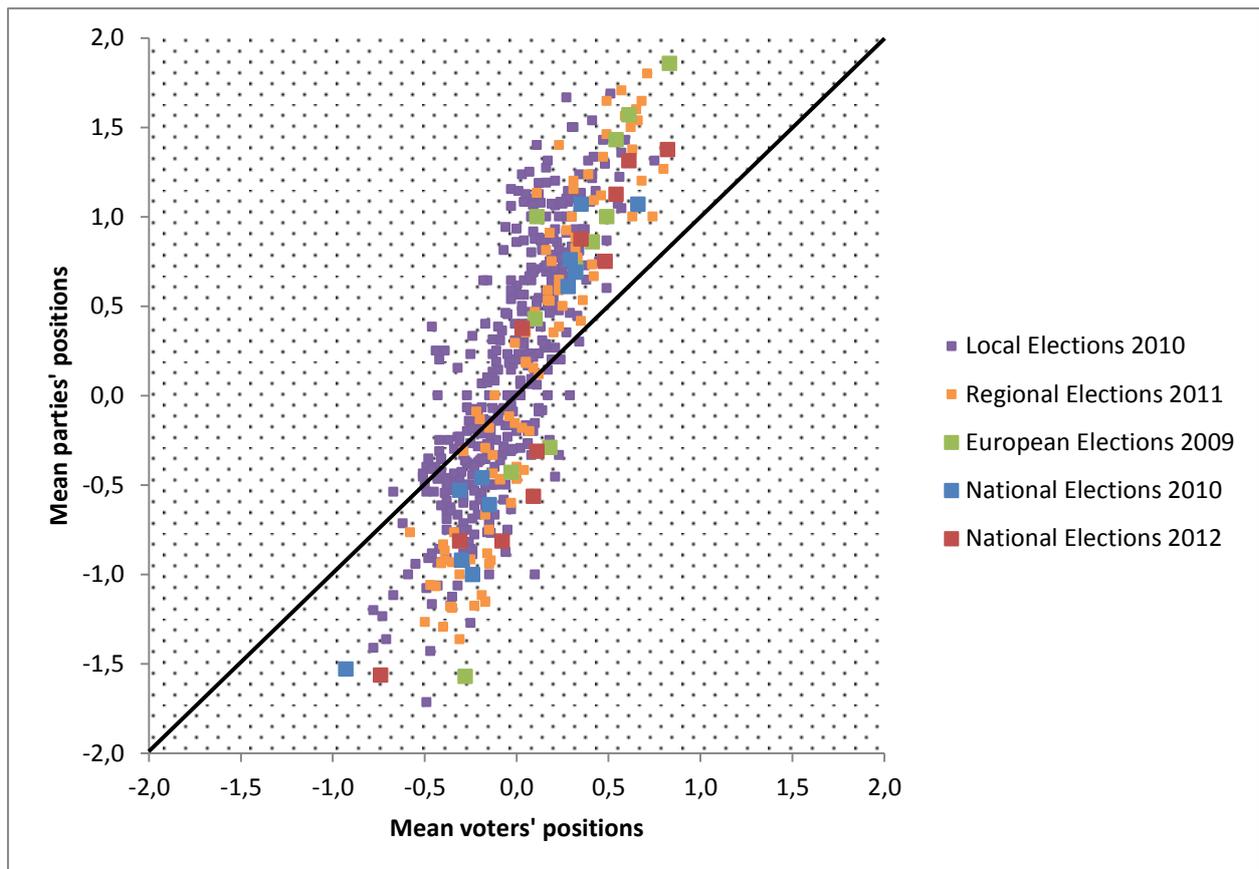


Figure 2: Positions on Cultural or EU Dimension



4.6 Hypothesis 6a and 6b

The following hypotheses are tested: “Policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the cultural dimension” and “Policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the EU dimension.” The numbers needed to answer these hypotheses are given when answering hypothesis 1; see table 1. Figure 3 and 4 shows these numbers in a bar chart.⁷ All differences between the dimensions in each election are significant at a level of $p \leq 0.001$. What immediately stands out is the difference there is in the European Parliament election with regard to the distance on the dimensions.⁸ The mean distance on the European integration dimension is 0.70 on a 4-point scale, while the mean distance on the socioeconomic dimension is 0.40, also on a 4-point scale. This means that the policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the European integration dimension; which leads to the confirmation of the second hypothesis (6b). However, the results on the other elections are less clear. In the local elections of 2010 (0.42 vs. 0.46) and the regional elections (0.52 vs. 0.53) the

⁷ The N is corrected for.

