Policy Punctuations in the Netherlands: The Cases of Alcohol and Gambling Policy

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Abstract. Why are there long periods of policy stability, while changes in the policy environment increase the pressure for policy change? The punctuated equilibrium theory provides an answer to this question, but the mechanisms through which it works are not yet studied extensively in the Netherlands. This studies demonstrates that the mechanisms, which the punctuated equilibrium theory uses to explain policy stasis and large bursts of policy change, are also present in the Netherlands. This is achieved through a study of the alcohol and gambling policy fields covering the time period between 1990 and 2015. The results indicate that policy monopolies exist in the Netherlands and are related to policy stability. The results also indicate that an expansion of conflict can cause the collapse of a policy monopoly, which is related to large-scale policy change.

As early as in May 1996, the Dutch Minister of Health Els Borst proposed to raise the minimum age for buying beer and wine from sixteen to eighteen. There was, however, not enough support for the proposal, and the proposal ended up getting sidetracked. In the following years, Minister Borst and other members of Cabinet have made several attempts to raise the minimum drinking age, but all of these attempts have failed. Since the proposal was on the agenda of multiple members of Cabinet, the issue did not lack attention. The problems associated with minors drinking also regularly featured on the media agenda. Raising the minimum drinking age did not lack popular support; a 2007 study by TNS NIPO showed that 76% of the Dutch population supported a ban on sales of alcohol to 16 and 17 year olds[1]. Despite the attention for the topic, the recognition of the problem, and the public support, the bill that raised the minimum drinking age was only turned into a law as late as in 2013.

The regulation of the Dutch online gambling market is a situation that is similar to the regulation of alcohol policy, but the online gambling market seems even less susceptible to change. The necessity of legalizing and regulating the Dutch online gambling market was already widely discussed in 1998. Some bills for the regulation of the market have been proposed, but each bill failed to pass due to a lack of support. Just like the issue of raising the minimum drinking age, the

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1   De Volkskrant. May 9th 2007. "Driekwart vindt verbod alcohol voor jeugd oké". Retrieved from: http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/driekwart-vindt-verbod-alcohol-voor-jeugd-oke~a875497/

issue of regulating the online gambling market got plenty of attention; the European Commission even ordered the Dutch government to liberalize the market. Next to that, problems associated with a lack of regulation, such as the large illegal market, were and are also known. Even though the issue and the associated problems are recognized, the Dutch online gambling market is still not regulated.

What can explain the policy stasis or very slow policy change for the alcohol and gambling policies? The punctuated equilibrium theory provides us with two concepts that are used to explain policy dynamics: policy monopoly and expansion of conflict. A policy monopoly refers to a situation where one group holds a monopoly on the political interpretation of a specific policy, and where institutional arrangements are in place to strengthen that interpretation and limit access to the policy process (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:6). When someone opposes a policy monopoly, one is met with resentment and his or her arguments are deemed to be invalid (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:7). Limited access to the decision making process and the existence of a powerful policy image through which a policy is understood can lead to a situation where changes in the environment are not translated to changes in the policy, thus causing policy stasis.

A policy monopoly, however, is not a permanent situation because an expansion of conflict can bring an end to the policy monopoly. An expansion of conflict means that stake-holding actors that are not supporters of the status quo protected by the policy monopoly successfully alter the scope of conflict and thereby attract new actors to the public policy debate. The theoretic idea of stakeholders changing the scope of conflict comes from Schattschneider's (1960) book *The Semisovereign People*. In this book, Schattschneider posits the idea that actors, when it benefits their interest, either may try to expand conflict surrounding an issue in order to attract other, not yet involved, actors to the discussion, or they may try to contain the conflict so that no new actors enter the discussion. A conflict can be expanded by pointing out the implications that the policy may have for yet uninvolved actors; this can be seen as an attempt to change the prevalent policy image (Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Leech, & Kimball, 2009:48). The attraction of hitherto uninvolved

actors can cause a fierce challenge to the status quo and, when the challenging group of actors is successful, cause a collapse of the policy monopoly and can in turn lead to a large change in the status quo.

This study seeks to discover whether the mechanisms of the punctuated equilibrium theory can be used to explain the periods of policy stasis or very slow policy change interrupted by major change in the fields of alcohol and gambling policies; therefore, the research question this study seeks to answer is as follows:

> *Research question: Can the punctuated equilibrium theory's mechanisms of policy monopolies and expansion of conflict explain the long periods of stability interrupted by large change in the Dutch policy fields of alcohol and gambling?*

In order to study the research question, I need to focus my analysis on three aspects: the policy dynamics, policy monopolies, and expansion of conflict. The policy dynamics will be analyzed with the usage of data on all the legislative changes for the alcohol and gambling policies. The existence of policy monopolies will be analyzed on a qualitative basis by looking at what actors have access to the legislative process and by assessing whether there is a single political interpretation of the policy problem. The expansion of conflict will be analyzed with data on all the outside lobbying activities for the two policy areas in the time period between January 1990 and December 2015. Outside lobbying refers to the attempts of actors with material or immaterial stakes in the issue using the media and public support to influence the policy-making process (Beyers, 2004).

There are several reasons for why it is interesting to compare the slow changing fields of alcohol and gambling policy. First of all, alcohol policy and gambling policy are changing in opposite directions. Where alcohol policy was initially liberal and not regulated strictly, gambling policy was initially strictly regulated. Over the last century alcohol policy has (slowly) become more regulated and restricted, whereas gambling policy slowly is becoming more liberalized. Secondly, the groups who push for change seem to be different in nature. The drive for change in alcohol policy seems to come from social groups, medical groups, and political parties, while

3

commercial actors want to keep and reinforce the status quo. For gambling policy, it seems that hitherto uninvolved commercial actors want the policy to change, while social organizations, multiple already involved commercial actors, and the Dutch Government want to keep the status quo because they have social and commercial interests in keeping the state control of the gambling sector.

This study has several distinctive qualities that set the study apart from other studies that focus on policy monopolies, expansion of conflict, and policy change. First of all, this study focuses on Dutch cases. Hitherto there are few studies in the punctuated equilibrium theory field that focuses on policy monopolies and expansion of conflict in the Netherlands and even less studies that also take the diversity of actors and frames into account. Most studies on this topic focus on North American cases and since the political culture in North America differs from that in Europe, it is necessary to first test whether the mechanisms are also present in Europe and in the Netherlands before one can discuss it. Second, this study uses both qualitative and quantitative data and analyses a long time period, whereas many other studies on this topic are either pure qualitative studies (e.g. Pralle, 2006), or studies that analyze a shorter time period (e.g. Baumgartner et al., 2009). Major policy changes often take quite a while to take place. Studying a longer time period allows me to capture more of the trajectory, if not the whole trajectory, of policy change. When the policy dynamics are only studied in the short term, the dynamics may either look stable or chaotic, while, according to the punctuated equilibrium theory, policies are likely to have both periods of stability and periods of fast following policy change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:39). So, it is necessary to study policy change over a longer period of time when we seek to observe the differences in policy dynamics in a topic.

