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Published in:
Society & animals

DOI:
[10.1163/15685306-12341415](https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341415)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2016

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Otjes, S. (2016). The Hobbyhorse of the Party for the Animals. *Society & animals*, 24(4), 383-402.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341415>

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The Hobbyhorse of the Party for the Animals

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Abstract

Can a small, new political party increase the attention to nonhuman animal welfare? This paper traces the effect of the Party for the Animals on the Dutch parliament. This was the first animal advocacy party to enter parliament. After this relatively small, new political party entered the Dutch parliament, attention to agriculture and animal welfare increased markedly. Because of timing of the change and the absence of alternative explanations, it is very likely that the Party for the Animals caused the change. The paper also identifies the underlying mechanism of the change in attention: a conflict between established political parties and the new political party about the framing of the debate on agriculture.

Keywords

animal advocacy – parliamentary agenda – new political parties – framing

Introduction

The Party for the Animals (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PvdD) was the first nonhuman animal advocacy party to win representation in a national parliament. It entered the Dutch parliament in 2006, winning two seats out of 150 (Lucardie, 2008, Van der Heijden, 2010). It was founded in order to act like “a pacer in the marathon” (Thieme, 2006). The party did not seek to implement its own animal welfare proposals directly, but rather it sought to make established parties work harder on animal issues through their participation in elections and in parliament. Prominent theorists of political science, such as Downs (1957) and

Mair (1997), have proposed that new political parties can change the policies of established parties in this way.

The main question of this article is to what extent has the Party for the Animals been able to reach this goal? Has the Party for the Animals been able to make established parties pay more attention to the position of (nonhuman) animals? This question has not yet been answered in a systematic way. In an analysis of the manifestos of the Dutch green party GreenLeft, Lucardie and Pennings (2010) speculated that the GreenLeft spoke more firmly about animals because of the electoral competition of the Party for the Animals. The goal of this study is to find out in a systematic way to what extent the Party for the Animals has been able to reach its goal.

The relevance of this study does not end at the borders of the Netherlands. This research contributes to the discussion about the success of animal advocacy groups (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995; Einwohner, 2002; Evans, 2010; Freeman, 2010; Mika, 2006). As the Party for the Animals is the first animal advocacy party that has entered a national parliament, it offers an opportunity to see to what extent and under what conditions participation in parliament is a successful strategy in influencing animal welfare policies. The electoral system of the Netherlands (proportional representation with no electoral threshold) makes it more amenable for new parties than countries with less open electoral systems.

First, the goals of new parties in terms of the mobilizer-challenger typology of Rochon (1985) will be discussed. This will consequently be applied to the Party for the Animals. Next, the different theories of how new parties can elicit change in established parties and how these changes can be measured and attributed to the new party will be discussed. These methods will be applied to the Party for the Animals. The conclusion will provide the results in a comparative context.

Goals of New Political Parties

Rochon (1985) has developed a typology that can help one to understand the goals of new political parties. Rochon differentiates between two kinds of new political parties: mobilizers and challengers. Challengers challenge one of the established parties “on its own turf” (Rochon, 1985). A challenger holds that an established party has distanced itself from the ideology or the group that they used to represent. The challenger seeks to represent this group or ideology instead. Mobilizers, on the other hand, attempt to mobilize voters on a new issue.

Challengers differ from mobilizers in three ways: challengers orient their political communication towards the party that they challenge, while mobilizers do not orient themselves towards one particular party. Challengers have an ideology that is similar to the ideology that the party that it challenged used to have. Mobilizers emphasize how their ideology differs from the ideologies of the existing parties. A challenger orients itself towards a social group that the party it challenges considers its electoral base. Mobilizers seek to cut through the established political cleavages. Challengers and mobilizers have different goals: a challenger seeks to replace an established party. In response the established party may return to its original positions. A mobilizer party attempts to introduce a new issue in the political arena. If it has an effect on the established parties, it must be in the attention that they devote to issues.

Goal of Party for the Animals

In order to understand the goal of the Party for the Animals, it may be useful to have an overview of the Dutch party system. The Dutch lower House, *Tweede Kamer*, is elected through proportional representation without an electoral threshold. A political party needs to win only 0.67% of the vote in order to win a seat. Because of this, the Netherlands has a multiparty system. One can understand Dutch politics in terms of a single left/right line of conflict, which concerns both economic and environmental issues.

