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# Fragmentation and Committee work in Dutch Parliament

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## **ABSTRACT**

Parliamentary committees are a crucial feature of legislative organization in European democracies. Increasing electoral volatility and new roles of emerging parties effect the nature of the legislative proceedings that take place in committee meetings. This thesis assesses the consequences of the drastic changes in the Dutch party system (large traditional centrist parties losing ground to the upcoming middle-sized parties) for the legislative process. By looking at the proceedings of committee meetings in two different periods of fragmentation (2005 and 2011), this study explores the contribution and participation of the different parties in the committee phase in parliament. A general correlation between smaller party sizes and a decline in the seats that are represented in committee meetings is detected. Furthermore, it is found that MPs of parties with centrifugal tendencies (towards the extremes of the political spectrum) are less likely to participate in committee meetings than MPs that are closer to the political center.

*Keywords: parliamentary committees; party system change; Dutch politics.*

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	1
Introduction.....	3
1.1 The Numerical and Ideological Criteria for Party Systems .....	8
1.2 Fragmentation of the Dutch party system: Good or bad? .....	9
1.3 Legislative Deliberations and Committee Power .....	16
1.4 Representation and Participation in the Legislative Process .....	18
1.5 The role of committees and their members in Dutch parliament .....	20
1.6 Theory and Hypotheses.....	22
2.1 The independent variables.....	27
2.2 The dependent variable .....	31
2.3 Data selection .....	32
2.4 Case selection.....	34
2.5 Measurement .....	37
2.6 Research method .....	38
3.1 Participation of PPG's in the committee phase .....	39
3.2 Effects of numerical pluralism and fragmentation .....	42
3.3 Effects of Polarization: The contribution of parties with centrifugal tendencies.....	43
CONCLUSION.....	44
References .....	45

## Introduction

The Dutch political landscape has changed extensively in the last decade. Traditional, centrist parties like the Christian and Social Democrats have lost their solid basis of electoral support and parties that operate at extremes of the political spectrum like the LPF, SP and PVV can emerge rapidly and fail just as quickly at the polls. This has led to the aggravation of fragmentation in Dutch parliament: Although the number of parties that has held seat in Dutch parliament has always been around ten, the number of seats that are occupied by members of one of the three biggest parties has dropped from 135 in the 1980's, to 85 in 2010. The 'effective number of parties' as described by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) has risen from 3.5 in 1986 to almost 7 after the elections in 2010. This change has induced the concern that the Netherlands is heading to a ungovernable situation as is impending in Israel where the 120 seats in the Likud is divided between 13 parties (Brill 2012). Since 2002 there have been six different elections because the coalition government had collapsed, and this growing instability has initiated a discussion about whether the Dutch electoral system should adopt a larger threshold of four or five percent, like most European proportional systems have, instead of the current threshold of 0,667 percent. In 2012 a nationwide survey showed that 56 percent of Dutch politicians supported the introduction of a threshold of five percent (NOS 2012). With such a threshold five of the eleven parties that currently hold seats in parliament would disappear.

The main objection against the fragmentation of parliament and subject of this public debate is the lack of support for a stable and solidly supported coalition government (Schutgens 2012). This corresponds with the literature wherein typology of party systems, based on numerical and ideological criteria, is used as an independent variable for studying government performance (Lijphart 1999). The impact of fragmentation on the functioning of

parliament itself, however, remains unquestioned. This thesis will look at the consequences of fragmentation on a crucial feature (Strøm 1998) of legislative organization in parliament: the parliamentary committees. The fragmentation of the distribution of parliamentary seats coincides with a strong increase of the workload in parliament, because the Dutch parliament meets increasingly more often for legislative deliberation in these committees. The parliamentary work consists for greater part of the proceedings that take place in parliamentary committees: “About 85 percent of the time required for dealing with bills in the Second Chamber is related to the committee phase” (Van Schendelen 1976: 235). Sector specialists from the different parties meet each other in these committees and go into extensive verbal and written discussion with their colleagues from other parties and the responsible minister. Other members of ‘parliamentary party group’ (PPG) in Dutch parliament increasingly take their voting cues from these specialists that participate in the committee that is concerned with the issue (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011: 669).

Committee meetings have increased steadily over the last decade from 1.076 meetings in 2002 to 1.734 meetings in 2011 (Tweede Kamer 2009: 2, 2012: 8). Because the constant pressure of time is a “recurrent feature of all parliaments” (Döring 1995: 223), each Member of Parliament has to decide, besides what position to take, on how active to be on every issue that comes before them (Hall 1996: 1). Smaller PPGs result in larger task schedules for individual members of these fractions, who already have to deal with the increasing workload. This raises the question on how this influences their choices on how they allocate their time and resources and how this affects their participation in the legislative process. If parties fail to participate, this affects the entire legislative process: “Who participates (in what ways, to what extent) will determine which values, interests, or geographic constituencies are represented at this crucial stage of the legislative process. Such patterns, in turn, will shape the policy decisions that emerge (or fail to emerge) from the committee rooms” (Hall 1987:

105). The recent fragmentation in Dutch parliament could therefore have elaborate implications for the participation levels in the committee phase and consequently for the functioning of the entire legislative branch. In addition to the influence on legislative outcome, a lack of legislative participation of increasingly numerous small and middle-sized PPGs will lead to a decreasing part of parliament that can rely on committee deliberations held by their party specialists. This will weaken the legislative organization in parliament and reduce the advantages for productivity, specialization and gains from trade that parliamentary committees provide (Strøm 1998: 24-27). This thesis will therefore look at the participation of the different PPGs in Dutch parliament in an increasingly fragmented party system. It will provide an answer to the following question:

*Does the fragmentation of Dutch parliament have a negative influence on legislative participation in committee meetings?*

I will argue that participation in parliamentary committees is crucial for both contributing to the legislative process, as it is for the division of labor in parliament and that the numerical and ideological fragmentation of the Dutch party system is problematic for broad participation. I will conclude that there is indeed a strong coherence between the size of the different PPGs and the degree of participation in the committee phase in parliament. Although the increase of pluralism in recent years is not proven to enhance this effect, the growing ideological distance in parliament is.

I will do this by looking at the criteria for the numerical and ideological division of party system and the debate on the implications this has. Subsequently I will discuss the influences of committee work on the legislative process and the importance of ‘parliamentary party groups’ (PPGs) being represented in the committee phase of the legislature. This thesis

will go on to inquire the proceedings of 347 committee meetings and the contribution of the different PPGs in these meetings.

# 1. Pluralism and Deliberations in the Dutch Parliamentary Democracy

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When we evaluate the effects of party system layout on the proceedings that take place in the committee phase of parliament, an overview is required of how these two fields (and a connection between the two) have already been explored. The breakthrough of Giovanni Sartori's (1976) influential work *Parties and Party Systems: a Framework for Analyses* has led to a wide range of studies concerning the pluralist character of party systems (Abedi 2002: 551-552). Sartori warns us in his book about the profusion of ways in which we characterize party systems; we could drown in an "embarrass de richesse" of typologies of party systems, so a clear theoretical framework is needed (1976: 119-121). Therefore before using the party system in the Netherlands and its pluralistic character as an independent variable for studying committee work, it first must be determined what it is that makes the fragmentation of parliament a significant theme in the political science literature. How do we assess the number of parties in a democratic system, how is fragmentation identified and which effects of fragmentation have already been examined? Subsequently we need to discuss how the influence of the fragmentation of party systems on the deliberative role of parliament is largely neglected by the literature. Therefore an overview is needed on what we know of the practice of legislative participation and the role parliamentary committees play in the parliamentary process. After that we must look at what has already been studied about the Dutch parliamentary committees. What is the role of the role of committee meetings in Dutch parliament and what do we know about the way members of the committee participate?

Deriving from all this, the relevance will become apparent of researching the connection between party system fragmentation and participation in legislative deliberations.



Subsequently an argument is made on what the nature of this connection may be and a set of hypotheses is laid out on how this relationship will be tested.

### **1.1 The Numerical and Ideological Criteria for Party Systems**

Although the number of parties in a party system can relate to the number of parties contesting in elections or holding seats in parliament or participating in government formation, it is usually based on parties that hold seats in parliament (Wolinetz 2006: 53) and will be regarded as such in this thesis. The question whether the number of parties in a party system is in fact an important indicator on how a party system in a country functions, has for decades been subject of debate. When Sartori came up with his framework for party systems he made an effort to establish party numbers as a key variable and stressed that degrees of pluralism do matter, but only need a “numerical criterion of classification that enables us to get a hold of what matters” (1976:120). According to Sartori (1976: 121-124) fragmented party systems contain more than five parties that obtain seats in parliament, he excludes ‘irrelevant’ parties that do neither play a role in coalition forming nor have “blackmail potential” which indicates whether parties can alter the direction of party competition (rightward or leftward, or to or away from the center). These forms of extreme pluralism can be characterized by either being of a polarized nature with a high ideological distance and intensity between the different parties, or by a more moderate nature, where the discrepancies between parties are less sharp (Sartori 1976: 121-124). The typology that Sartori established for rating the number of parties in a party system and the capability to use them has been challenged over time. Peter Mair (2006: 64) emphasizes that the number of parties can be misleading and that above all the most significant feature of party systems is the ideological character of parties that take part in the competition. He states that “knowledge of how many parties exist in the polity can tell us next to nothing in itself about how the party system works. For that, we need to know how the

various parties can and do act". He observes that multiparty systems have become predominantly moderate, while polarized pluralism is disappearing, leaving Sartori's typology with only the distinction between two-party stems and multiparty systems. He states that a higher fragmentation of parliament does not imply that the entire nature of a system changes (Mair 2006: 69). Alan Siaroff (2000: 103-108) adds another distinction, that can be attributed to extreme multiparty systems. He distinguishes between multiparty systems with one dominant party, two main parties or with a balance among the parties. The starting point for assessing the number and proportion of parties in a party system, however, predominantly remains Sartori's typology as established in 1976. In order to guarantee its utility it should consider, besides the number of parties, "their relationships, and the presence or absence of clustering, as well as centripetal versus centrifugal drives" (Wolinetz 2006: 59).