This study has societal relevance because it shows how the existence of a policy monopoly influences policy dynamics. Policy monopolies can be formed by different types of actors, for example commercial actors, experts, or social organizations. Knowledge on how these types of actors can influence the policy process is interesting and important because it shows us something

about the influence of unelected actors on a process that has a democratic nature.

In the next section of this paper I lay out the theoretical framework. I discuss the relevant literature on the punctuated equilibrium theory and I discuss the concepts of policy monopoly and expansion of conflict. Following the discussion of these concepts, I state the hypotheses that are tested in this paper. In the third chapter of this paper I discuss the data collection process and the methods that are used to analyze that data. In the fourth chapter I analyze my findings. In the fifth and final chapter I discuss and summarize my findings and discuss the possible avenues for future research on this topic.

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and Its Mechanisms

Punctuated equilibrium theory

The punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) is based on the observation that policies often go through long periods of stability where a policy only changes with small steps, but those periods of stability can be punctuated by periods in the policy process where relatively many large-scale changes occur, more so than one would expect one the basis of a normal distribution (True, Jones & Baumgartner, 2007:155). The focus on the relatively many large-scale changes sets the PET apart from older theories, such as Lindblom's (1959) theory of incrementalism, which posits the idea that policy change only happens with small steps. The theoretical basis of the PET is formed by a combination of insights from discussions concerning agenda setting, policy communities, and bounded rationality (Cairney, 2013:4).

Large-scale policy change is seen as the result of new information and changes in the environment that are not immediately transferred to changes in policy (Jones & Baumgartner, 2005:5). The absence of adapting the policy in the light of the changes in the environment leads to a buildup of pressure for policy change. The pressure can be resisted for a period of time, but once the pressure becomes too high, the resistance will be broken and that will result in large-scale policy change (Baumgartner, Jones & Mortensen, 2014:64). The period of policy stability or only limited change can be explained by the policy monopoly concept, while the large-scale policy change can be explained by the expansion of conflict concept. Both concepts are discussed below.

Clear evidence for the PET can be found in the analysis of the budget of the United States government. Jones, Sulkin and Larsen (2003) have shown that the distribution of budget changes is not normally distributed, but that it has a leptokurtic distribution. A distribution is leptokurtic when it has a tall peak, which means that there are many small changes, fat tails, which means that there are relatively many large changes, and weak shoulders, which means that there are relatively little medium changes (Breuning & Koski, 2006). These findings have been replicated on the level of states in the United States (e.g. Breuning & Koski, 2006; Mallinson, 2016), European countries (e.g.

Jensen, 2009; John & Margetts, 2003), and the European Union (e.g. Baumgartner, Foucault & François, 2012). Studies that focus on the content of policy or the agenda instead of on budget distributions have also found support for the PET and its concepts (e.g. Alexandrova, Carammia & Timmermans, 2012; Crow, 2010).

Policy monopolies

One concept that can explain why a policy is stable for a long period of time is the policy monopoly concept. A policy monopoly refers to a situation where a specific group holds a monopoly on a powerful policy image through which a policy is perceived and where there is an institutional structure in place that limits the access to the policy process (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:6-7). A policy monopoly, thus, rests on two pillars: the policy image and the institutional structure, which is also called the policy venue.

Policy images are important because there generally are multiple perspectives from which an issue can be viewed and each of those perspectives can speak to different values and actors (Chong & Druckman, 2007:104). When a policy is viewed through a single powerful image and when that image is supportive of the policy in place, then it is difficult to focus on perspectives that speak to different values and warrant a rethinking of the existing policy, which has the result that the policy is stable (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002:12).

When there is a clear and limited access to the decision making process surrounding a policy, then the group that has access is able to create a stable policy structure that fits their interests (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002:12). The institution that has the power to grant actors access to the policy process can grant access just to actors that share their vision, which can result in a self-reinforcing system where the status quo is strengthened and where other actors are deterred from trying to change the status quo (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002:13).

A policy monopoly is not a dichotomous variable; there are different levels of how strong a policy monopoly is. The stronger a policy monopoly is, the higher the threshold that the pressure needs to overcome. Depending on how strong the policy image is and depending on how limited the

access to the policy process is a policy monopoly can be considered weak or strong. A policy monopoly is strong when the access to the policy process is limited to one group of actors that have aligned interests and when the policy image they stand behind is resilient to change. A policy monopoly is weak when multiple groups have access to the policy process and when the policy image is more susceptible to the spur of the moment.

Expansion of conflict

The idea that actors can achieve their policy goals by expanding or containing the conflict surrounding the policy comes from Schattschneider's (1960) book *The Semisovereign People.* The expansion of conflict is part of the reason why policy does not just changes incrementally, as Lindblom theorized, but that the policy process also faces large-scale changes. An expansion of conflict, which is also called a Schattschneider mobilization, can cause rapid change because it, when successful, can lead to agenda entrance and it can mobilize actors that are supportive of change and not yet involved in the debate (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993;35-6). The conflict can be expanded by changing the policy image. By trying to change the perspective through which an issue is discussed, the conflict can be expanded because new actors become aware that the policy also concerns their interests.

A successful Schattschneider mobilization can severely weaken a policy monopoly or even lead to the collapse of a policy monopoly (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:89). A successful Schattschneider mobilization can be observed when there is a shift in the policy image and when there is an influx of new actors that seek to join the public debate. The shift in the policy image can lead to a change in the group of actors that have access to the policy process (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:86). A successful Schattschneider mobilization can, for example, be found in the case of the change in tobacco policy. In the tobacco policy area, a mobilization of health advocates and government health agencies have shifted the policy image of tobacco from an economic issue to a health issue (Givel, 2006:408). The Schattschneider mobilization has led to dramatic change in the tobacco policy area (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:93).

Problem definition

Besides using the terms of positive feedback and negative feedback, the individual-level mechanisms through which actors seek to change the policy image is still rather opaque. PET does not focus on what tactics stakeholders use in their attempts to expand the conflict, nor does it discuss what type of actors are attracted to the debate. A literature that does focus on the different tactics that actors can use to change the policy image is the literature on problem definition.