⁸ However there is a large difference on this election, this might partially be contributed to the way in which the mean distance was calculated. In this VAA for this election there were less questions on the EU dimension than there were questions on the cultural dimension in the other elections. Therefore, a deviation is more easy to achieve.

socioeconomic dimension scores slightly better than the cultural dimension. For the national elections it is the other way around, also, the differences are larger. The national election of 2010 shows a distance of 0.58 on the socioeconomic dimension and a distance of 0.46 on the cultural dimension. The national election of 2012 shows a distance of 0.72 on the socioeconomic dimension and a distance of 0.55 on the cultural dimension. The national elections shows distances of 0.72 (socioeconomic dimension) and 0.55 (cultural dimension). This means that the differences are not as could be expected from the hypothesis. Therefore, the first hypothesis (6a) cannot be confirmed.

Figure 3: Mean Distance on Dimensions (national, regional and local elections)

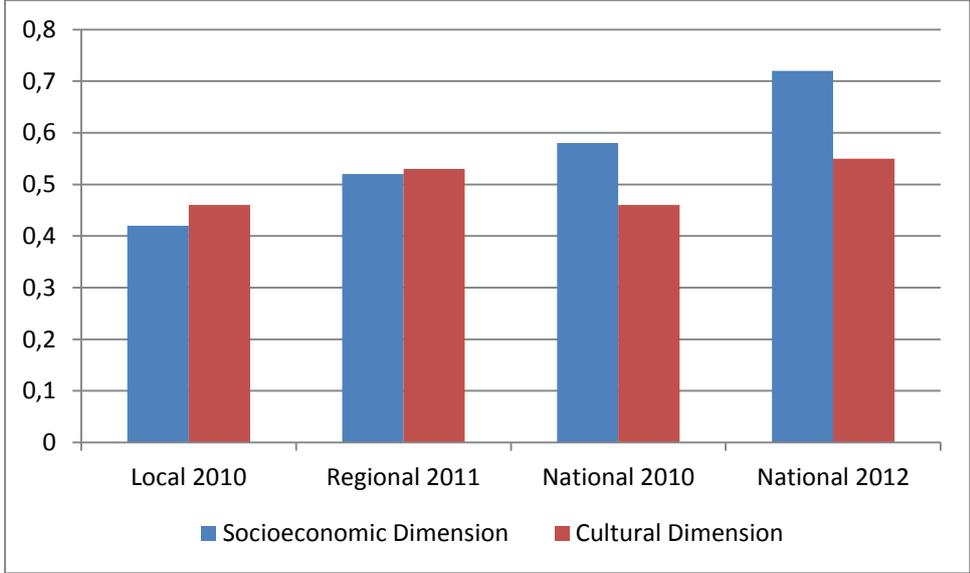
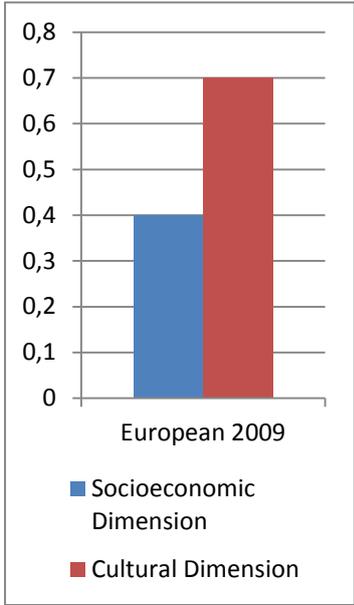


Figure 4: Mean Distance on Dimension (European elections)



5. Conclusion

The goal of this study was to expand the knowledge on policy congruence by including elections from multiple administrative levels and by using PTV's instead of actual votes. Due to the Dutch VAA Election Compass a large amount of data was available on a wide variety of issues. Six hypotheses were formulated and tested. Table 8 shows the results of the empirical tests.

Table 8: Summary Results Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Results
1 The level of congruence is higher in first-order elections than in second-order elections.	Not confirmed
2 The higher the propensity to vote, the higher the level of congruence.	Confirmed
3 Voters with a clear preference for only one party will have a higher congruence than voters with high propensities for multiple parties.	Partly confirmed
4 The more extreme parties are, the higher the level of congruence.	Not confirmed
5 Political parties take more extreme policy positions than their potential voters do.	Confirmed
6a Policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the cultural dimension.	Not confirmed
6b Policy congruence is higher on the socioeconomic dimension than on the EU dimension.	Confirmed

It would be interesting if further research would be undertaken in the following directions. First, it can be studied why the level of congruence is lower in first-order elections than in second-order elections. This was a result that was not expected based on the theoretical framework. Second, following hypothesis 3 different ways of measuring the effect of PTV on policy congruence can be done. Different patterns can be discerned to see what differences there are with regard to the level of congruence. Third, further research can be done on the policy congruence on different dimensions in non-EU elections. Contradicting the expectations, the policy congruence on the cultural dimension was higher than on the socioeconomic dimension in national elections. Furthermore, the difference between the dimensions was also small in the local and regional elections.