Where Sartori mentioned the exclusion of irrelevant parties and tried to establish rules for counting parties in a particular party system, Laakso and Taagepera (1979) developed an index to calculate the 'effective number of parties' that would provide "a generalized framework to express concentration, fractionalization, and effective number of components for any system of qualitatively similar components which differ in size" (1979: 23). It is a solution to the problem of counting parties that vary greatly in size, as is characteristic for multiparty systems (Lijphart 1994: 67). The effective number of parties gives a precise understanding of the degree of numerical fragmentation that is demonstrated in parliament after an election, although the ideological tendencies of the parties may not be clear yet.

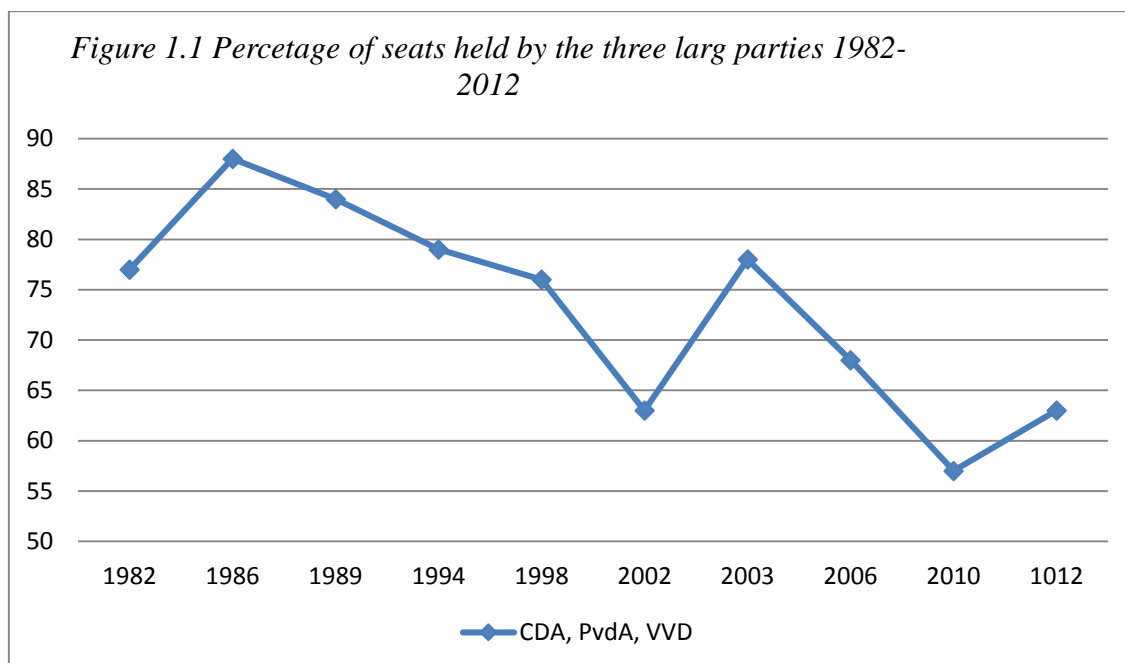
## **1.2 Fragmentation of the Dutch party system: Good or bad?**

In order to assess the importance of the number of parties -and the pluralist character of the multiparty system in particular- of the Netherlands as a political variable, derived from Sartori's framework, we must look at three things: Why is the Dutch party system highly

fragmented, how has it become increasingly more fragmented and what are the (possible) consequences of this? This will be done by describing the classic debate on which patterns a democracy should follow, which pattern the Dutch democratic model follows and what are believed to be the results of this. By pointing out that the effects on parliamentary work are not yet a part of this debate, the contribution of this research in this area will become apparent.

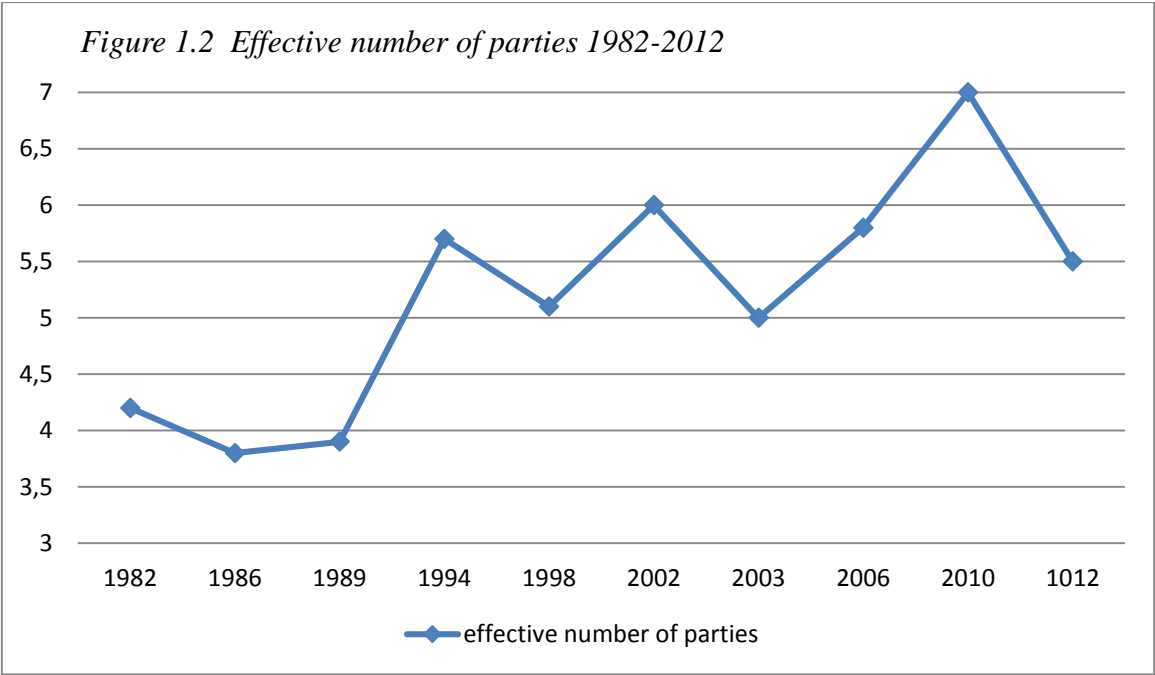
The numerical features of a party system are often discussed in the light of the broader institutional design of countries. There is established to be a pattern of electoral systems that are in place and that are believed to help determine the number of parties, how cohesive these parties are and how this eventually translates into the functioning of the government (Taagepera 2007). In the tradition of Duverger's law that suggests that the type of electoral system influences the eventual political outcome (Duverger 1964), there has been much research done on this connection (Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1994; Cox 1997; Taagepera 2007). There are various electoral rules that are suggested to have certain degrees of influence on the party system layout and electoral systems are seen as a "Rosetta Stone" for parts of political science (Taagepera 2007: 284-286). Besides the influence of electoral laws, the other important factor that influences the number of parties that are elected into parliament is the range of social diversity in a country (Neto and Cox 1997: 149-150) Since the years of the 'frozen cleavages' that were described by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), when mass parties could rely on steady alliances with deeply embedded electorates, preexisting social cleavages are believed to play a role in structuring the party system. The permissiveness of the electoral system and the heterogeneity of the society are shown to have a combined influence on how multipartism eventually comes about: Electoral laws play an "intervening role" in order to mediate the influence of heterogeneity in society on party systems (Ordeshook and Svetsova 1994: 100).

This combined influence has caused profound shifts in the numerical and ideological trends the Dutch party system is experiencing over the last ten to fifteen years. Since the depillarization (which marked the end of the frozen cleavages) was completed in the 1990's the openness of the Dutch party system became apparent. The constraints on volatility that were in place due to the cleavage structure disappeared and other constraints, like institutional barriers such as a considerable threshold, never were in place to begin with (Mair 2008). Hans Daalder stated in 1987, when discussing the Dutch place in Sartori's model, that "for a time it seemed as if the situation would lead to increased polarization and a strengthening of extreme parties in a process of centrifugal competition. Yet the actual outcome was the reduction of political actors" (1987: 269). Since the 1980's however, the numerical and ideological character of the Dutch party system changed significantly and since the 2002 elections we can speak of a "both evolutionary and revolutionary party system change (Pellikaan, *et al.* 2007: 283). The primary numerical change seems to be the structural, downfall of the three major parties in the Netherlands: CDA, PvdA and VVD.



Source: [www.parlgov.org](http://www.parlgov.org)

The decrease of seats held by these three large parties has opened the electoral arena for the emergence of a variety of new parties, which led to a vast increase of the effective number of parties. This increase has led to different form of seat allocation: After the 1986 elections there were three large PPGs (with more than 20 percent of the seats), one medium-sized PPG (with up to 15 percent of the seats) and five small PPGs (with up to five percent of the seats) in parliament and after the 2010 elections there were four large PPGs, three medium-sized PPGs and only three small PPGs in parliament.