There are three major political parties: the Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA), the Christian-Democratic Appeal (*Christen-Democratisch Appel*, CDA), and the Liberal Party (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD). The Christian-Democrats and the Liberal Party are center-right parties. They tend to favor agricultural interests. The Labour Party, a center-left party, favors more environmentalist policies. In addition to the three major parties, there are three groups of parties: on the center left, small Christian parties, and radical rightwing populists. First, the GreenLeft (*GroenLinks*, GL), Democrats 66 (*Democraten 66*, D66), and the Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP) are (center-)leftwing parties that tend to favor environmentalist policies as well. Second, the small Christian parties, the center-left ChristianUnion (*ChristenUnie*, CU), and the rightwing Political Reformed Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, SGP) have strong ties with rural agricultural communities. And third, since 2002, rightwing populist parties have played a major role in politics: before 2006 the List Pim Fortuyn (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, LPF) was the populist party in parliament. In 2006 it was succeeded by the Freedom Party

(*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV), which is sceptical about climate change, but favors animal welfare policies.

Members of the animal advocacy movement founded the Party for the Animals on October 28, 2002 (Krouwel & Lucardie, 2008). The founders were the chair, the director, and one of the policy advisors of the animal advocacy group *Bont voor Dieren* (Fur is for Animals). They were concerned about the animal welfare, environment and agriculture policies of a newly formed center-right cabinet (Lucardie, 2008). The founders were particularly worried about the plans of that cabinet to delay and reverse animal welfare legislation. They decided that they should go into politics to ensure that animals received the attention they deserved.

The idea of an animal advocacy party dates back to at least the early 1990s, when Niko Koffeman, who served as an independent campaign advisor to the Socialist Party, proposed the idea (Kruijt, 2007). The party won its first two seats in the *Tweede Kamer* in the 2006 national elections. One seat was taken by one of the party's founders, Marianne Thieme. In 2007 the party won one seat in the upper house, *Eerste Kamer*. Niko Koffeman filled that seat. In the following elections, the party was able to retain these seats.

Thieme and Koffeman have given different reasons why an animal advocacy party was established specifically. In Thieme's opinion, the established parties are single-interest parties because they focus solely on the financial interests of humans and neglect many other interests, particularly the interests of animals (Thieme, 2006, p. 30). The Party for the Animals offers an exceptional non-anthropocentric program (Van der Heijden, 2010). In the eyes of Thieme (2006, p. 113), established parties do not work hard enough for animals. The "hot breath" of the Party for the Animals should force the established parties to put animals higher on the political agenda (Thieme, 2006, p. 83). Thieme (2006, p. 74) wants to remind the existing parties of the "good intentions in their own programmes."

Koffeman explains the strategy of the party in a different way. He fathered the idea of an animal advocacy party, but he became involved with the party only after it was formed. In his view, journalists are not interested in yet another party with a broad program oriented at welfare and sustainability. By zooming in on the position of animals, the party draws journalists' attention: even the choice for the name "Party for the Animals" was strategic in nature, according to Koffeman. The party could also have been called "Party for the Environment," but according to Koffeman that makes no lasting impression. This way, the Party for the Animals can attract media attention and show the true magnitude of the environmental degradation (De Telegraaf, 2007; De Pers, 2008; Van Os, 2010). These arguments are partly contradictory: in the

story of Koffeman, the Party for the Animals has a broad green and leftwing program, and it *uses* animal issues to attract attention. In Thieme's story, the party focuses on animal issues in order to realize policy change, albeit indirectly.

Does the Party for the Animals concentrate on the position of animals or does it seek to tell a broader story? The program of the party focuses on animals. The party devotes most attention to the position of animals in industrial agriculture. Almost 70% of its manifesto concerns agriculture or animal welfare policies. In addition to the position of animals, the party also pays considerable attention to environmental issues: Thieme (2009) has linked the consumption of meat to climate change. The party argues that it transcends the traditional division between left and right and instead aims for a society based on sustainability and compassion (Thieme, 2006). Van der Heijden (2010) and Lucardie (2006) describe the Party for the Animals as a party with a broad-based left-leaning program that focuses on agriculture and other animal-rights-related policies. On the whole, the picture is mixed: the program of the Party for the Animals is similar to that of the SP and the GreenLeft in terms of its political positions, but differs strongly in terms of the attention it pays to issues.