The concept of problem definition is closely linked to the concept of policy image. A problem definition is "concerned with the organization of a set of facts, beliefs, and perceptions – how people think about circumstances." (Weiss, 1989:118). Whereas a policy image can be defined as a mixture of emotional appeals and empirical information (Baumgartner et al., 2014:66) that influence how a policy is discussed and understood (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993:25). An interesting difference between the two concepts for this study is that the literature on problem definition focuses on the rhetoric that is used to highlight an aspect of a problem (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994:15).

Rochefort and Cobb (1994) identify nine different categories of problem definition rhetoric and discuss how they are used. Not all of those nine categories are relevant to the issues I discuss in this paper, so I will only discuss the four relevant categories of problem definition. The first category is causality. The rhetoric of causality means that the source of a problem is defined (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994:15). With regards to alcohol policy and a problem of underage drinking, this could mean that actors, for example, either define a lack of parental supervision as the source of the problem, or they can blame the ease with which young people can buy alcohol. The second category is severity. The rhetoric of severity means that the seriousness of the problem and its consequences are discussed (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994:17). The third category is incidence (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994:20). The rhetoric of incidence means that the scope of a problem is discussed. The fourth category is solutions. The rhetoric of solutions focuses on whether or not a solution is available, acceptable, and affordable (Rochefort & Cobb, 1994:25-6).

The mechanisms of punctuated equilibrium theory in the Dutch alcohol and gambling policy fields

In accordance with the research question that asks whether the two mechanisms of PET, policy monopolies and expansion of conflict, can explain the policy dynamics of the Dutch alcohol and gambling policies, I have formed three hypotheses. The first hypothesis focuses on the question whether the policy dynamics studied in this paper actually exhibit the characteristics observed in the introduction and posited by the PET. As stated above, PET assumes that policy goes through periods of stability, followed by a punctuation of relatively large-scale change(s). This implies the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1: The Dutch gambling and alcohol policy dynamics display long periods of policy stability, followed by large-scale change.*

The second hypothesis focuses on the policy monopoly concept. The first portion of the hypothesis focuses on the strength of the policy monopolies. A policy monopoly exists when a community of actors define a problem in a similar manner, they achieve this by institutionalizing and limiting the access to the policy making process. A strong monopoly is characterized by a stable policy image and a stable group of actors that are involved in the decision making process. I expect that the policy monopoly in the gambling policy field is stronger because the interests and stakes of the government are closer aligned to those of the commercial players in the gambling policy field than they are in the alcohol policy field. The first portion of the second hypothesis can be formulated as follows:

> *Hypothesis 2a: The policy monopoly in the Dutch gambling policy field is stronger than the policy monopoly in the alcohol policy field.*

I expect that policy monopolies explain the policy stasis in the two policy fields. It is important to note that this portion of the hypothesis focuses on whether the characteristics of a policy monopoly are actually related to policy stability. When this interpretation of the concept is used, an observation of policy stability does not equate to the existence of a policy monopoly. This

interpretation leaves room for the possibility that a policy is stable while there is no policy monopoly, though it is not expected. All in all, the following hypothesis can be formed:

> *Hypothesis 2b: Policy stability in the Dutch gambling and alcohol policy fields is caused by the existence of policy monopolies.*

The third hypothesis is based on the expansion of conflict concept. As stated above, a successful expansion of conflict consists of two parts: a shift in the policy image, and an influx of new actors. Since the policy monopoly in the gambling policy field is expected to be stronger than the policy monopoly in the alcohol policy field, I expect that it will be more difficult and that it takes more pressure to start a successful expansion of conflict in the gambling policy field than in the alcohol policy field. Since pressure is difficult to measure and compare, this portion of the hypothesis will focus on the time it takes actors to start a successful expansion of conflict. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3a: It takes more time to successfully expand the conflict in the gambling policy field than in the alcohol policy field.*

I also expect that large-scale policy change in the Dutch policy fields of alcohol and gambling is caused by a successful expansion of conflict. The idea that large-scale policy change is caused by a shift in the policy image is not unique to PET. Other scholars, such as Hall (1993), have also argued that large policy changes are the consequence of a shift in the policy image. The shift in the policy image, however, does not just randomly take place, so groups of actors who promote the alternative policy image are an important second aspect. This implies the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3b: Large-scale policy change in the Dutch gambling and alcohol policy fields is caused by a successful expansion of conflict.*

Figure 1 shows the relations between the independent and dependent variables as discussed above. To recapitulate, pressure for policy change is not translated into policy change because policy

monopolies are barriers that severely hinder that relation. However, eventually the pressure for

policy change becomes too large and it has to go somewhere. The built up pressure for policy

change triggers an expansion of conflict which also attracts hitherto uninvolved actors, which

increases the pressure for policy change even more. The expansion of conflict causes large-scale

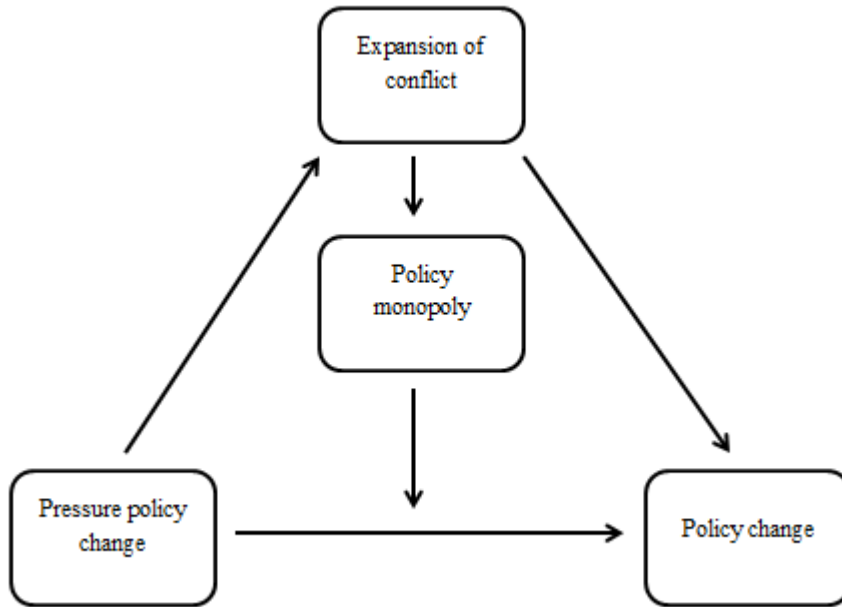policy change and can lead to a breakdown of the old policy monopoly.

Figure 1. Model of the mechanisms of the punctuated equilibrium theory.