References

- Achen, C. H. (1978). Measuring Representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 22, 3, 475-510.
- Andeweg, R. B. (2004). Parliamentary Democracy in the Netherlands. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 57, 3, 568-580.
- Belchior, A. M. (2010). Ideological Congruence among European Political Parties. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 16, 1, 121-142.
- Belchior, A. M. (2012, September 4). Explaining Left-Right Party Congruence Across European Party Systems: A Test of Micro-, Meso-, and Macro-Level Models. *Comparative Politics Studies*. Doi: 10.1177/0010414012454695.
- Costello, R., Thomassen, J., & Rosema, M. (2012). European Parliament Elections and Political Representation: Policy Congruence between Voters and Parties. *West European Politics*, 35, 6, 1226-1248.
- Dalton, R. J. (1985). Political Parties and Political Representation. Party Supporters and Party Elites in Nine Nations. *Comparative Political Studies*, 18, 3, 267-299.
- Häusermann, S., & Kriesi, H. (2011). What do voters want? Dimensions and configurations in individual-level preferences and party choice. "The Future of Democratic Capitalism" Conference. Zurich, Switzerland.
- Hindmoor, A. (2006). *Rational Choice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Irwin, G. A., & Thomassen, J. (1975). Issue-consensus in a multi-party system: voters and leaders in The Netherlands. *Acta Politica*, 10, 4, 389-420.
- Iversen, T. (1994). Political Leadership and Representation in West-European Democracies: A Test of Three Models of Voting. *American Journal of Political Science*, 38, 1, 45-74.
- Karvonen, L. (2010). *The personalization of politics: A study of parliamentary democracies*. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Katsanidou, A., & Lefkofridi, Z. (2011). Asymmetrical Representation? Policy Congruence Gaps in the 2009 European Parliament Election. 1st European Conference on Comparative Electoral Research. Sofia, Bulgaria, 1-3 December 2011.
- Lucardie, P. (2013, January 7). PVV partijgeschiedenis. Retrieved from <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/pp/pvv/geschied>.
- Lutz, G., Kissau, K., & Rosset, J. (2012). Policy congruence beyond left-right: evidence from the Swiss 2007 election. "Policy Representation in Europe" Conference. Mannheim, Germany, 28-29 May 2010.
- McAllister, I. (2007). The Personalization of Politics. In R. J. Dalton and H. D. Klingemann (Eds.),

- The Oxford handbook of political behavior* (pp. 571-588). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mattila, M., & Raunio, T. (2006). Cautious Voters – Supportive Parties. *European Union Politics*, 7, 4, 427-449.
- Miller, W. E., & Stokes, D. E. (1963). Constituency Influence in Congress. *The American Political Science Review*, 57, 1, 45-56.
- Powell, G. B. (2004). Political Representation in Comparative Politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7, 273-296.
- Rabinowitz, G., & Macdonald (1989). A Directional Theory of Issue Voting. *The American Political Science Review*, 83, 1, 93-121.
- Reif, K., & Schmitt, H. (1980). Nine Second-Order National Elections – a Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results. *European Journal of Political Research*, 8, 1, 3-44.
- Schakel, A. H. (2011). Congruence Between Regional and National Elections. *Comparative Political Studies*. Doi: 10.1177/0010414011424112
- Stokes, D. E. (1963). Spatial Models of Party Competition. *The American Political Science Review*, 57, 2, 368-377.
- Thomassen, J., & Schmitt (1997). Policy representation. *European Journal of Political Research*, 32, 2, 165-184.
- Urbinati, N. (2011). Representative democracy and its. In S. Alonso, J. Keane and W. Merkel (Eds.), *The Future of Representative Democracy* (pp. 23-49). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Valen, H., & Narud, H. M. (2007). The conditional party mandate: A model for the study of mass and elite opinion patterns. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46, 3, 293-318.
- Van der Eijk, C., Van der Brug, W., Kroh, M., & Franklin, M. (2006). Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behavior: On the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities. *Electoral Studies*, 25, 3, 424-447.
- Vasilopoulou, S., & Gattermann, K. (2012). Matching policy preferences: the linkage between voters and MEPs. *Journal of European Public Policy*. Doi: 10.1080/13501763.2012.718892.