In the eyes of Thieme, existing parties focus too much on the interests of human beings and neglect the interests of animals. The Party for the Animals makes a division between animal friendly and unfriendly parties. Animal unfriendly parties such as the CDA are the main opponents of the party (NRC Handelsblad, 2010). The SP, Labour Party, GreenLeft, and D66 belong to the animal friendly majority (Thieme, 2005, pp. 79-80). When it comes to these animal friendly parties, the PvdD is "content about their intentions, and does not want to create a gap between [the Party for the Animals] and them, but the fact remains that they treat animal welfare as a side dish on the political menu" (Thieme, 2006, p. 113). A separate animal advocacy party is necessary to make the established parties "run faster" on this issue. During several campaigns, however, the Party for the Animals specifically attacked the GreenLeft: in 2005, Thieme wrote that GreenLeft's support for the "animal-unfriendly European Constitution" was bad for its credibility as an animal advocate (Thieme, 2005). When several local GreenLeft councillors spoke out in favor of industrial-size stables, Thieme wrote: "how fast can a party that once called itself progressive forget its ideals when it begins to bear governmental responsibility" (Van Kooten & Thieme, 2006).

Electurally, the Party for the Animals does not target the constituency of a particular party. When Thieme (2006, p. 33) speaks about the electoral potential of the Party for the Animals, she refers to the number of vegetarians. The

party appeals explicitly to voters by asking them to voice their dissatisfaction about the treatment of animals, independent of the question of who gets into power (Thieme, 2006, p. 115).

So is the Party for the Animals a mobilizer or challenger? In terms of campaign strategy the picture is unclear: the party focused on both the CDA, as the representative of traditional farm interests, and the animal friendly parties that have neglected the issue. The program of the Party for the Animals shows the same ambiguity as well. This program differs significantly from the program of the existing parties in its special focus on the position of animals, but it takes positions that are similar to smaller parties of the left. The central claim of challenging parties, namely that a particular party no longer represents the ideology that it once did, is not consistently and continually made by the Party for the Animals.

The Party for the Animals also does not focus on the electorate of a particular party: indeed, by insisting that the animal issue transcends the traditional social cleavages, it appeals to animal lovers in all social groups. All in all, the party's profile leans somewhat towards mobilizer. Other authors have categorized the Party for the Animals as a mobilizer or a subcategory thereof as well (Krouwel & Lucardie, 2008; Meeuwissen, 2011; Schaafsma, 2006).

Effects of New Political Parties

Given that the Party for the Animals is a mobilizer, the focus in the analysis is on attention. Earlier research has focused on the electoral manifestos of established parties (Harmel & Svåsand, 1997; Meguid, 2005). This study will focus on the attention that established parties pay to issues in parliament.

What issues come on the parliamentary agenda is a crucial question in politics. There are many societal problems and political attention is a scarce resource (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). Political action will only occur on those issues that are on the parliamentary agenda. Change in the parliamentary agenda occurs in two steps: long periods of stability are followed by sudden changes of the agenda. These changes occur because of different external shocks, such as disasters or public protests (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Rohrschneider, 1993). The disasters in Fukushima, for instance have put nuclear energy on the parliamentary agenda in Western European countries. Political scientists have hypothesized that media attention influences the parliamentary agenda as well (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Elections can also lead to changes in attention because they change the balance of power between political parties. The entry of a new political party may serve as both an external

shock and a change in the internal balance of parliament. Therefore, new political parties may have a marked impact on the parliamentary agenda.

The parliamentary agenda is a particular political construct. On the one hand, parliamentary parties formulate the agenda together (Green-Pedersen & Mortensen, 2010). On the other hand, parliamentary parties are constrained by the parliamentary agenda: parliamentary parties must react to the issues that are put on the agenda. Other parties and the media expect MPs to discuss the issues that are on the agenda. It is not just a question of appropriateness, but also of control: if a parliamentary party does not speak out on the issues that are on the agenda, it leaves the definition of that issue to other political parties.

Take the example of parliamentary motions: if a parliamentary party does not propose any motions itself, it can only react to the motions of other parties. If, for instance, an animal advocacy party is the only party to propose motions on agriculture, the only thing that other parties can do is vote against this party's radical proposals (e.g., abolishing animal husbandry). Since animal welfare is a valence issue, which is generally positively valued by voters (Stokes, 1963), established parties may not want to vote exclusively against animal-friendly proposals. Therefore, these parties must participate in parliamentary discussions and propose parliamentary motions, in order to define the issue in a way that benefits them. This means that by dominating the parliamentary agenda, new parties can influence the attention that other parties pay to issues.

The underlying mechanism is the definition or the framing of the political conflict. According to Mair (1997), the competition between new and established parties on the definition of the political conflict is as important as the conflict between established parties on the established lines of conflict. Established parties compete with each other on the established lines of conflict, such as the left-right line of conflict. They have an interest in maintaining these lines of conflict: they owe their existence to this line of conflict. How the conflict is defined matters for which majorities can be found in parliament and therefore which solutions political parties will implement (Schattschneider, 1960). In periods of stability the balance between political parties is fixed and therefore the particular parties or actors will monopolize the formulation of policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). New parties have an interest in redefining the political conflict. The definition of the political conflict is a matter of political conflict itself.