Research Design

The analysis uses data on changes in gambling and alcohol legislation, data on the public debate concerning the two topics, and data on the existence and extent of policy monopolies. For the data on the changes in legislation and for data on the public debate, large-N quantitative datasets are used. The data that is used for measuring the existence and extent of policy monopolies is gathered through analyzing government policy documents. In this chapter I will discuss how I measure the central concepts of this paper, which are: policy dynamics, policy monopolies, and expansion of conflict.

Measuring policy dynamics

The policy dynamics are analyzed using a large-N quantitative dataset that contains information on all the legislative changes with regards to gambling policy and alcohol policy. Multiple aspects of the legislative changes are measured, namely: the size of the change, the policy goal of the change, and whether the change concerns the production, access, or consumption of the product.

The legislative changes are analyzed by both looking at content of the changes and by looking at the explanatory memorandum that is published alongside the official publication of the legislative change. The explanatory memorandum contains information on the policy goal of the change, while the actual legislative change provides information on the size of the change and on what is changed. An overview of all changes in the legislation is retrieved from a government website (wetten.overheid.nl). The actual legislative changes are published in the Dutch official journal and the explanatory memoranda are published on governmental websites.

Measuring policy monopolies

As stated above, a policy monopoly has two analyzable aspects: the existence of a powerful policy image, and the limited access to the policy process. Both the powerful policy image and the access to the decision making process are rooted in the institutions surrounding the policy process. These institutions can differ per policy area and, therefore, cannot be measured quantitatively. So, the

existence of a policy monopoly needs to be assessed qualitatively, on a case by case basis. There are, however, some general pointers that can guide the analysis. These pointers are: what aspects of a policy are deemed important by the decision makers, who has access to the decision making process concerning the policy, what organizations are considered experts on the topic by the decision makers, and how limited is the accesses to the decision making process.

Following Euchner, Heichel, Nebel, and Raschzok (2013), I will use the explanatory memoranda to derive information on what aspects of a policy are deemed important by the decision makers. Together with other government documents such as consultation reports, the explanatory memoranda will also be used to derive information on what actors have access to decision making process, who are considered experts on the topic, and how limited the access to the process is. The government documents that are used in the analysis are all published on governmental websites.

Measuring expansion of conflict and problem definition rhetoric

The dataset that is used to measure expansion of conflict and problem definition rhetoric is based on an analysis of all newspaper articles on the topics of gambling policy and alcohol policy in two newspapers, which are NRC Handelsblad and Algemeen Dagblad, covering the time period between January 1990 and December 2015. Since expanding the conflict generally involves the media, a newspaper analysis is a logical and suitable approach to capture those activities. Baumgartner and Jones (1993:103) argue that the media reflects the public discussion surrounding public policies in the United States. The newspaper articles are collected and analyzed through several steps.

First of all, the Lexis-Nexis database is used to identify all articles published on the topics of alcohol policy and gambling policy in NRC Handelsblad and Algemeen Dagblad from 1990 up to and including 2015. Several keywords were used to identify the relevant articles, such as 'alcohol', 'alcohol policy', 'underage drinking', 'gambling', 'gambling policy', 'casino', 'online gambling', and more. After this initial search, the total sample is reduced by filtering out the irrelevant articles.

Secondly, a codebook was used to code several aspects of the newspaper. The coded aspects

are: the policy image, the name of the actor, the type of actor, the goal of the actor, and the used rhetoric. One newspaper article can include information on multiple actors. The policy image of the article is divided into five different categories and concerns the primary aspect/problem discussed in the article. The five categories of the policy image variable are: health, crime, enterprise, moral, and neutral. The type of actor variable measures the group that an actor represents and that can range from political party, to social or medical organization, to commercial actor, and more. In total there are eight different types of groups coded. The goal of the actor variable measures the overall policy goal of an actor and has three different levels: liberalize the activity, restrict the activity, and keep the status quo. The used rhetoric variable measures what argument the actor uses.

Thirdly, I use the policy image variable and the actor variable to analyze whether there has been an expansion of conflict. A successful expansion of conflict has taken place when the policy image of the debate has shifted and when a group of, up and until that point, uninvolved actors become involved and also use that specific policy image.

Methods

The data will partly be presented in the form of a narrative, and partly in the form of graphs. The narrative approach is used to describe the policy dynamics, the existence and strength of policy monopolies, and the start of an expansion of conflict. The graphs are used to identify a successful expansion of conflict.

The Mechanisms of Punctuated Equilibrium Theory in the Alcohol and Gambling Policy Fields

Gambling policy

Before I discuss how the gambling law has changed in the time period between January 1990 and December 2015, I will first discuss the general goal of the law and what the general situation was before that time period. The Dutch gambling law has a restrictive nature. The main goals of the Dutch gambling policy are to canalize the desire to gamble and to diminish the illegal gambling market. At the start of the analyzed time period, the law permits gambling activities such as casinos, lotteries, and betting on sports, but there are only a handful of organizations that have a license to provide those activities. The organizations that have the license to provide the aforementioned gambling activities must be non-profit organizations, and depending on the type of activity the profit that those organizations make either goes to the state or to charities, cultural organizations, or sport organizations. There is one gambling activity that has a different licensing system, namely the operation of gaming machines, which was legalized in 1985. Companies that operate gaming machines do need to have a license, but there is no restriction on the amount of licenses that the government provides and the companies that get the license are allowed to be for-profit organizations. There are, however, restrictions on where the gaming machines may be placed, what type of gaming machines are allowed, and how much money a costumer can lose per hour.

While the gambling policy generally has stayed stable, there are some changes to the policy in the time period between January 1990 and December 2015. The gambling policy was changed thrice in the period of 1992-1993. All three changes were aimed at liberalizing the gambling market by expanding the capacities of already existing license holders. First of all, the Staatsloterij was changed from a public organization to a private organization, which gave the organization more flexibility in responding to the wishes of the consumers, while at the same time the organization still had to hand its profit over to the state. Second, the regulation for betting on sports and non-state owned lotteries was liberalized. New types of lotteries were allowed, more lottery draws were

possible, and there was an expansion of locations that were allowed to sell lottery tickets and betting forms. Third, the government legalized scratch cards and gave the license to the Stichting de Nationale Sporttotalisator, which is an organization that already had a license for organizing sport bets and lotteries. What these three policy changes have in common is that they all liberalized the gambling market in favor of organizations that were already licensed and the argumentation for all three liberalizations was that it was needed due to competition from organizations based in neighboring countries.

The fourth and last noteworthy change in the gambling policy stems from 1998. Contrary to the three previous changes, this change was aimed at restricting the gambling market. The core of the policy change was to reduce the amount of gaming machines, give municipalities more power in limiting the amount of gaming machines in bars and restaurants, and to raise the minimum age for playing on gaming machines from sixteen to eighteen. The main goal of the law was to prevent and reduce gambling addiction.