Source: [www.pargov.org](http://www.pargov.org)

Besides the numerical fragmentation, since the introduction of the LPF in the political arena there has been change in the dimensions of the political debate and with that the space of party competition changed (Pellikaan, *et al.* 2003; Otjes 2011). Before this the competition between three dominant parties had a strong centripetal character with fixed (social-economic) conflict lines, which left opportunities at the flanks of the spectrum to introduce new conflict lines. The introduction of new conflict lines by the populist-right LPF moved competition between parties away from the “backyard” of the traditional parties at the center (Pellikaan,

*et al.* 2007: 298). Since these ideological lines have been crossed at the elections 2002, other parties such as the SP, which occupies the most extreme left-wing position on the economic dimension” (Pellikaan, *et al.* 2007: 289), in 2006 and the PVV in 2010 have acquired more than 20 seats.

In order to establish this fragmentation as the independent variable of this study, we must consider what we already know about its consequences. As mentioned before, fragmented Dutch party system and the aggravation of the numerical and ideological divisions are suggested to be making the Dutch government less stable. This is what Lijphart (1968: 8-10) has identified as a debate on the quality and stability of democracy, which can be seen as a legacy of the Weimar Republic that had a qualitatively strong democratic system, but turned out to be very unstable (1968: 8). Advocates of a two-party system emphasize the stability of a “certain majority” that leads to effective and unified policy making and the possibilities for holding the party in power directly responsible (Neumann 1957: 422). Duverger (1964: 387-388) states that both democratic quality and stability are features that can primarily be attributed to a two-party system: “Public opinion seems to manifest a deep seated tendency to divide into two rival major fractions, and because almost always there is a duality of tendencies; a system with two parties seems to correspond to the nature of things, and a multiparty system is unnatural. Moreover, a two-party system tends to be more stable, because it is more moderate, than a multiparty system. In the former one finds a decrease in the extend of political divisions restricting the demagogy of parties, whereas in the latter there is an aggravation of political divisions and an intensification of differences coinciding with a general ‘extremization’ of opinion”. Duverger’s assertions that fragmentation increases instability were supported by research conducted by Taylor and Herman (1971: 37) which shows that there exists a relation between the fragmentation of parliament and government instability and that especially ideological division caused by the presence of parties between

pro-system and anti-system, that was pointed out by Sartori's (1976: 132) as one of the most distinctive features of polarized pluralism, enhances this instability.

There are, however, also those who challenge the instability of a multiparty party system and discuss the democratic quality of a fragmented system. Arend Lijphart (1994: 151) is perhaps the most influential advocate of pluralism in parliament and he states that there are "strong limits to change even within plurality families" and he therefore sees no evidence for increased instability. He distinguishes between what he calls 'consensus democracy' (characterized by inclusive and accessible multi-party government and proportional representation) and 'majoritarian democracy' (characterized by a dominant one-party cabinets and plurality elections) in order to evaluate the different institutional systems of a country (1999: 301). The number of parties in a party system is, according to Lijphart (1999: 78-89), linked to the number of issue dimensions in a country. Such issue dimensions, like those that originate from socioeconomic positions, religion or ethnicity should be represented in the party system of a country. He emphasizes that the disproportionality of majority victories leads to an allocation of parliamentary seats that deviates from the preferences of a large share of the electorate (1994: 139-141). A party system that is more faithful to the principle of proportionality and the corresponding minority representation leads to higher democratic quality and eventually to a "kinder and gentler" system (1999: 275-300).

This debate on the democratic qualities and effects of different systems is mainly held through the evaluation of countries that correspond, in a way, to Sartori's party system types. Here fragmentation, whether it reflects on segmentation or polarization, is generally regarded as a key characteristic of a certain system, or a "continuum" as Sartori (1976: 273) describes. In the case of (extensive) volatility however, a party system can be subject to change and fragmentation (numerical and ideological) and become a factor of change itself. According to Mair (2006: 69) a breakdown of the old structure of party competition can occur "quite

suddenly and abruptly” and therefore makes it possible to “treat party system change as an independent variable rather than just a dependent variable”. As was mentioned before, the occurring patterns and deviations of party systems can primarily be attributed to the heterogeneity in society and electoral laws of a country. It is however “quite another thing to trace the effects of party system change –whether on the component parties themselves, or on the voters- and this is something which, at least as yet, is a relatively neglected research question”.

Previous studies on effects of fragmentation, or the quality and stability of party systems characterized by pluralism, were primarily directed at the consequences of different types of party systems on government performance. Party systems are being discussed in terms of how the emergence of features like pluralism, left-right divisions, ideological distance and polarization, movements from and towards the center, anti-system sentiments and opposition arrangement are affecting the range and number of the competing policy preferences that eventually determine the outcome of government. Although the extent to which the policy outcomes correspond to their initial preference is arguably the most important effect for the component parties and their constituencies, it does not comprehend all the functions an elected party has in a parliamentary democracy. Besides appointing and dismissing governments and through supporting or opposing laws providing the oversight of government, the PPGs of parties have a more constructive role in the legislative process as well. The process of forming majorities which is crucial to democratic politics, does comprehend more than voting alone. In the following section I will discuss the more deliberative aspects of (Dutch) parliamentary democracy.



### 1.3 Legislative Deliberations and Committee Power

Prominent theorists like Edmund Burke and John Start Mill have stated that “the role of deliberation (in contrast to the will) in politics are also justifies the existence of parties” (Manin 1987: 368). Although the role of parties in what has been called ‘deliberative democracy’ can be seen in a much broader perspective than parliamentary work and has been regarded to deserve more attention in the scholarly literature (Johnson 2006), I will primarily look at the deliberative role different parties have when they enter the legislative process of parliament. The conduct of parties as representatives of the electorate, and thus as part of aggregative democracy, can however be seen “as a vehicle for rather an alternative to public persuasion and debate” (Johnson 2006: 50). In this section I will discuss how the committee phase in parliament is seen as the main arena for these deliberations in European democracies.

All Members of Parliament vote when a certain piece of legislation comes to a vote on the chamber floor. This mere act of voting is the decisive phase in the legislative process but certainly not the most elaborate one. Much of the deliberations, bargaining and editing of the bill have already been done during the committee phase that in almost every European parliament precedes floor voting (Strøm 1998: 43-44). It could therefore be argued that the most evident contribution to the legislative process is being made in the committee phase (Gallagher, *et al.* 2006: 62) and that strong committees are “at least a necessary condition for effective parliamentary influence in the policy-making process” (Rommetvedt 1998: 60) and can be regarded as the “part and parcel of the way most legislatures do their work” (Strøm 1998: 21). The reason behind ‘committee strength’ and their added value for parliamentary work evolve out of the ability for PPGs to delegate specific legislative work to individual members in order to enhance the overall legislative productivity, the possibilities it provides for specialization and therefore capability of the committee members and it provides an incentive for different PPGs to negotiate and stimulate the passing of bills (Strøm 1998: 21).

The debate on how far the influence of the committees in various parliaments reaches is mainly directed at two issues; their institutional strength, indicated by their 'legislative property rights' that enables them to obstruct or promote legislative change (Strøm 1998: 21), and the relationship of the individual committee member with their PPGs (Damgaard 1995). Kaare Strøm (1998: 56) states that these two factors are intertwined, because strong specialized committees can be more dominant in the legislative process and therefore lead to weaker PPGs who are unable to control the proceedings that take place in the committees and to direct them according to their own goals. Strong PPGs on the other hand need strong and capable committees that represent their authority in an efficient legislative institution, in order to secure their interests.

Whether party group specialists give direction to the preferences of the PPGs in their areas of expertise or follow the guidelines set by the PPG and its leadership, the findings in the literature are clear on the importance of the different positions that are brought forward in the committee phase. Although the other members of the PPG always have a say in the bargaining position and compromises proposed by committee members (Damgaard 1995: 321), there should be "clear evidence of committee dedication to expertise and information collection" (Strøm 1998: 56). After all committee influence is a "signaling game", whereby the party group specialists have to convince the other members of the well-considered nature of the committee proceedings. This makes it possible to "advise the non-specialist members (the floor) concerning the quality of pending proposals" (Strøm 2000, 278). This demonstrates the need for a better understanding of how PPGs and their specialists contribute to committee deliberations: "The more heterogeneous the preferences of the committee members, the greater the confidence the floor members can have in the signals that the committees send. Thus, effective learning improves with the diversity of the sources of information available to the legislators" (Strøm 2000, 278). In the end, all members of parliament will have to rely on

and support the deliberations and deals that the specialists of their PPG hold and make (Damgaard 1995: 318). The proceedings in the committee phase of the legislative process are therefore a critical condition for the prospects of parliamentary democracy (Strøm 1998: 56).

#### **1.4 Representation and Participation in the Legislative Process**

The research conducted by Strøm and Damgaard provides mainly perspectives on the institutional conditions of committee work, that have implications for the functioning of parliament and its component PPGs. The “behavioural implications of these perspectives” (Strøm 1998: 55-56) however, are yet to be determined. In this section I will look at the implications of legislative behavior on the diversity of the preferences that are represented in committee deliberations and therefore the dependability of their work. Because contribution in the committee phase is of vital importance in an effective legislative system, the willingness and capability of the individual legislator and subsequently their PPG to contribute must first be determined. What determines whether or not the preferences of a PPG are represented in the committee phase?