This idea that the definition of the conflict matters takes a prominent role in the literature on framing. A frame is a scheme that helps an individual to interpret, process, and store information about the world. Framing is an attempt to think strategically about which schema to invoke (Freeman, 2010). Parliamentary parties want to control the way discussions are framed, because

they prefer that the debate be framed in their terms. In order to frame the debate in their own terms, parties will need to propose their own frames by participating in debates and proposing motions.

We can now explicate our expectations: when a new party enters parliament, it can indirectly influence the parliamentary agenda. If a new party focuses considerable attention onto its own issue, the attention that established parties pay to that issue may increase. This will occur if the way in which the new party frames the debate on this issue differs markedly from the way that the established parties (used to) frame the debate. While established parties change their attention to the issue, they do not adopt the frames of the new party.

Materials and Methods

This article examines parliamentary speeches and parliamentary motions to study the effect of the Party for the Animals on the attention that established parties pay to the issue of the Party for the Animals: agriculture. Two different sources of data are used to cross-validate patterns. The way that motions on agriculture are framed is analyzed in order to identify the causal mechanism. The choice to focus on agriculture is reasonable because the Party for the Animals orients itself primarily towards the position of animals in traditional large-scale agriculture. For the categorization of motions and speech into substantive categories the scheme of Breeman et al. (2009) was used.¹ This “agriculture” category has been extended to also include all policies related to fishery, animals in the wild, and animals in human care.

Parliamentary Speech

Parliamentary speech is a good indicator of the saliency of an issue, because all speech that is recorded in the Dutch parliament is speech during plenary sessions. Here, time is a scarce resource because parliament only has plenary sessions for three days a week and a limited number of weeks per year. This means that MPs will only speak on issues that they feel are worth their time. In both aspects of parliamentary work (policy-making and controlling the government) speech plays an important role: parliamentarians use their speaking time to debate new policies or express their criticism or support for the government.

1 This scheme consists out of 19 categories: macro-economy and taxes, civil rights, healthcare, agriculture, labor, education, environment, energy, transport, justice, social affairs, housing, enterprise, defense, science, foreign trade, foreign affairs, governance, and land management.

The data on parliamentary speech is drawn from Louwse (2011a, 2011b). Louwse (2011a, 2011b) has collected all speeches in the Dutch *Tweede Kamer* between 1946 and 2010 from the website of the Dutch parliament. These speeches have been assigned to more than twenty substantive categories on basis of word use. The texts were assigned on the basis of automatic coding: the first step consists of the construction of a dictionary with more than fifty words linked to each substantive category. A speech was assigned to the category from which it contained the most words. If there was a tie or no words were found, the data were assigned to a category on basis of similarity in word use to the paragraphs that were already coded. This was done using a Linear Support Vector machine, a method that looks at similarity in word use.² This approach has shown itself to be quite reliable when compared to the results of hand coding (Louwse, 2011a, p. 81).³

Motions

In addition to parliamentary speech, motions are examined to study patterns in saliency. In contrast to other forms of written means at the disposal of an MP (such as written questions or amendments), motions are used both when making policy and controlling the government. Motions also represent the priorities of an MP because they have to be read into the parliamentary minutes at the cost of speaking time in debates.

Every motion is assigned to a single subject and to a single parliamentary party. The parliamentary party is the party of the first sponsor of the motion. The same categorization scheme is used to assign motions, and the agriculture category is used again. Motions are drawn from two different sources: first from the Polidocs database of Marx and Schuth (2010). This includes all motions between 2003 and 2008. These motions have been assigned to their categories using a system of keywords, which were assigned to them by the secretariat of the *Tweede Kamer*. Every one of these motions is assigned to a category. Each motion is assigned to the category from which it has the most keywords (relative to the number of keywords linked to that category).⁴ In the period 2008-2010, the records of parliamentary speeches are used: those motions that

2 A Linear Support Vector Machine treats each paragraph as a point in a high-dimensional space, where each word forms a dimension. For those paragraphs for which the categories are known, the SVM will calculate a hyper-plane, which is best able to separate the different categories (Louwse, 2011a). This can in turn be used to assign the paragraphs to the categories to which they are, in terms of word use, most similar.

3 Louwse's results have a Krippendorff's Alpha of 0.723 for election manifestos compared to hand coding.

4 Motions that had no keywords assigned to a category were excluded.

were voted on were found using automatic text recognition software. These motions were assigned by hand.