There are also some changes that are close to being implemented. There are and have been policy proposals that introduce regulation for the online gambling market. In 2008, a bill that would introduce one experimental license for online gambling and that would give that license to the only licensed casino chain in the Netherlands, Holland Casino, was rejected by the Senate. Currently, a proposal that would regulate the online gambling market in a similar manner as the gaming machine market is being discussed by the House of Representatives. Also, recently an Amsterdam district court ordered the Dutch Gaming authority to stop limiting the available number of lottery licenses to a maximum four.

Alcohol policy

The history of the Dutch alcohol policy dates back to 1881, when the sale of hard liquor was regulated and public intoxication became a punishable offence. Since 1881, the Dutch alcohol market has slowly become more and more regulated, mainly with the goal of improving the public

health and limiting the criminal network involved with places that sell alcoholic beverages. Before January 1990 the minimum drinking age for soft alcoholic beverages, such as beer and wine, was sixteen years, and the minimum age for hard alcoholic beverages was eighteen years.

The first noteworthy change in the alcohol policy since January 1990 was made in 2000. The change was aimed at reducing the consumption of alcohol, especially among the youth. The policy change had two elements: making it more difficult for minors to buy alcoholic beverages, and limiting the types of places where alcohol can be sold. The rules making it more difficult for minors to buy alcoholic beverages were as follows: a mandatory ID-check to confirm whether the costumer is indeed at least sixteen or eighteen years old, and an entry requirement that visitors of a large dance venue must at least be sixteen years old. The rules limiting the types of places where alcohol can be sold were as follows: a ban on selling alcohol in petrol stations and associated stores and a ban on selling alcohol in company restaurants.

The second and third noteworthy changes were made in 2012 and 2013. Both of these changes were aimed at reducing the consumption of alcohol among the youth. The second change made the possession of alcohol in public places by people under the age of sixteen a punishable offence. The third change raised the minimum drinking age from sixteen to eighteen and made the possession of alcohol in public places by people under the age of eighteen a punishable offence.

Punctuated policy dynamics

Are the policy dynamics of the Dutch gambling and alcohol policies characterized by alternating periods of stability and large-scale change? As discussed above, four noteworthy changes to the gambling policy are observed. These changes, however, are not large changes. The first three changes to the gambling policy are all small changes that liberalize the field a bit, but do not change anything concerning the structure of the policy field. The three changes also fit with the policy image that is present in the gambling policy field. The fourth change, which is aimed at restricting the gambling machine market, also fits with the policy image and also does not change anything to

the structure of the gambling policy. The change that might be at hand in the gambling policy field, however, does seem to be large. The potential liberalization of the online gambling market and the removal of a maximum number of licenses for lotteries indicate a prospective change to the core structure of the Dutch gambling market.

In the alcohol policy field, three noteworthy changes can be observed. The first change is a relative small change because larger issues such as raising the minimum drinking age to 18 and regulating commercials for alcohol through legislation were removed from the proposal (Kamerstuk 25969, nr.3:7). The second change is a prelude to the third change. Originally the proposed bill for the second change contained a plan to allow experiments with locally increasing the minimum drinking age, but this idea was removed because it was argued to result in alcohol tourism between municipalities with different minimum drinking ages. The third change is a relatively large change. Raising the minimum drinking age changes the structure of the Dutch alcohol policy because it excludes a large group of people from being able to legally buy and legally publicly possess alcoholic beverages.

The findings discussed above lend support for the first hypothesis. Both the gambling and alcohol policy have been rather stable over for the better part of the past 25 years. The small changes that are observed fit with the PET observation that policy faces many incremental changes. A period of relatively large-scale change can be observed in the alcohol policy field as the minimum drinking age was raised. In the gambling policy field the punctuation of large-scale change has not taken place, but it is possible that the punctuation is at hand.

The strong gambling policy monopoly

The main powerful policy image in the gambling policy field is a mixture of economic, crime, and health arguments. The idea behind liberalizing the gambling market is that it is necessary in order to prevent people from gambling illegally (Kamerstuk 22172, nr.3:2); to gain funds for the state, charities, or social and cultural organizations; and to safely channel the gambling tendencies of

people towards safe environments where gambling addictions can be prevented as much as possible (Kamerstuk 22269, nr.3:3). The three types of arguments do not contradict each other; all three arguments fit with the idea of a legal, but heavily regulated gambling market.

The goals of preventing gambling addictions and preventing people from gambling illegally can also be found in the explanatory memorandum for the bill that restricts the amount of gaming machines that can be placed in bars and restaurant. In the explanatory memorandum it is stated that the gaming machines should be made less attractive to players in order to curb the amount of people that are addicted to the machines, but it also states that the amount of machines should not be limited too much in order to prevent people from looking for illegal alternatives (Kamerstuk 25727, nr.3:2-4). Since gaming machines are the only gambling activity that directly benefit for-profit organizations, there are no arguments in the explanatory memorandum that relate to the social-cultural-economic aspect.

The list of organizations that have access to the decision making process coincides with the main policy image as discussed above. In an explanatory memorandum for a bill that failed to pass, a list of organizations that were consulted was mentioned. The organizations that were consulted include: Public Prosecution Service, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sports, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Dutch Association of Mental Health and Addiction Care, the Gaming Machine Trade Organization, and the organizations that hold gambling licenses (Kamerstuk 30362, nr.3:1). What strengthens the argument that the access to the decision making process is limited is that the bill in question concerns the legalizing of online gambling and that no organizations that are already involved in online gambling are consulted.

All in all, the discussion above indicates that there is a strong policy monopoly in the gambling policy field. Even though the policy image consists of arguments from three different perspectives, namely from health, crime, and social-cultural-economic perspectives, all three perspectives lead to the same policy goal, and therefore strengthen each other. The actors that do have access to the decision making process all support the policy image.

The less strong alcohol policy monopoly

The central goals of the Dutch alcohol policy are to reduce and prevent the harmful effects of alcohol on health and to reduce the societal problems that alcohol causes (Kamerstuk 25969, nr.3:7). These central goals, however, are not the only aspects that form the alcohol policy image. Another important aspect that is taken into account in forming the alcohol policy are the economic consequences for the alcohol industry (Kamerstuk 25969, nr.3:6). The economic view and the more problem oriented view are both linked to different policy goals. The problem oriented view can be linked to a policy goal of restricting the laws concerning alcohol, while the economic view can be linked to a view that the status quo should be kept.