The organization of PPGs and how they “make up the linkage between mass suffrage, parties and parliaments” (Heidar and Koole 2000: 1) vary in numerous ways in terms of performance and structure. There are macro explanations for PPG behavior, such as division of power in the system, electoral rules and the internal organization of parliaments and there are micro explanations that emphasize on factors such as relative size, age, origins and ideology of the PPG (Heidar and Koole 2000: 16-21). Both the macro explanations of division of power and internal organization of parliaments and the micro explanations of size and ideology will contribute to what the ‘revealed intensities’ of PPG’s are and how they deal with a “recurrent feature of all parliaments”: the constant pressure on their time (Döring 1995: 223), that eventually leads to the contribution of party specialists in committees.

The importance of legislative participation and the need for extensive research on the subject has already emphatically been pointed out by the American political scientist Richard Hall (1987; 1996). In his book *Participation in Congress* (1996) Hall has outlined who participates how (in what ways and to what extent) in American congressional politics and what their motives are to do so. His model of committee participation provides a behavioral analysis of the everyday work of congressmen in political decision making. He concludes that participation is “selective and purposive” (Hall 1987: 122); the selections congressmen make in participation are driven by the purpose of advancing their political goals. He detects four different goals: serving district interests, making good policy, making a political mark and promoting the president’s agenda (Hall 1987: 121). According to Hall these choices in participation are at the basis of the legislative choice and democratic consent that eventually takes place in parliament: “A theory of behavioral choice must precede a theory of collective choice and that must entail something more than and different from a theory of voting, we must first understand why members decide to become players” (Hall 1996: 250). He makes a distinction between the revealed preferences (how members vote on an issue) and revealed intensities (how much time and effort a member devotes to the issue) in order to point out participation as one of the two important indicators of legislative outcomes (Hall 1996: 3).

In the concluding chapter of his book Hall (1996: 235) asks: “What are we to make of such behavior and what does it mean for our assessments of Congress as a decision-making institution and the representativeness of legislative deliberations? (Hall 1996: 235)” These questions suggest the possible consequences that the revealed intensities of members of parliament have on the parliamentary democracy in general. Resembling Strøm’s (2000) concerns about the representation of different preferences for capable and trusted committees, Hall questions the “representativeness of deliberations”, an institutional goal that should

create “an assembly that roughly resembles the larger population in the interests and opinions that might find expression in parliamentary deliberation and debate” (1996: 238).

Although American congressional politics are part of a majoritarian and presidential system, that has a significant other role in lawmaking than western European parliaments, attention to the revealed intensities of members of parliament and their PPGs seem relevant. In a system of negotiation and compromise that can lead to “cogoverning” oppositions and a “cross-party mode” (Gallagher, *et al.* 2006: 64), the representativeness of deliberations can obviously play an important role as well.

### **1.5 The role of committees and their members in Dutch parliament**

In order to look at legislative participation in committee meetings in Dutch parliament as the dependent variable for this study, it first must be determined what we already know about committee work in Dutch parliament. What is the importance of the committee phase in Dutch parliament and who participates how in these meetings? Therefore a closer look at how the ‘institutional strength’ of parliamentary committees that is emphasized in Strøm’s research and the legislative behavior as described by Hall has been researched in Dutch parliament is required.

Arend Lijphart’s (1999) consensus model of democracy originated from his early studies of the Dutch democratic model. This can still be seen in the deliberative nature of the parliamentary work in the Dutch Second Chamber (the Dutch lower house). Committees have a prominent role in considering legislation. Although governments tend to get their legislation through parliament relative easily, this goes by extensive dialogue between parliament and the minister in question (Gallagher, *et al.* 2006: 64). Thorough written and verbal preparation of legislature is essential for the explicitness on the political and legal meaning of the legislature.

For PPGs, contributing to the report of the legislature is the most common way to influence the content and meaning of the legislature (Schutte 2009: 10). The Second Chamber standing Orders (Tweede Kamer 1993) determine that each government department has its own standing committee and that the possibility exists to constitute temporary (ad hoc) committees for specific subjects, like for example citizen initiatives and internal parliamentary affairs. The seats in a committee and speaking time are informally allocated “rough proportion” of the size of the PPG, although smaller parties are always permitted to join the meetings. Officially the presidium of the Second chamber appoints committee members, but in practice the PPGs are free to appoint their party group expert. The chairmen of the committees are being appointed proportionally and are also determined informally by the joint PPG leaders (Andeweg and Irwin 2002: 134-135). Although the Dutch parliamentary committees are generally considered to be very influential, the committees are not given the authority to initiate, consolidate, or split bills, nor have they the authority to rewrite bills; this last authority is left to the chamber floor (Strøm 1998: 50).

Besides the institutional position of committees in Dutch parliament, ‘institutional strength’ of committee work and the manner in which it is executed is also characterized by the demeanor of its members. The way division of labor in a PPG is organized internally influences how much freedom a party specialist gets from his PPG to take position on a certain matter in the committee and to what extent this position is translated into a position for the whole PPG to take. Research has shown that, although PPG leadership has become of increasing importance in Dutch parliament, the advice that the spokesperson represented in the relevant committee gives is almost unanimously followed by the rest of the PPG (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011: 667-669).

Party unity is therefore important for committee strength and the ‘signaling game’ as described by Strøm, but it also aggravates the partisan role of the committee members. This

‘role theory’ is the primary focus in the literature on legislative behavior in Dutch parliament (Andeweg 1997; Andeweg and Thomassen 2004; Van Vonno 2012). Participation in the committee phase is therefore mainly considered by the “norms of behavior” to which MPs adhere by doing their parliamentary work (Van Vonno 2012: 119). These different roles are a consequence of the maintaining relations with the electorate as well as with the executive power (Andeweg 1997: 110). Having to be both representative and legislator, MPs can specialize or switch between three different roles: As a ‘parliamentarian’ (overlooking the government without the interference of partisan interests), as a ‘partisan’ (interacting as an extension of its party with other MPs and ministers that represent ideological counterparts) and as an ‘advocate’ (representing a particular interest or issue area) (Van Vonno 2012: 122-123). During committee work MPs operate generally more as a partisan, although MPs belonging to a government party tend to be more parliamentarian (Van Vonno 2012: 127-130).

We can therefore conclude that in the literature on parliamentary work in the Netherlands, legislative behavior is assessed by the role party specialists have within the PPG and how their basic attitude is during committee work. These attitudes only explain legislative participation as a matter of how they approach legislative work substantively and not as a matter of how much time and effort is devoted to legislative work. The revealed intensities as used by Hall are therefore yet to be determined for Dutch parliament.

## **1.6 Theory and Hypotheses**

In this first part of the thesis it has been explained how previous studies have shown what pluralism and fragmentation of the Dutch party system implies. It clarified that this indicates numerical, as well as ideological characteristics and that this can have consequences for the stability and democratic quality of a system. Secondly it has been discussed how parliamentary committees are believed to be the environment where the most important

legislative work is done and that the dedication to expertise and information collection is vital for parliamentary democracies. The PPGs and their party specialists are dependent for their legislative contribution on their size, ideological preferences and time resources. Their participation in the legislative process shows their revealed intensities. Now it must be determined how and why research on the effects of party system fragmentation in the Netherlands on committee work will make a contribution to the scholarly literature. Subsequently I will formulate several hypotheses on what this effect will be.

Sartori's typology of party systems gives a good perspective on the fragmentation and ideological division of party systems and how these systems are characterized. Although debate on the advantages and disadvantages of such systems is elaborate, it primarily focuses on the effects that relate to the pluralism of preferences that are represented and what the consequences are for the outcome of government. The effects the number and ideological character of parties that are elected have on the legislative process of a parliamentary democracy before floor voting however, is still largely neglected by the scholarly literature. The deliberation and negotiation that take place in committee rooms is arguably the most important work that is done in the legislative process. Because the interests of PPGs and their individual committee members are so intertwined, their relationship so complex and because committee proceedings are such a decisive factor for overall legislative production, the assessment of the work that takes place in committees by the rest of the parliament is of crucial importance for effective parliamentary influence in the policy-making process. The institutional perspectives on how well committee work is accommodated have been well documented by Strøm, but much of the behavioral implications of legislative organization are yet to be asserted. At the same time, committee proceedings should be substantial on expertise and information collection, in order for the PPGs to rely on. Due to the pressure of time, size of the PPG and ideologically incited considerations, the participation in committee work will



become an objective on its own. This is where the pluralism, fragmentation and ideological division of the party system becomes an issue.

The dispersion of power in parliament, the downfall of larger parties and centrifugal tendencies are expected to have an effect on participation levels in the committee phase of the legislative process. Smaller and ideologically further from the center deprived PPGs will show intensities that do not serve overall contribution and are therefore not in the interest of an effective legislative process. Although more parties in parliament will naturally mean more party group specialists with specific preferences around the table during committee meetings, it is eventually the severity of the PPG they represent that matters. If PPGs that tend to contribute less to the committee phase occupy more seats in parliament, a smaller portion of the parliament is represented in the deliberations and can therefore rely on their outcomes. This undermines the advantages for productivity, specialization and gains from trade that committee work provides.

We have seen that this can potentially be the case in the Dutch parliament: small and medium-sized PPGs with centrifugal tendencies are on the rise and could affect participation, while members of these PPGs almost always take their voting cues from the party group specialist on the issue and the party group specialist generally represents the interests of the PPG. Therefore this thesis will, besides give an overview of how the different PPGs in the Dutch parliament contribute to the committee phase, test three hypotheses on how the numerical and ideological fragmentation of the party system in the Netherlands affects the number of seats that are represented by party group specialists during committee meetings.