Appendix I: Parties

Shortcut	Full party name (Dutch)	Full party name (English)
50+	50Plus	50PLUS
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl	Christian Democratic Appeal
CU	ChristenUnie	ChristianUnion
D66	Democraten 66	Democrats 66
GL	GroenLinks	GreenLeft
LDP	Liberaal Democratische Partij	Liberal Democratic Party
Newropeans	Newropeans	Newropeans
PE	Progressief Ede	Progressive Ede
PvdA	Partij van de Arbied	Labor Party
PvdD	Partij voor de Dieren	Party for Animals
PVV	Partij voor de Vrijheid	Party for Freedom
SGP	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	Reformed Political Party
SP	Socialistische Partij	Socialist Party
ToN	Trots op Nederland	Proud of the Netherlands
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

Appendix II: Tests of Significance

Hypothesis 1

One-way ANOVA tests were used to test whether the differences between elections are significant. These are the results:

- Socioeconomic dimension: [F(4, 740015) = 15272.669, p = 0.000]
- Cultural dimension: [F(4, 750015) = 15189.159, p = 0.000]

The Tukey post hoc test shows that on the socioeconomic dimension all differences among elections are significant at a level of $p \leq 0.001$. On the cultural dimension, only the difference between the national election of 2010 and the local elections of 2010 is not significant.

Hypothesis 3

One-way ANOVA tests were used to test whether the differences between elections and party groups are significant. These are the results:

- Socioeconomic dimension:
 - o Multiple high PTV's (elections): [F(4, 347782) = 5422.881, p = 0.000]
 - o Multiple high PTV's (parties): [F(8, 347778) = 23214.814, p = 0.000]
 - o One high PTV (elections): [F(4, 399391) = 9384.597, p = 0.000]
 - o One high PTV (parties): [F(8, 399387) = 22284.467, p = 0.000]
- Cultural dimension:
 - o Multiple high PTV's (elections): [F(3, 327093) = 3731.342, p = 0.000]
 - o Multiple high PTV's (parties): [F(8, 327088) = 5229.607, p = 0.000]
 - o One high PTV (elections): [F(3, 368734) = 5893.562, p = 0.000]
 - o One high PTV (parties): [F(8, 368737) = 2725.175, p = 0.000]
- EU dimension:
 - o Multiple high PTV's (parties): [F(7, 20682) = 7188.241, p = 0.000]
 - o One high PTV (parties): [F(7, 30650) = 13030.197, p = 0.000]

The Tukey post hoc test showed that all differences among the categories were significant at a level of $p \leq 0.001$; except between the following categories:

- Socioeconomic dimension:
 - o Multiple PTV's (parties): Between the multiple party families group and the Christian conservative group.
- Cultural dimension:

- Multiple high PTV's (parties): Between the single-issue group and the social-democratic group; between the single-issue group and the multiple party families group; between the social democratic group and the multiple party families group; between the socialist group and the multiple party families group.
- One high PTV (parties): Between the Christian democratic group and the right-wing group; between the socialist and the multiple party families group.
- EU dimension:
 - One high PTV (parties): Between the single-issue party group and the social democratic group.

Hypothesis 4

One-way ANOVA tests were used to test whether the differences between party groups are significant. These are the results for the national, regional and local elections:

- Socioeconomic dimension: [F(8, 750011) = 45237.685, p = 0.000]
- Cultural dimension: [F(8, 698663) = 7318.283, p = 0.000]
- EU dimension: [F(7, 51340) = 20022.742, p = 0.000]

The Tukey post hoc test showed that all differences among the categories were significant at a level of $p \leq 0.001$; except between the following categories:

- Socioeconomic dimension: Between the Christian conservative group and the green group (significant at a level of ≤ 0.05); between the Christian conservative group and the right-wing group (significant at a level of ≤ 0.05); between the single-issue group and the multiple party group.
- Cultural dimension: Between the Christian democratic group and the right-wing group; between the Christian conservative group and the single-issue group (significant at a level of ≤ 0.01). Between the social democratic group and the multiple party families group.

Hypothesis 6

Concerning the significance of the differences, Paired-Samples T-tests show the following results:

- Local elections 2010: A significant difference in the scores for the socioeconomic dimension (M = 0.4175, SD = 0.29520) and the cultural dimension (M = 0.4573, SD = 0.32481); $t(93323) = -29.143$, p = 0.000.

- Regional elections 2011: A significant difference in the scores for the socioeconomic dimension (M = 0.5191, SD = 0.32223) and the cultural dimension (M = 0.5309, SD = 0.28615); $t(145969) = -14.637$, $p = 0.000$.
- National elections 2010: A significant difference in the scores for the socioeconomic dimension (M = 0.5755, SD = 0.36547) and the cultural dimension (M = 0.4589, SD = 0.18974); $t(234500) = 125.927$, $p = 0.000$.
- National elections 2012: A significant difference in the scores for the socioeconomic dimension (M = 0.7168, SD = 0.47333) and the cultural dimension (M = 0.5497, SD = 0.11764); $t(224876) = 147.066$, $p = 0.000$.
- European elections 2009: A significant difference in the scores for the socioeconomic dimension (M = 0.3995, SD = 0.27673) and the EU dimension (M = 0.7012, SD = 0.32267); $t(51347) = -160.102$, $p = 0.000$.