The split in the policy image is not pronounced when one looks at the institutional structure concerning the access to the decision making process. In the Netherlands, the alcohol industry has a strong lobby position (van de Luitgaarden, Thush, Wiers, & Knibbe, 2008:176). The strong position of the alcohol lobby has given the alcohol industry self-regulatory power. One example of the self-regulatory power of the alcohol industry is that they have created their own advertising code for alcoholic beverages and by doing so they have prevented the implementation of legislation regulating the advertising of alcoholic beverages (Stichting Alcoholpreventie. 2007:7). Another example of the self-regulatory power is that the supermarket trade organization has created a rule that all supermarkets need to check the identification of costumers who appear to be under the age of 25; this rule is a substitute for the implementation of legislation that regulates when supermarkets need to check identification or the implementation of electronic identification systems.

In a document that discusses how the policy program concerning alcohol is established, a list of consulted organizations is published. The organizations that are consulted for establishing the alcohol policy are: the supermarket trade organization, the platform of alcoholic beverages selling stores, the hospitality industry branch organization, the Dutch municipality organization, and the CEO's of the Dutch alcohol industry (Kamerstuk 27565, nr.35:19). There was also another

deliberation where representatives of the alcohol industry, the government, and addiction prevention organizations discussed the alcohol policy (Kamerstuk 27565, nr.35:4-5).

In 2008 there is a shift in the organizations that are consulted for deliberation on alcohol policy. Instead of mainly inviting actors from the alcohol industry, there is a shift towards inviting more representatives of organizations that focus on the negative health effects of alcohol (Stcrt. 2861700). This shift can mean that the limited access to the deliberation process has been opened up for certain social and medical organizations.

It can be concluded that until 2008 there was a policy monopoly in the alcohol policy field. The alcohol policy monopoly was, however, not very strong because there was not one powerful policy image. The health sector did have some access to the decision making process, but its position was not strong compared to that of the alcohol industry. The self-regulatory power and the extensive consultation of different stakeholders in the alcohol industry indicate that the alcohol sector had considerable decision making power. The change in consulted organizations that was implemented in 2008, however, has weakened the strength of the policy monopoly because the initial limited access to the decision making process was opened up.

Comparing the strength of the gambling and alcohol policy monopolies
The evidence presented above lends support for the first portion of the second hypothesis. The mismatch between the goals related to the different aspects of the policy image in the alcohol policy monopoly means that there is no single powerful policy image that fully relates to the goals of the actors that have access to the decision making process. In the gambling policy monopoly there is a match between the policy goals related to the policy image and the policy goals of the actors that have access to the decision making process. The gambling policy monopoly, thus, appears to be stronger than the alcohol policy monopoly

The link between policy monopolies and policy stability

Since the interpretation of the policy monopoly concept that is used in this paper does not fall back on equating policy stability with the existence of a policy monopoly, it is necessary to analyze whether the existence of a policy monopoly actually causes policy stability. The policy image in the gambling policy field can be linked to the stability of the policy. Neither the Dutch state, the active commercial actors, nor social groups benefit from liberalizing or restricting the Dutch gambling market to a great extent. Even though changes in the environment have produced great pressure towards the liberalization of the online gambling market, the actors that form the policy monopoly have been able to deflect the pressure for change by using arguments focused on the negative effects of online gambling on the public health and on the funding of charities and social-cultural organizations. Dutch commercial actors have also made use of the courts in their successful attempts of preventing foreign commercial actors from entering the Dutch gambling market (Huls, 2006:77).

In the alcohol policy field, the self-regulatory power has successfully prevented several legislative policy changes. Furthermore, there is a close link between the important representatives of the alcohol industry and political parties, such as the prominent VVD-member Hans Wiegel who has, for many years, spearheaded the Dutch brewery branch organization. The alcohol industry has also extensively lobbied against raising the minimum drinking age. The alcohol industry has used rhetoric that focused on the idea that legislation for raising the minimum drinking age is not a good solution for reducing underage drinking. Actors from the alcohol industry have stated that tackling underage drinking should focus on parental supervision instead of raising the minimum drinking age.

It is notoriously difficult to measure the influence of interest groups and stakeholders on the policy process, but the evidence discussed above does lend support to the second portion of the second hypothesis. In both the gambling and alcohol policy field actors that form the policy monopoly have lobbied and argued against impending change. It is of course the question whether

these protests have been influential, but that does seem to be the case. So, it appears that the policy stability in the gambling and alcohol policy fields can be explained by the existence of policy monopolies, but there is no infallible evidence that proofs causation.