Because Sartori's model of party system dispersion consists of both a numerical as well as an ideological component, I will research the relationship of both elements with the dependent variable level of participation in the committee phase. The numerical character of

the Dutch party system, fragmentation, can be explained in two ways: in the first place does fragmentation indicate a situation of (extreme) pluralism (Sartori 1976:133), which is indicated in Dutch parliament by a high effective number of parties and that is caused by the presence of small and medium-sized PPGs. Considering the participation is 'selective and purposive' and that the revealed intensities depend on the time and effort party group specialists are willing and able to devote to an issue, the first hypothesis is that *the presence of small and medium-sized PPGs has a negative influence on participation in committee meetings* (H.1).

Besides the mere presence of pluralism, fragmentation also indicates an increase in the degree of pluralism that is caused by the emergence of small and medium-sized PPGs. Figure 1.2 shows that the effective number of parties in Dutch parliament has increased over the years and can fluctuate heavily from one election to another. This would imply that a rise of the effective number of parties, caused by a decline of the three major PPGs and the emergence of small and medium-sized PPGs, leads to a situation where the party specialists not participating in committee work represent increasingly larger PPGs. This leads to the hypotheses that *the emergence of small and medium-sized PPGs has a negative influence on participation in committee meetings* (H.2)

The transformation of the Dutch party system does not only mean a larger effective number of parties, but also a changing space of party competition. Because the centripetal lines of conflict have been crossed and debate is now subject to more centrifugal forces, PPGs with centrifugal tendencies are becoming larger and thus more prominent in the Dutch parliament. Now, not only the pressure of time and the size of the PPG, but also ideologically incited considerations will become a deterrent for revealed intensities. It is therefore questionable whether PPGs that are further deprived from the political center have revealed intensities that serve overall contribution and are therefore not in the interest of an effective

legislative process. The final hypotheses therefore holds that *the emergence of PPGs with centrifugal tendencies has a negative influence on participation in committee meetings* (H.3).

## 2. Research Design

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In order to research the influence of fragmentation on the participation in committee meetings through the three hypotheses, first the four key concepts (the three independent variables and the dependent variable) that are being used in the hypotheses must be determined.

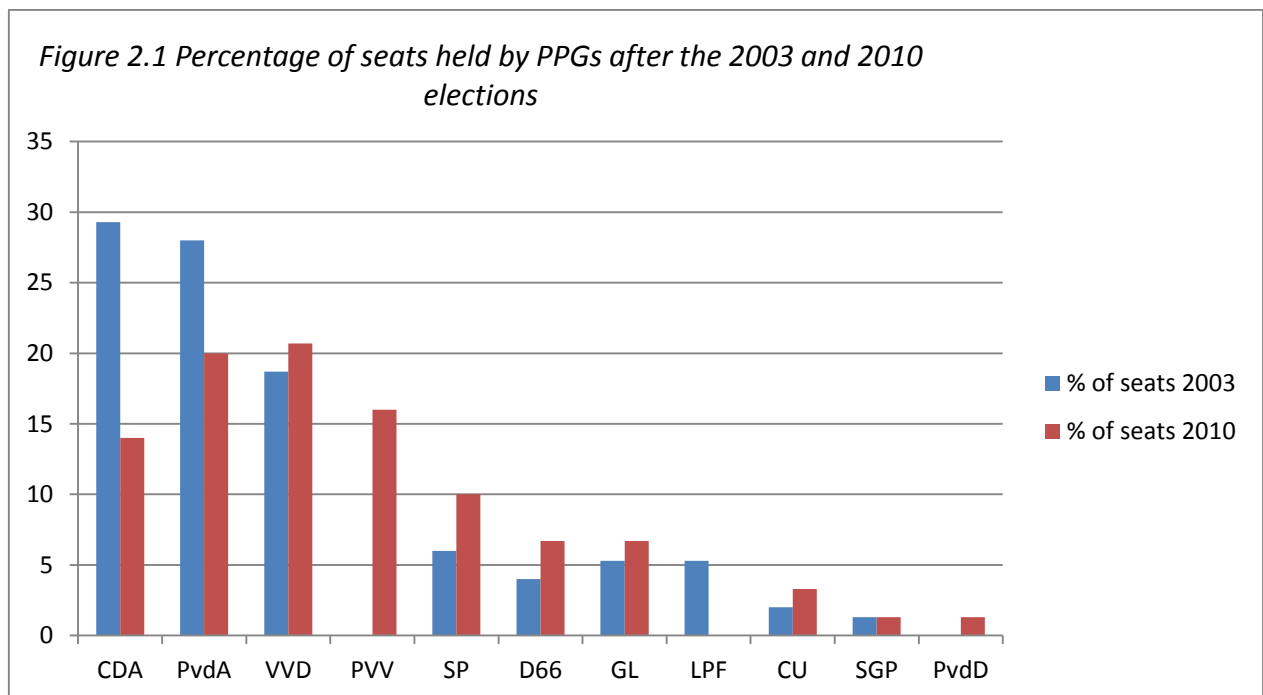
Subsequently I will make clear what data should be used, what cases should be selected and how the dataset will be compiled. Finally I will describe how the relations of the different independent variables with the dependent variable will be researched and how the different concepts will be measured.

### 2.1 The independent variables

The three independent variables used in the hypotheses are three forms of fragmentation of the Dutch parliament, two covering the numerical and one the ideological components of Sartori's model of the power dispersion of party systems. The first form of numerical fragmentation is the situation of (extreme) pluralism in Dutch parliament. Sartori (1976: 131-132) establishes, because there is a need for an operational demarcation, a turning point for high fragmentation, or extreme pluralism at "around five" of what he considers to be relevant parties (with 'blackmail potential') that hold seats in parliament. Figure 1.2 shows that the effective number of parties (Laakso and Taagepera 1979) in the Dutch parliament has been ranging from five to seven since the mid- 1990's . Because the high effective number of parties in Dutch parliament is, as will be discussed after this, directly connected to the high number of seats that are held by the smaller and medium-sized, the concept of pluralism relates to the share of seats that are held by the different parties.

The increase over the years in the effective number of parties that are represented in the Dutch parliament can be associated with the emergence of the small and medium-sized PPGs at the expense of the three major parties. The second independent variable, the

fragmentation of the Dutch parliament through the aggravation of pluralism, must therefore relate to a change in the share of the total number of seats that is held by the small and medium-sized parties. Figure 2.1 shows that the difference of two effective parties in parliament between the results of the 2003 and 2010 elections has elaborate consequences for the composition of the party system.



*Source: www.parlgov.org*

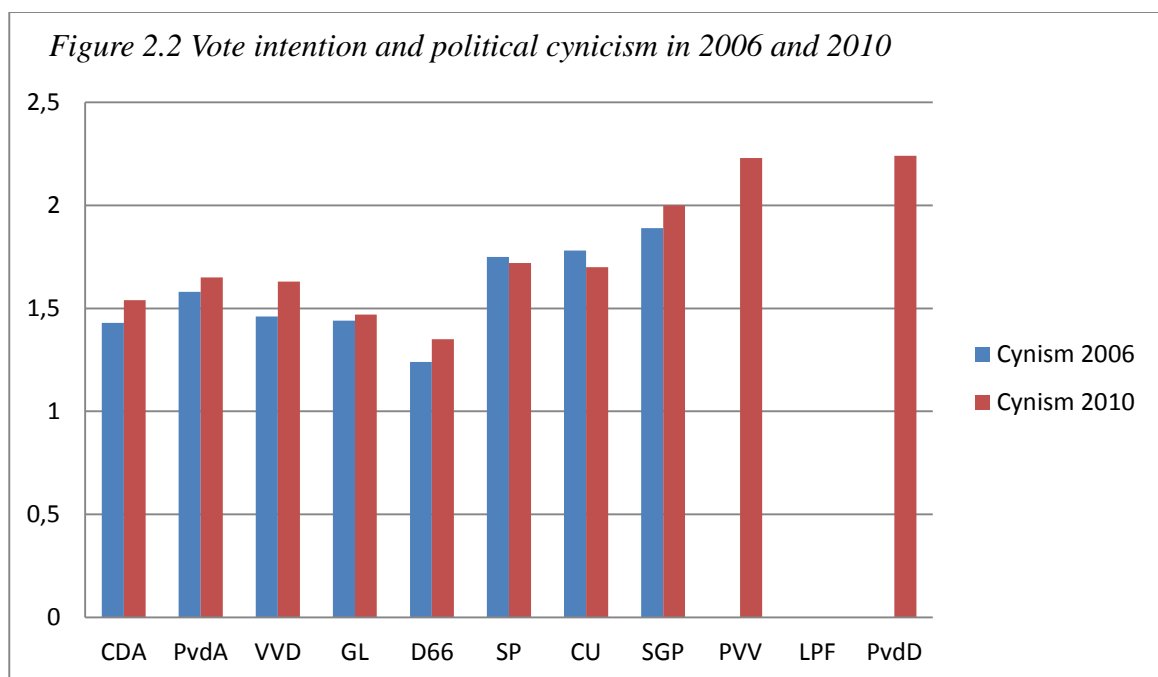
After the 2003 elections, next to the three major PPGs, there were six small PPGs that held around five percent or less of the seats in parliament. After the 2010 elections however, there were only two large parties with around 20 percent of the seats left, CDA was diminished to one of the six medium-sized party that had roughly between the five and 15 percent of the seats.