Motions are also employed to examine framing. To this end, all agriculture motions were coded by hand. The motions were divided between those that concern animals and those that do not. The second category concerns, for instance, horticulture. This is used to test the extent to which the debate on agriculture was framed in terms of favoring or opposing animal welfare. The exact definitions of these four categories are explicated in Table 1.

Methods of Data Analysis

This study is a single case study. It relies on pattern-matching: the basic idea is that one compares a theoretically predicted pattern with an empirically found pattern (Yin, 2009). In order to see whether changes in attention can reasonably be attributed to the Party for the Animals, three factors have to be present: first, one must see marked increase in the attention that established parties pay to issues. Two different measures are used in order to cross-validate the results. The timing of these changes must be correct. In order to attribute the change in attention to the Party for the Animals, the elections of 2006 must interrupt the development in attention.

Second, one must eliminate alternative explanations for the changes: as seen above, external circumstances, crises, social movements or the media can put an issue on the agenda. In order to attribute the change to the Party for the Animals, one must eliminate these three factors as alternative explanations.

Finally, a specific mechanism was identified above in order to explain the increase in attention, namely that parties increase activity to keep the conflict defined in their own terms. In order to attribute the change in attention to the

TABLE 1 *Coding categories used in analyses*

Categories	Characteristics
Non-Animal Issues	Agriculture that does not concern (nonhuman) animals (horticulture, organizational aspects, nature).
Animal Issues	Agriculture that does concern (nonhuman) animals (animal husbandry). Other social practices involving (nonhuman) animals (fishery, hunting, exotic animals, companion animals).

Party for the Animals, one must find that this party frames its argument in a different way than the established parties do and that the established parties maintain their own frames after the Party for the Animals enters Parliament. If parties adopt both the frames and the attention of the Party for the Animals (adopting the themes and the issues of the Party for the Animals, for instance), then the theoretical mechanism proposed is not found. An alternative mechanism would have to be formulated concerning how the party changed established parties.

All in all, in order to attribute change in attention to the Party for the Animals a change must occur in the expected direction, alternative explanations must be eliminated, and the mechanism that was proposed must be identified.

Results

The Party for the Animals is very active in parliament on animal issues. The large number of written parliamentary questions that the party's two MPs sent to the ministers of agriculture has necessitated the ministry to hire a specific civil servant in order to answer them (Douwes, 2007). Marianne Thieme, the chair of the Party for the Animals parliamentary party, concludes all of her contributions to the plenary debate with the words, "Furthermore, I think that industrial agriculture must be ended," echoing Cato the Elder, the Roman senator who used to end his speeches with the wish that Carthage be destroyed. The exceptional focus of the Party for the Animals on the position of animals has led to visible irritation in other parties.

When the Party for the Animals attempted to propose 60 motions during the parliamentary discussion of agriculture budget, one MP stood up, loudly said "this makes no sense," and left the parliamentary deliberations. Of the many new political parties that have entered the Dutch parliament since 1945, the Party for the Animals is by far the most active, for instance in proposing motions. A total of 302 motions proposed by the Party for the Animals came to a vote from 2006-2010: this is 42 motions per MP per year. (See Figure 1 for percentage of motions breakdown.) No new party proposed as many motions per year. The closest is the Freedom Party, which proposed 27 motions per MP per year. The Party for the Animals is strongly focused on one subject. A total of 72% of its motions concerned agriculture. (See Figure 2 for percentage of speech breakdown.) All other new parties are far less concentrated on a single issue. No party came above 50% on any issue.