The start of an expansion of conflict in the gambling policy field

Figure 2 shows what policy images are used in the public discussion concerning gambling policy for the time period between January 1990 and December 2015. The top panel of figure 2 shows the absolute number of articles published and the bottom panel shows the relative share of each policy image per year. The figure shows that, overall, the enterprise policy image is used most, followed by health and then followed by the crime policy image. The policy is rarely publicly discussed in terms of morality. The observation that gambling policy is frequently discussed as an enterprise, health, or crime issue fits with the observation that the gambling policy monopoly rests on a policy image that is based on those three aspects.
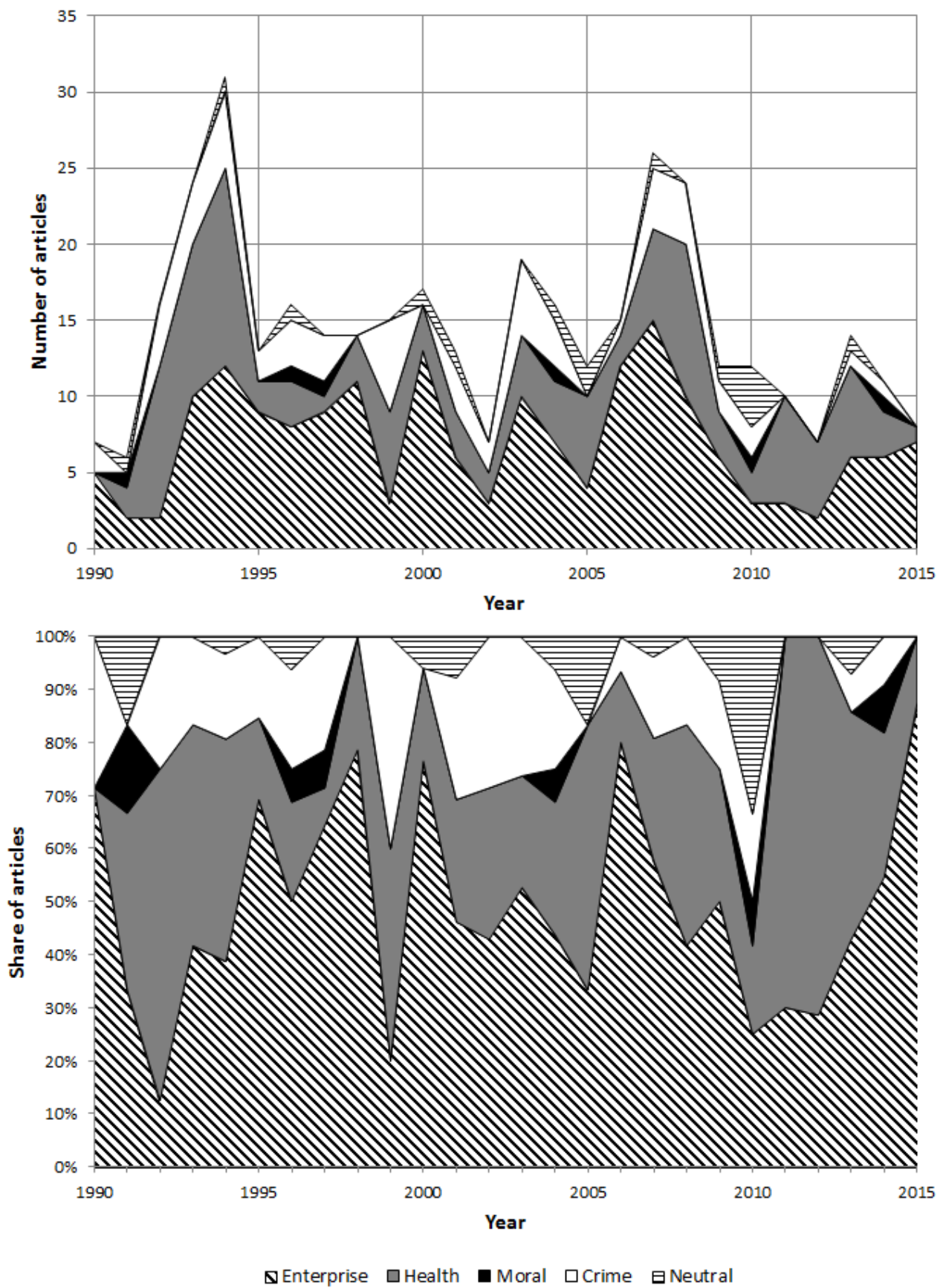
Figure 2. Policy images used in the public debate concerning gambling. Top panel represents absolute numbers, bottom panel represents percentage of total per year.

Has there been a successful expansion of conflict in the gambling policy field? As stated above, a successful expansion of conflict takes place when the policy image has changed, and when a group of hitherto uninvolved actors becomes involved. Figure 2 shows that there are some years where the enterprise policy image, by far, is the most use policy image, but in all those cases the rise in the usage of the enterprise image does not last for more than one year. The health policy image is the second most used policy image in the public debate. An analysis of the used arguments also shows that warnings for the addictive aspects of gambling are used as arguments against the liberalization of online gambling, while proponents of the liberalization argue that the system in place is already failing to protect gambling addicts.

Figure 3 shows the amount of yearly unique actors per year and the percentage of those actors per type. What is noticeable is that, up and until 2014, the relative peaks in the usage of the enterprise policy image do not align with the peaks in the amount of unique actors per year or a large growth in the portion of a specific category of actor. There are multiple years where a peak in the number of unique actors that participate in the debate can be observed, but in none of those years a substantial change in the policy image can be observed.
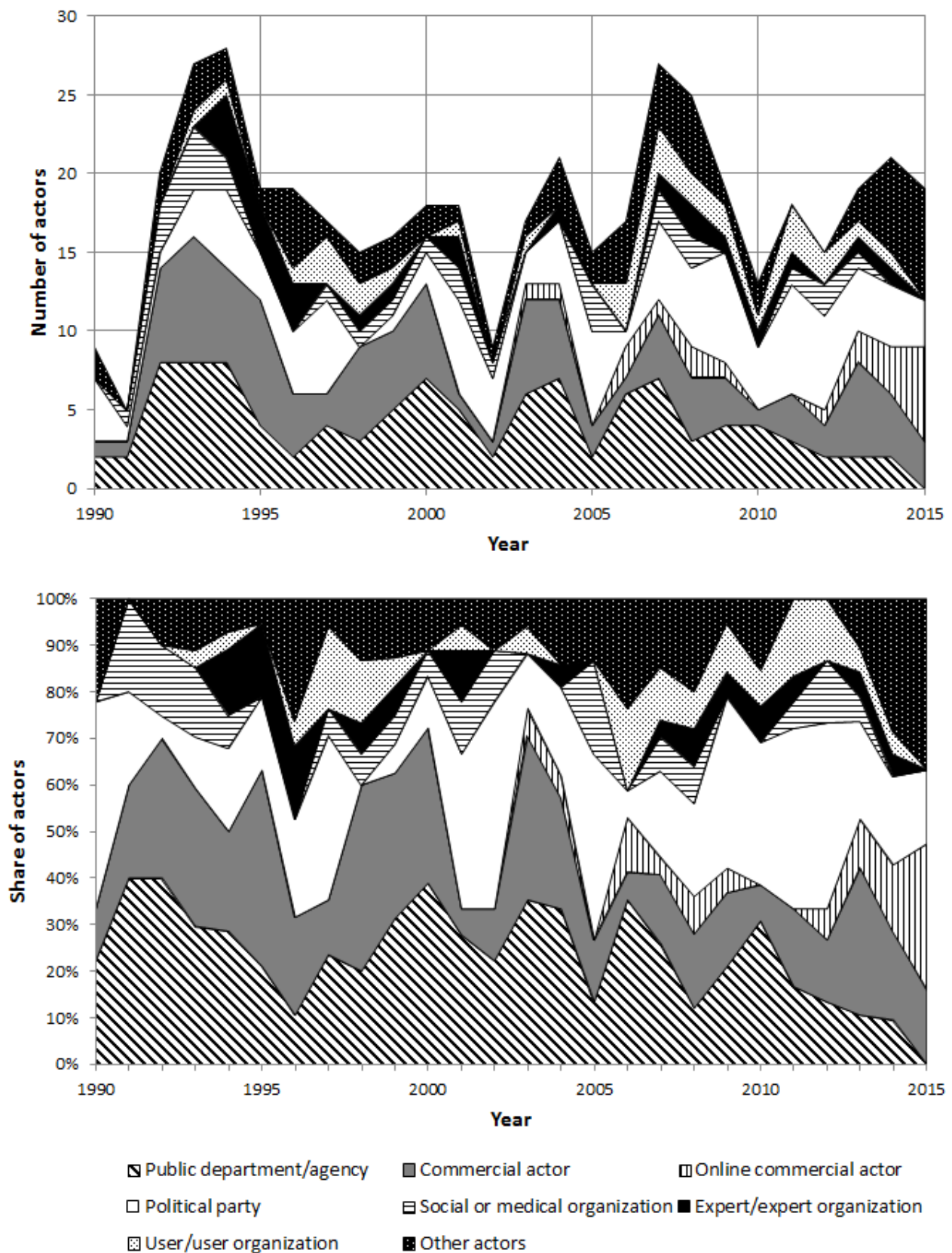
Figure 3. Amount of yearly unique actors in the public debate concerning gambling. Top panel represents absolute numbers, bottom panel represents percentage of total per year.