The third independent variable will consider what Sartori (1976: 131-134) describes as the ideological distance in a party system. He comes up with a variety of criteria of what makes the classification of pluralism 'polarized'. The discussion on what criteria are applicable to

the post 2002 Dutch party system and whether this means it is polarized, can be elaborate and will not be pursued in this thesis. Key elements of Sartori's model, like for example the presence of 'anti-system parties' would become problematic, now that parties that are usually to be considered to be far deprived from the political center, such as the PVV and SGP, have recently shown constructive support for minority-government policies out of parliament, while traditional parties with a history of governing, such as PvdA and CDA, have declined to give this sort of support to minority-governments. A recurring indicator for ideological distance in Sartori's model however are the 'centripetal or centrifugal drives' of the different political parties. These tendencies do not so much measure which parties occupy the center of the political spectrum, but more a dynamic process of the "enfeeblement of the center" (1976: 134). In order to conceptualize the drives of the different PPGs in the Dutch party system, we must therefore not look at their traditional position within the spectrum, but at the attitude that drives them.

After the emergence of Pim Foruyn a "left-right interpretation of Dutch politics does not suffice to explain the 2002 elections" (Pellikaan, *et al.* 2007: 284). In order to look at whether the tendencies of a PPG are centripetal or centrifugal, we must therefore see beyond the traditional placement of parties. In the *Dutch Parliamentary Election Study* of 2010, for example, GL is regarded by the voters to be further to the left than the SP and the PvdA is considered to be further to the left than the PvdD. Whether this reflects their tendencies towards or from the center however, remains to be seen. Although the ideological fragmentation of the Dutch parliament of the last decade is primarily driven by the introduction of new conflict lines, centrifugal tendencies are difficult to describe by means of particular policy preferences. The immigration issue for example, does not capture the general attitude of a PPG. The dismissiveness towards the strong centripetal forces during the 1990's, that became distinctive during the fragmentation of the Dutch party system during the

beginning of this century, however, does. In order to conceptualize (and operationalize) the centrifugal tendencies, I will use the broad and at the same time vague indicator of ‘political cynicism’. This is of course a poor measure to explain the complete way a PPG conducts itself in parliament. It is however a way to determine the underlying tendencies of why and with what attitude the different PPGs were voted into office and whether it represents the aversion towards the business that is conducted in the political center, that caused the ideological fragmentation in the first place. In order to measure the underlying drives of the different PPGs, I will look at the ‘political cynicism’ scores of their voters in the two Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies that were held closest before or after the parliamentary years I will study.



*Source: www.easy.dans.knaw.nl*

Only the LPF is left out of this chart because in 2006 it had only three respondents that would vote for them. Because this party instigated the centrifugal tendencies in the Dutch political system, it will be regarded as a PPG with centrifugal tendencies. The rest will be roughly

divided between PVV, PvdD, SP, SGP and CU as PPGs with centrifugal tendencies and the other PPGs who are less characterized by centrifugal drives.

## 2.2 The dependent variable

The three different forms of fragmentation of the Dutch party system will be used through their influence on participation in committee meetings. In the previous chapter the relevance of mapping the ‘contributions’, ‘participation’ and ‘representation’ of the different PPGs in committee proceedings became apparent. Although the committee phase is a crucial stage in the Dutch legislative process, the revealed intensities of the different MPs in Dutch parliament are less evident as those of MPs in other parliaments. This is because Dutch parliamentary committees have no distinct ‘legislative property rights’ at their disposal: as the authority to initiate, consolidate and split or rewrite bills. These are revealed intensities that can be found in the plenary phase of the Dutch parliament (Strøm 1998: 50). This makes it difficult to follow the example set by Hall (1987, 1996) when it comes to researching participation in the committee phase. He collected data on formal participation ranging from whether someone attended, voted, was a minor or major participant in discussion, offered a minor or substantive amendment and played a significant role (Hall 1987: 107).

In Dutch parliamentary committees such distinctions in legislative work are hard to make. The principal instruments that committee members have at their disposal, besides the possibility to enlist external advice and organize hearings, are speaking time, consultation and the ability to address the member of cabinet that is present (Tweede Kamer 1993: 14-15). As a result, participation in the committee phase of Dutch parliament comes down to the contribution to the consultations during committee meetings. Whether this contribution is major or minor is not a significant distinction: committee meetings have often a duration of two to three hours and all PPGs are entitled to a delegation of at least one party specialist (larger PPGs can have more members in one committee) with pre-determined speaking time.



The choice whether to use this speaking time or not is therefore the best indicator for the revealed intensities of party specialists and participation is best described by the amount of meetings a party specialist speaks at.

As was established before, participation of individual committee members cannot be seen separately from the PPGs they belong to, because the two are very much intertwined: party specialists take on a partisan role and act according to the goals of their PPG (Van Vonno 2012), but at the same time they have great authority in directing the vote of the PPG on their subject (Andeweg and Thomassen 2011). Strøm (1998: 56) described with his ‘informational perspective’ that committee members should behave as delegates, rather than autonomous actors and strive to “expertise and information collection” and representation of the preferences of their PPG in order to “signal” the quality of the committee work to the other members in the PPG and therefore legitimize the outcomes. Participation through speaking time can therefore be seen as the ‘representation’ of the PPGs in committee meetings. Since this research is directed at the influence of the entire party system rather than the conduct of individual MPs, it is important to ascertain that participation on the individual affects the contribution of the entire PPG to the legislative process.

### **2.3 Data selection**

In the section above it has been determined that the usage of speaking time during meetings is the main instrument for committee members and therefore the best indication for participation in the Dutch parliamentary committees. Because in 2011 over 1.700 meetings were held by the different committees (Tweede Kamer 2012: 8) and these meetings were of a variety of subjects and formats, it is impossible to achieve some form of inference when talking about the participation of different PPGs in committee meetings through qualitative research. In order to evaluate who used their speaking time and in what committees did they did this, a

broader image of the committee proceedings must be described that represents the legislative proceedings in the Dutch parliament.

When a certain issue or piece of legislation arises, committee members have the opportunity to apply a written contribution and it can be decided by the committee collectively to hold a verbal consultation on the matter. The two main forms of verbal consultation are the legislative and general consultations (Tweede Kamer 1993: 15). From the proceedings of what has been said in these meetings a report is made and later published (unless the meetings were closed to the public). In these reports can therefore be seen which committee member used his or her speaking time in what meeting.

These proceeding reports are available online at the government website for ‘official announcements’, however without the specific document number for every separate meeting, collecting information on a large quantity of meetings is virtually impossible. Fortunately I was able to access the internal databases of parliament (that are called ‘Parlis’ and ‘VIP’), which gave me the opportunity to retrieve data from specific periods of time, of specific standing committees. In these proceeding reports of committee meetings the usage of speaking time can be traced in great detail: who spoke when, how long and about what and which words were used. Although this offers the possibility of a more elaborate analyses of the contribution a committee member makes, due to the pre-determined speaking time and the variety of content of the meetings this research will only look at whether a committee member did or did not speak during the meeting.

In the previous sections it is described how the relationship between the individual committee member and the rest of the PPG is so intertwined that they can be regarded as one. The participation of the individual committee members can therefore be seen as a representation of their PPG. In every committee meeting that will be analyzed, we will see

which PPG was represented and which PPG was not. This causes two problems: MPs may have left their PPG and are not affiliated with one anymore and PPGs may be represented by two, or more party specialists during a committee meeting. The first problem occurred in my dataset, because one MP (Hilbrand Nawijn) departed from the LPF PPG halfway 2005. Because he hardly went to any meeting during this period and counting his participation would therefore only have a negative influence on the participation of smaller PPGs, I did not take his presence into account. A delegation of more than one committee member during a meeting happens often in one in case of the three major parties; counting them would be favorable for confirming my hypotheses. Besides, a delegation of more than one committee member of a PPG contributes only to the interests of that PPG to the meeting and will only deliver a position on one issue back to the rest of the PPG. These delegations will therefore be regarded as one.

## 2.4 Case selection

In order to establish the participation of PPGs we need to determine how they were represented in the committee meetings. Which committees, how many meetings and during what period of time, have to be analyzed to research the consequences of the fragmentation of the Dutch party system, however, remains unclear. In this section I will lay out the limitations of studying the proceeding reports of Dutch parliamentary committee meetings and in what way the results of party system fragmentation can be best drawn from this.

To determine which proceeding reports of what meetings to select for my research, I used Eckstein's crucial case method (King, *et al.* 1994: 209-210) as an indicator. This meant that I had to look for meetings that would allow making precise predictions on how the actual participation behavior of particular PPGs is. If I were to visit one committee meeting, which committee would I visit in order to get a realistic impression on the heterogeneous character of the deliberations? Where do I expect certain PPGs to be involved and where certainly not?

Researching this kind of particular parliamentary behavior will always be biased to a certain extent, due to the predetermined politically colored preferences PPGs have. The pressure of time is a given in parliament and we can expect smaller PPGs to make choices on what committees best serve their interests. Besides my own reasonable expectations (that I, as a former intern in parliament, have and that can be used in the tradition of Richard Fenno's (1978) in depth qualitative experience), it can roughly be anticipated, when we look at the nature of their election-programs and their position in the space of competition (Pellikaan 2007: 293-297), which committees will never be missed by PPGs and which will be neglected. At the same time there are committees with a large quantity of legislature passing through them and other committees with almost no new laws to deal with. Small PPGs, for example, tend to pass over foreign affairs meetings, because the issues are often elaborate and not in their direct sphere of interest while there is little to no legislation to be influenced. The PVV will never miss a committee meeting of the Committee on Integration and Asylum affairs and the PvdD can be expected at meetings of the Economic Affairs Committee, because environmental issues are being discussed in that committee.