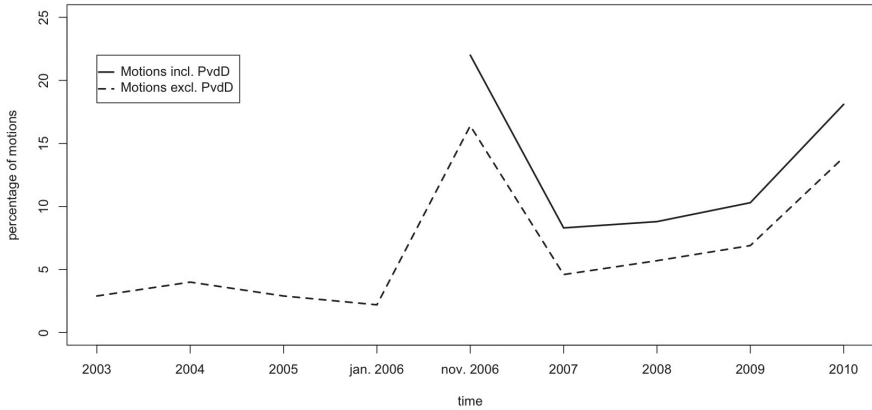


FIGURE 1 *Percentage of agriculture motions.*

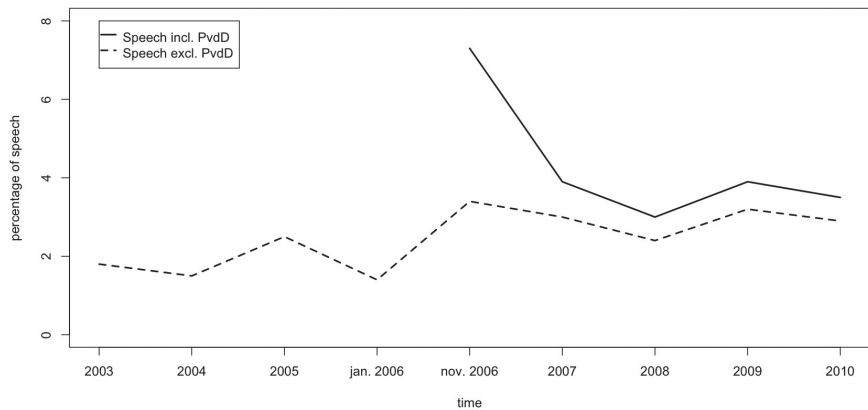


FIGURE 2 *Percentage of agriculture speech.*

Parliamentary Agenda

How did attention to agriculture develop in parliament? First, parliamentary motions are examined. Before November 2006, between 2% and 4% of motions concerned agriculture. Between 2004 and 2006, the percentage declined gradually. After 2006, the percentage of motions concerning agriculture increases sharply. After 2006, the total percentage of motions concern agriculture ranges between 8% and 22%. The highest percentages (18% and 22%) are in short periods just before or after elections. These figures include the large number of motions concerning agriculture proposed by the Party for the Animals.

If one excludes the motions proposed by the Party for the Animals and the short periods before and after elections, the percentage of motions concerning agriculture ranges between 4.5% and 7%, considerably more than before 2006. This percentage increases between 2007 and 2010. Between 2006 and 2010, attention was higher for all parties than it was between 2003 and 2006. This was the case for traditional farmers' parties as well as for the animal friendly parties.

If one looks at speech, a similar pattern can be seen: before the 2006 elections, between 1.5% and 2.5% of parliamentary speech concerned agriculture. After 2006, this ranges between 3% and 7%. Again, these numbers include a peak just after the 2006 elections and the speech by the two MPs of the Party for the Animals, which strongly focused on agriculture. If one excludes these numbers, the level of attention lies between 2.5% and 3.5%, which is still more than before November 2006. After 2006, all parties speak more about agriculture.

In terms of timing, these patterns certainly would lead one to believe that the 2006 elections mattered for the levels of attention: for both motions and speech, the 2006 elections formed a clear break. The fact that the share of Party for the Animals activity of all the motions and speeches on agriculture actually declines between 2007 and 2010 lends credence to the idea that parties responded to its entry. So in terms of the actual development, there is good reason to believe that the increase in attention is the result of the entry of the Party for the Animals.

Framing

The key mechanism proposed above is that an increase in attention (whether in terms of motions or in terms of speech) to an issue, caused by a new political party, is the result of a battle over control over the definition of that issue. By focusing strongly on an issue, a new party can try to define the debate in their own way. In order to prevent losing control over the debate, established parties must increase attention, while maintaining their own definition of the debate. If, on the other hand, established parties take over the framing of the new party, then this explanation fails. One must see an increase in attention, but stability in the way these contributions are framed by established parties.

A total of 111 motions were tabled on agriculture before the 2006 elections. In Table 2, one can see that 68% had some link to animals (fishery, animal husbandry, hunting, exotic animals, animal disease, and companion animals). A total of 32% concerned other issues such as horticulture.

TABLE 2 *Framing agriculture issues*

		Agriculture	
		Non-animal issues	Animal issues
Established parties	2003-2006	32%	68%
	2006-2010	31%	69%
Party for the Animals	2006-2010	3%	97%

After the 2006 elections, 548 motions were tabled on agriculture. The Party for the Animals proposed 39% of these motions and the other parties 61%. As one can see in Table 2, 97% of the Party for the Animals motions concerned animals, and 3% did not directly concern animals. The Party for the Animals did not only strongly focus on agriculture, but within this issue, it focused on animal issues. Meanwhile, the established parties devoted more attention to agriculture, but maintained the same division between animal and non-animal issues: 69% of the motions were linked to animals and 31% were not. While the established parties increased attention to the issue of agriculture, they maintained the balance between issues that concerned animals and issues that did not concern animals.

After the entry of the Party for the Animals into parliament, the number of motions that concerned animal issues increased in absolute terms, but in relative terms animal-oriented framing did not proliferate. All in all, the debate did not turn more towards animal welfare policies, but rather we see stability in terms of framing.

Alternative Explanations

The fact that attention to the position of animals increased sharply after the elections in which the new party entered is not enough to attribute the change in attention to the new party. In order to credibly attribute the change in attention to the new party, one must eliminate alternative explanations. The literature offers alternative explanations of why the parliamentary agenda can change: these are social movements, media attention, policy crises, and the legislative agenda. We will discuss these different explanations in turn.

Figure 3 shows the combined number of members or donors of the eight largest animal advocacy organizations in the Netherlands between 2003 and 2010.⁵ These support levels are a measure of the extent to which Dutch citizens are concerned about the position of animals. The numbers are quite consistent over time: the average yearly shift in membership is around 4%. There are a few sudden shifts in membership. The question is whether these coincide with the change in attention in parliament. If this is the case, the shift must occur in 2006. This year actually shows the *least* changes in support. All in all, there is no evidence that increased attention to agriculture after the 2006 elections is the direct result of increased societal support for animal welfare policies. Other indicators of societal concern for animals remain quite stable: for instance, both in the period 1997-1998 and in the period 2007-2010, 1.2% of the Dutch population was vegetarian or vegan (TNO Voeding, 1998; Beukers & Van Rossum, 2012).

The parliamentary agenda is partially determined by the media. It is an empirical question whether media attention can explain the increase in attention to agriculture. Figure 4 shows the number of stories in the four most important national Dutch newspapers.⁶ We examine the average number of

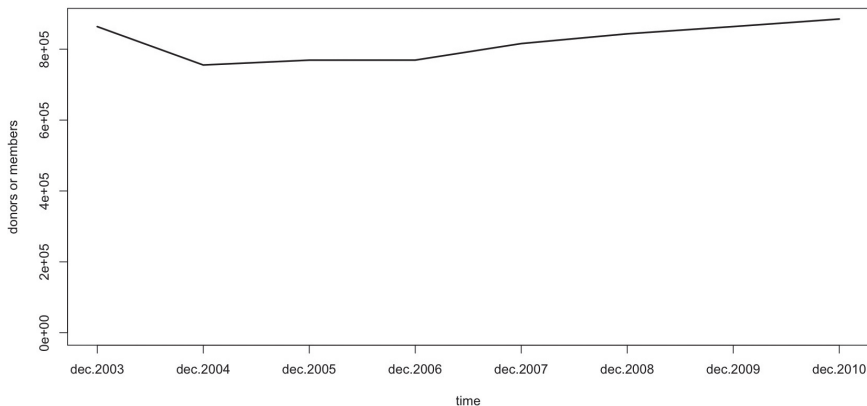


FIGURE 3 Combined membership figures of animal advocacy organizations.

5 These are the *Dierenbescherming* (Animal Protection), the International Fund for Animal Welfare, *Vogelbescherming* (Bird Protection), *Stichting Aap* (Ape Foundation) World Society for the Protection of Animals, *Proefdiervrij* (Test Animal Free), *Bont voor Dieren* (Fur for Animals) and *Wakker Dier* (Animal Awake). Source: VARA (2012).

6 *De Telegraaf* (the most widely read Dutch newspaper), *De Volkskrant*, *NRC-Handelsblad*, and *Trouw* (the three largest quality newspapers in the Netherlands).