Considering all this, the committees that are most significant for the validity of this research are the committees where every PPG can be expected to participate in. Therefore the committees that are selected should meet two criteria; in the first place they should deal with a wide range of subjects (that are to a certain degree salient) and secondly they should cover a lot of legislature. Three committees that meet these two criteria are: the Justice Committee, which deals with the most extensive amount legislature of all committees and covers subjects ranging from high profile criminal law to family law, the Committee on Economic Affairs and the Committee on Home Affairs. With the inclusion of the Committee on Economic Affairs in this research, it can be expected that the PvdD will have disproportionately high representation, however since this PPG had only two seats in 2011, this will not be of much

influence for the results. This choice of three important and broad parliamentary committees as Justice, Economic Affairs and Home Affairs, automatically leads to the exclusion of other important committees from this research. Committees on other salient issues such as Labour and Public Welfare however, are known to attract MPs that primarily take on the role as ‘advocate’ and not as ‘parliamentarian’ or ‘partisan’, while the committee of Finance is primarily populated with ‘parliamentarians’ (Van Vonno 2012:121).

Besides the number and the nature of the committee meetings that will be analyzed, two time periods in which they are being analyzed must be determined. These time periods must be characterized in three ways: first, during both periods the Dutch party system must be one of extreme pluralism in order to test the first hypotheses. Secondly there must be a large difference between the effective number of parties in the two periods, in order to test the second hypotheses. Finally, both periods must be after the 2002 election in order to test the influence of parties with centrifugal tendencies. As can be seen in Figure 1.2, the period with the highest numerical fragmentation was after the election of 2010, with an effective number of seven PPGs that held seats in parliament and a historically low number of seats held by the three major parties. The second period that is selected has to have a considerably lower numerical fragmentation and has to be comparable with regard to the PPGs that are participating and the amount of workload. This was the case in the period after the elections of 2003 when the effective number of parties was five and the three large parties got almost 80 percent of the votes. The 347 meetings of two full years will be analyzed :154 in 2005 and 193 in 2011.

	<b>Meetings in 2005</b>	<b>Meetings in 2011</b>
<b>Justice</b>	54	59
<b>Economic Affairs</b>	68	78

<b>Home Affairs</b>	32	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>193</b>

## 2.5 Measurement

In sections 2.1 and 2.2 the key concepts of the independent and the dependent variables are explained. In this section I will briefly explain how these concepts will be measured in order to test the three hypotheses. It has been established that the concept of participation in Dutch parliament can be measured very broadly, after all a committee member only has to show up at a meeting and speak, in order to be included in the proceeding report of the meeting and to have visibly participated in the committee phase in the legislative process (written contributions excluded). It has also been established that a contribution by an individual member will be regarded as a representation of its PPG. The participation of the entire PPG can therefore be determined by the percentage of committee meetings in which it was represented by the party specialist. The problem that remains is, that the PPGs vary in size and that a PPG that holds five seats can never reach the participation levels of a PPG that holds 30 seats. That is why the participation of the different PPGs will be viewed by the relative measure of 'seat representation' whereby the percentage of committee meetings a PPG participates in, will be evaluated with respect to the amount of seats it holds. How quantitatively seen a PPG is representing its number of seats in the committee phase is important to determine two major principles of committee work. In the first place it establishes how the different PPGs are effectively contributing to the legislative deliberations. Secondly it shows to what degree MPs see their interests represented in the committee meetings through their party specialists, so they can rely on the legislative work that is done and the outcomes that it provides.

Fragmentation is measured in three distinct ways. The presence of pluralism is measured through the distribution of seats among the different PPGs and the percentage of seats every PPG has as can be seen in Figure 2.1. The aggravation of pluralism (or fragmentation of the party system) between 2005 and 2010 will be measured through the emergence of smaller parties in respect to the percentage of seats they hold. Finally the ideological fragmentation will be measured through the percentage of seats that is held by PPGs with ‘centripetal tendencies’ and PPGs with ‘centrifugal tendencies’. How the relationships between these different seat allocations and ‘seat representation’ will be researched, is explained in the following section.

## **2.6 Research method**

In the previous sections of this research design I have explained the necessity for quantitative research on the matter of legislative participation and how only a ‘large-n’ research could approach inference when it comes to committee meetings. Now it must be established what quantitative methods must be used, in order to determine whether there are significant relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

In order to test the influence of party system pluralism on seat representation, it must be determined what the correlation is between the percentage of seats a PPG holds and the percentage of committee meetings its party specialists participates in. The influence of aggravation of pluralism from 2005 until 2011 on participation will be determined by the change in the relationship between percentage of seats and percentage of participation. Finally a comparison is made between at how many meetings PPGs with centrifugal tendencies are represented relatively to the share of seats they hold, and at how many meetings other PPGs are represented relatively to the share of seats they hold.

## 3. Results

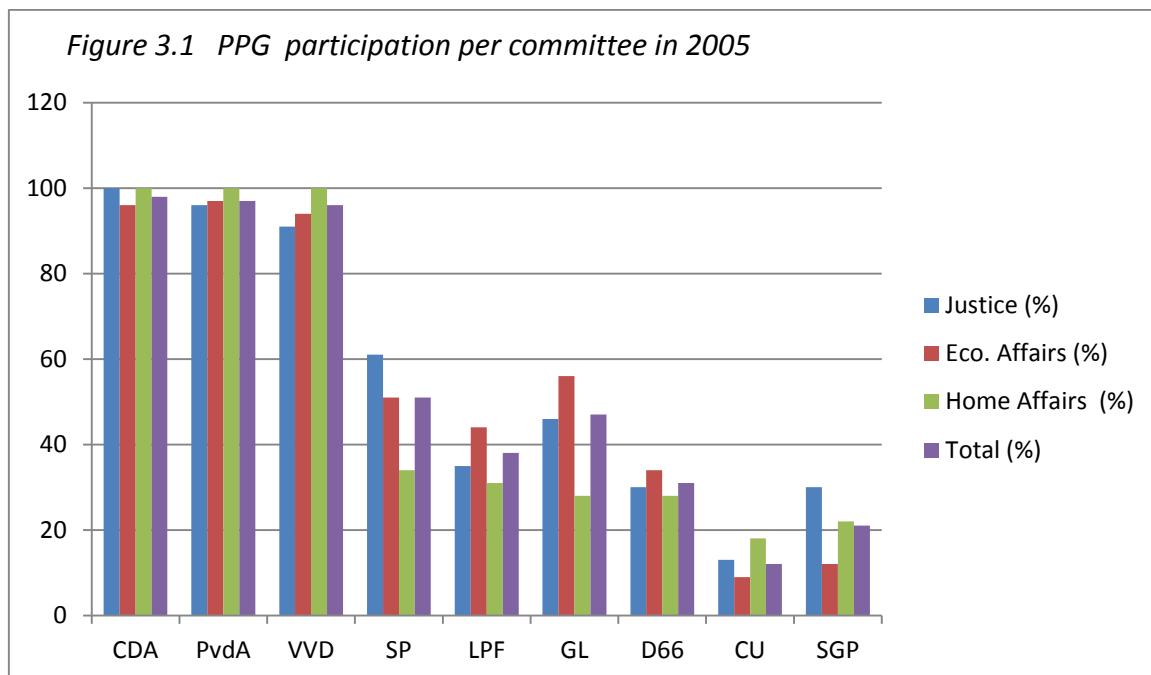
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In order to evaluate the contributions of the different PPGs to the committee phase in Dutch parliament and the effects that are caused by the fragmentation of the party system, this chapter will look at 347 committee meetings divided over the three aforesaid committees. I will first discuss the levels of representation in in the 154 committee meetings in 2005 and the 193 committee meetings in 2011. The main objective here is to discuss the participation behavior of the different PPGs: to what extent are their points of view included in the legislative deliberations? What are the patterns in terms of revealed intensities of PPGs; do they devote more legislative effort to certain policy areas and how does this affect their general role in parliament? As a consequence of this, how can we define this role, given their contribution compared to the other PPGs? Secondly I will assess the consequences of pluralism and party system change for representation in the committee phase, by looking at the differences in participation between PPGs of different sizes and between the two different periods of party system fragmentation. Does the presence of smaller PPGs have a negative influence on the quantity of representation of the electorate in the committee phase? And if that is the case, what is the effect of a higher number of effective parties in a party system? Finally I will look at the ideological division of the party system: How prominent is the role of PPGs with centrifugal tendencies in the committee phase compared to other PPGs and what is the result of more centrifugal competition?

### 3.1 Participation of PPG's in the committee phase

When we are looking at the reports of committee meetings of both 2005 and 2011 we see very different patterns of participation.