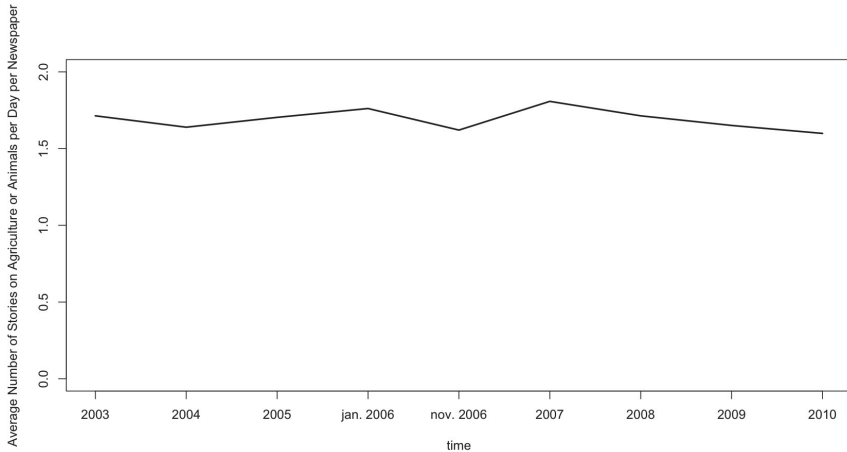


FIGURE 4 *Average number of stories on agriculture or animals.*

news stories per day that mention either animals or agriculture between 2003 and 2010 per newspaper. The average number of stories falls between 1.6 and 1.8. There is considerable stability in the number of stories. After the entry of the Party for the Animals, the average number of stories was slightly lower than before its entry (a decrease of less than 0.05 story per day). The sharp increase in attention to agriculture in parliament cannot be explained by a decrease in news stories about animals or agriculture.

It may be the case that the attention to agriculture increased in reaction to crises in agriculture, in particular the outbreaks of animal diseases. Two outbreaks are examined here: the outbreak of avian flu in 2003 and the outbreak of Q-fever in 2007. Avian flu (H7N7) broke out in the Netherlands in 2003. It mostly affected poultry farms. There were 89 people infected, one of whom died (Bijkerk et al., 2009). According to the official count, 255 farms were infected. There were 25 million animals (mostly chickens) killed preventively in order to prevent the spread of the disease (RIVM, 2003). By the end of 2003, the disease was under control. The spread of the avian flu was coupled by fears of a pandemic, as it coincided with the spread of SARS in East Asia.

Q-fever broke out in 2007. The disease primarily affected goats and sheep. There were 3,212 human infections, which led to 24 fatalities over the course of 2006-2012 (RIVM, 2006). The spread of the disease peaked in 2009: only seven farms had been infected in 2008: 100 people had been infected and there had been one fatality; in 2009, 55 farms were infected: 2,354 new human infections were identified and there were seven fatalities. In 2010, the number of new infections had decreased to 504, while 11 people died. The disease was

combated with both vaccination of healthy animals and the killing of 40,000 (pregnant) sheep and goats. Neither the spread of Q-fever nor the spread of avian flu coincides with peaks in attention. The breaking point was 2006, in which no major outbreaks of animal disease occurred.

During the period 2006-2010, there were two major policy initiatives on agriculture: a government policy paper on animal welfare was sent to parliament at the end of 2007, and the discussions were brought to close during the beginning of 2008. Additionally, the environmental organization Environmental Defence (*MilieuDefensie*), the Dutch branch of Friends of the Earth, brought the environmental impact of livestock to the parliamentary agenda by means of the citizens' initiative. The initiative was discussed in parliament in 2007 and came to a vote in early 2008. These two developments might have led to an amplification of an already existing trend. Again the breaking point formed by the 2006 elections cannot be explained by these two policy initiatives, which follow the increase in parliamentary attention.

The possible alternative explanations for the increase in attention to agriculture that started in 2006 all have been eliminated: social movements, media attention, crises, and policy initiatives cannot explain the specific way attention to agriculture developed.

Conclusion

The explicit goal of the Party for the Animals is to raise the saliency of animals for the established parties. This fits the profile of the Party for the Animals as a mobilizer. The Party for the Animals has been able to change attention for agriculture: since the Party for the Animals is in the *Tweede Kamer*, attention to agriculture has increased sharply. The number of parliamentary speeches on the subject has doubled and the number of motions on the subject has tripled. The issue has a more prominent role in the parliamentary agenda. The timing of the change makes it likely that the Party for the Animals has caused the increase in attention. Some external circumstances may have contributed to a change in attention (animal disease crises and animal welfare policy initiatives), but they cannot explain the sharp increase in attention in 2006. The specific mechanism proposed, namely that the Party for the Animals and the established parties were in conflict about the way the animal issue must be defined, has been corroborated: even though the number of motions on agriculture that were proposed by the established parties increased in absolute numbers, the share of motions that did and did not concern animals remained remarkably constant.

The success of the Party for the Animals is linked in part to the specific features of the Dutch polity: one does not need a large share of the votes to enter the Dutch parliament, and Dutch parliamentary rules give small parties more room than they have in other systems. An important lesson can be learned from this case about the way in which animal advocacy groups can be successful: the Party for the Animals has been able to have such an impact on the attention for animals through its own activity. By focusing so strongly on one issue and by being so active on its issue, the Party for the Animals has been able to change the saliency of this issue. If one wants to change the parliamentary agenda, one must not get caught up in it, but maintain one's own focus independent of what is on the agenda. By continually defining the debate on agriculture in terms of those who favor animal welfare policies and those who do not, the Party for the Animals challenged the established parties' control over the definition of that issue.

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