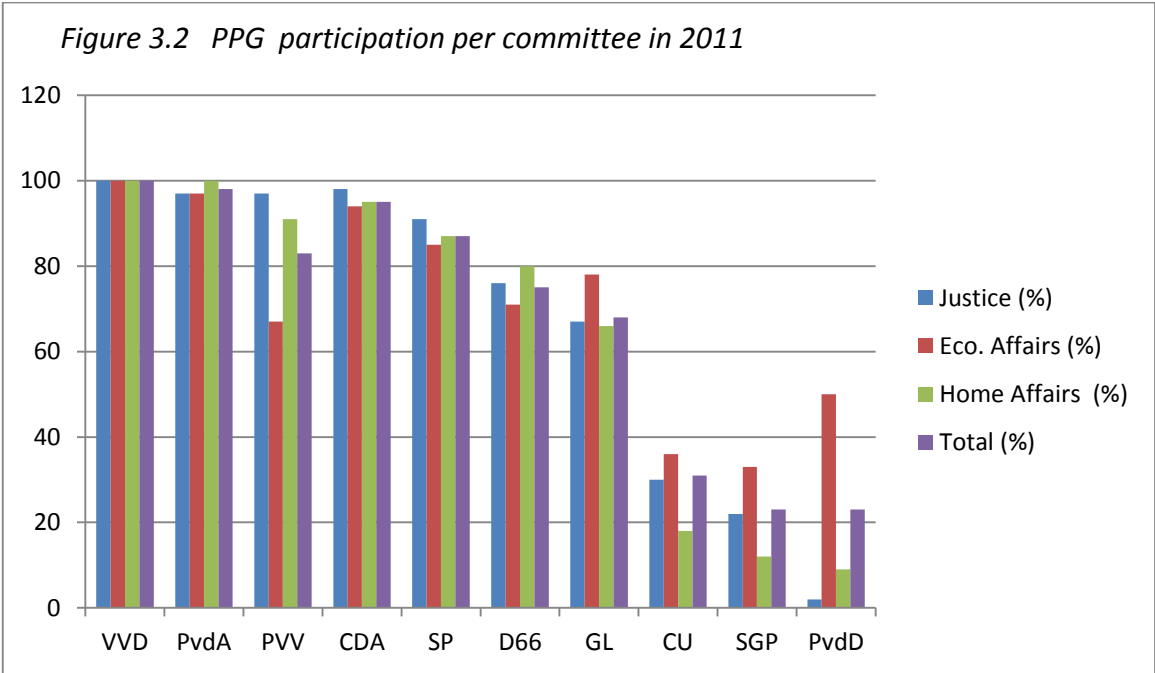




As was mentioned before, the position of the three traditionally large PPGs (CDA, PvdA and VVD) was in 2005 very strong. We see therefore a very clear division in the degree of participation that year. CDA, PvdA and VVD, together holding 114 seats in parliament, speak at almost every committee meeting. The rest of the PPGs, all holding less than ten seats, have a remarkably low level of contribution to the committee phase. Although the number of meetings are relatively low, the Committee on Home Affairs held only 32 meetings, none of the small PPGs manage to participate at more than half of the committee phase of the legislative process. The chaotic state of the LPF, for example, becomes apparent with participation levels in little more than a third of the meetings. D66 spoke only at 31 percent of the meetings, this means that almost 400.000 voters<sup>1</sup> where not represented at the other 69 percent of the meetings. Because of the generally high participation of the three major PPGs and the generally low participation of the other PPGs, not much can be said about the revealed intensities of the different PPGs, except that the SP and GL have a considerable lower involvement in home affairs and the smaller Christian parties barely attend committee meetings on economic affairs.

<sup>1</sup> At the elections of 2003, the number of votes needed per seat was 64.363.

Because of the larger amount of medium-sized PPGs, the overall participation rate in 2011 is significantly higher than in 2005.<sup>2</sup> The large PPGs (VVD and PvdA, with 31 and 30 seats) still manage to attend every (or almost every) committee meeting. With a larger effective number of parties, however, a block of 80 seats are represented by five medium-sized PPGs PVV, CDA, SP, D66 and GL. The CDA, a PPG with a large tradition of government support, still approaches the level of participation of when it held 44 seats. The PVV, a PPG that identifies strongly with a reputation of ‘law and order’ is very active in the areas of justice and domestic affairs, but is absent at a third of the meetings on economic affairs. From all the medium-sized PPGs, GL is the least active and participates in seven percent less meetings than D66, but still 17 percent more than the SP in 2005, that had only one seat less. This seems to be illustrative for medium-sized PPGs; although they, with the exception of



CDA, do not approach the nearly complete involvement of large PPGs in the committee phase, but contribute considerably more than small PPGs. They also do not seem to neglect a particular field of interest (as the PVV does on economic issues), which is certainly the case

<sup>2</sup> The mean difference is 15,639%, P<0,05

with the small PPGs, who direct much of their attention towards economic affairs; which can be explained by their involvement in almost every meeting on agriculture and fishery, as a result of their commitment to animal rights (PvdD) and their grassroots in rural areas (the Christian PPGs).

### 3.2 Effects of numerical pluralism and fragmentation

Although the representative input seems to have enriched the committee deliberations in 2011 with the emergence of a stronger parliamentary midfield, the question remains what the dispersion of legislative power in parliament means for representation in committee work.

What effect will multipartism have on the democratic value of committee deliberations and what is the consequence of an aggravation of the pluralistic character of parliament?

In order to ascertain the relationship between multipartism and representation in parliamentary committees, the first hypothesis - *the presence of small and medium-sized PPGs has a negative influence on participation in committee meetings* - must be tested. In 2005, the magnitude of the share of the seats that was held by one PPG had significant impact on the number of seats that were represented in committee meetings.<sup>3</sup> Large PPGs contributed disproportionately more to committee deliberations than smaller PPGs. With every percentage point more seats a PPG had, it participated in almost three percentage points more committee meetings.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between PPG size and seat representation in committee meetings was in 2011 also significant<sup>5</sup>. Here for every percentage point that a PPG held more seats, that PPG would go to almost four times more committee meetings<sup>6</sup>. We can therefore conclude that the presence of smaller and medium-sized PPGs and therefore the multi-party system in the Dutch parliament, has a negative influence on how well the preferences of the other members of these PPGs were heard in the committee phase of the legislative process.

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<sup>3</sup> Correlation:  $R=0,949$ ,  $P<0,001$

<sup>4</sup> Regression:  $B= 2,85$ ,  $P<0,001$

<sup>5</sup> Correlation:  $R=0,897$ ,  $P<0,001$

<sup>6</sup> Regression:  $B=3,744$ ,  $P<00,1$

Because of the analyses revealing a relationship that is significant, we can state that H.1 is (very strongly) confirmed.

This however cannot be said about the second hypotheses about party system fragmentation: *“The emergence of small and medium-sized PPGs has a negative influence on participation in committee meetings”*. Although the relationship between the number of seats and committee participation intensified with the situation of increased fragmentation after the 2010 elections (almost 4 percent more representations in 2011, against almost 3 percent in 2005), we cannot pass judgment on the difference between the two significantly large effects of PPG size on representation. In other words, the failure of small (and in 2011 medium-sized) PPGs in both years to contribute in the committee phase according their size does not mean that fragmentation of the party system necessarily has made a difference in the effects multipartism already has. H.2 must therefore be rejected. That being said, it is important to note that, although medium-sized PPGs have gained a larger role in parliament in 2011, their level of absence at committee meetings is still so high that the gap in representation between large PPGs and the rest of the parliament becomes even wider.

### **3.3 Effects of polarization: The contribution of parties with centrifugal tendencies**

The third and last hypotheses is about the difference in representation between ‘centrifugal PPGs’ and other PPGs that account for the increase in ideological divide in parliament: *“The emergence of PPGs that have centrifugal tendencies has a negative influence on participation in committee meetings”*. Both in 2005<sup>7</sup>, as in 2011<sup>8</sup> the PPGs with centrifugal tendencies spoke at significantly less committee meetings relatively to their seats, than the other PPGs

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<sup>7</sup>  $t(7) = 2,360, P < 0,05$

<sup>8</sup>  $t(8) = 2,385, P < 0,05$

did. Because both the centrifugal PPGs<sup>9</sup> in 2005 and 2011 and the other PPGs<sup>10</sup> in 2005 and 2011 are positively correlated, we can state that the larger number of seats that is occupied in 2011 by PPGs with centrifugal tendencies, will have a greater negative influence on the representation in the committee phase. This means that H.3 is confirmed.

## Conclusion

I have argued that participation in parliamentary committees is crucial for both contributing to the legislative process, as it is for the division of labor in parliament and that the numerical and ideological fragmentation of the Dutch party system is problematic for broad participation. My research has shown that there is indeed a strong coherence between the size of the different PPGs and the degree of participation in the committee phase in parliament. Although the increase of pluralism in recent years is not proven to enhance this effect, the growing ideological distance in parliament is.

So how should we assess these findings? I have tried to make a contribution in two fields of political research: the debate on the effects of different party systems and the examination of committee work. Considering the scope of the first field and the limited signification of my hypotheses, here my findings are of no significance. In the second field however, specifically with regard to what we know about the committee phase proceedings in Dutch parliament, the findings of this study should be considered. Committee work is of vital importance for the effectiveness of the legislature. Two of the three hypotheses were confirmed, demonstrating that the variety of parties represented, in number as well as ideology, has its influence on the work that is done in committees. Whether the increase of parties actually increases the void of legislative participation could not be proven.

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<sup>9</sup> Correlation: 0,986, P<0,05

<sup>10</sup> Correlation: 0,945, P<0,05

Although the indication of political cynicism of the supporters of the different parties can be regarded as vague and is far from a good reflection of the competition space of the Dutch party system, it has however become apparent that there is a large difference in attitude towards committee work, which cannot be attributed to party size alone. The large gap in seats that are being represented does certainly tell us something about how the different PPGs see their role in parliament. Although the research was done in order to investigate the fragmentation in parliament, the overview of legislative effort by each PPG over two years is perhaps the most striking aspect that derives from this research. How they approach the daily legislative work in parliament could not only have consequences for the ‘deliberative’ aspect of the legislation that derives from parliament, but also for the institutional position of the committee phase as a whole. Further research should therefore perhaps not only focus on a deeper understanding of the quality of committee work, but also on a broader perspective on how members of (medium-sized) parties see and practice their role, not only as politicians, but as legislators as well.

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