Interestingly, in 2015 there is a rise in the usage of the enterprise frame while there is also a rise in the amount of unique actors related to two actor types. In 2015 the enterprise image has the largest relative share in the time period measured. The relative and absolute growth in the unique actors that fall under the categories 'other actors' and 'online commercial actors' is also unprecedented. An example of some actors that fall under the group of other actors are: Dutch charities, the European Court, the European Commission, sport organizations, and museums.

Figure 4 shows, for each year, the percentage of actors that want to liberalize the policy, restrict the policy, and the percentage of actors that want to keep the status quo. In 1990 and 1991, the years leading up to the three liberalizing policy changes, the general tendency was focused on liberalizing the policy, but after those years a majority of the actors sought to keep the status quo or even restrict the policy. Over the years the percentage of actors that want to liberalize the policy slowly grew.
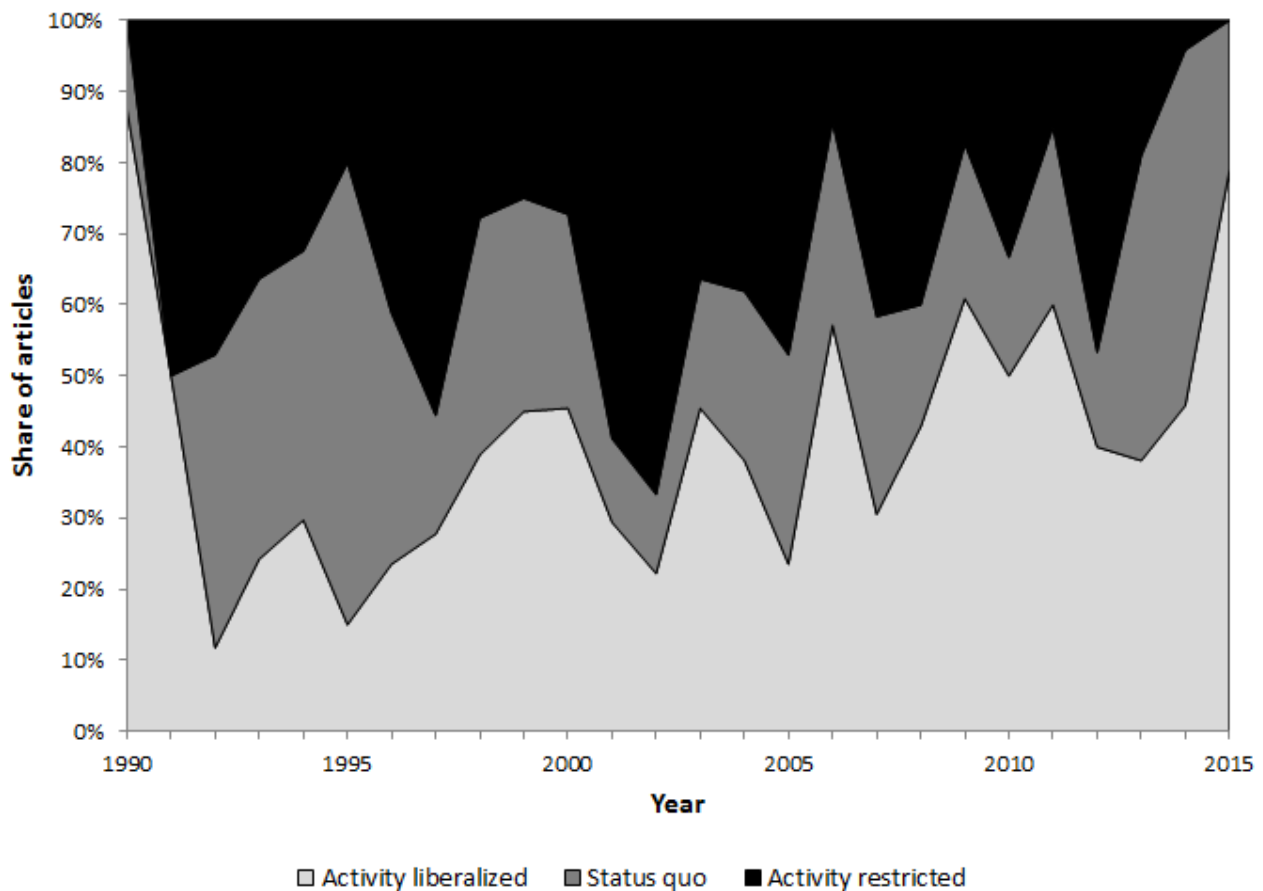

Figure 4. Percentage of actors that either want to liberalize gambling policy, restrict gambling policy, or keep the status quo.

All in all, there are multiple years when there is a peak in the usage of the enterprise policy image, in those years the enterprise policy image is used in 75% of the news articles concerning the gambling policy. Most of the times, however, those peaks do not align with a surge in new actors joining the debate. In 2015, there is such an alignment. In 2015, the enterprise policy image is used in more than 85% of the news articles about gambling policy, nineteen unique actors participate in the public debate, and more than 75% of those actors seek to liberalize the gambling policy. This all indicates that there is indeed an expansion of conflict in the gambling policy field.

The successful expansion of conflict in the alcohol policy field

Figure 5 shows the policy images used in the public discussion surrounding alcohol policy for the time period between January 1990 and December 2015. There are many different policy images used in the public discussion about alcohol policy. Even though the enterprise policy frame is part of the alcohol policy image in the decision making process, the enterprise policy image is not used frequently in the public discussion; this might be the case because the alcohol industry has a strong lobby position in the decision making process, but wants to keep a low profile in the public discussion. The prevalence of the health, crime, and road safety policy images fit with the observation made concerning the policy image of the policy monopoly. Figure 5 also shows that the health policy image has been used more frequently over time in the public alcohol policy debate. The growth started in 2006, reached its peak in 2012, and shrunk largely after 2013. This growth can indicate an expansion of conflict, but since a successful expansion of conflict also leans on a surge of involvement of yet uninvolved actors, it is necessary to first analyze whether that is the case before conclusions about an successful expansion of conflict can be made.
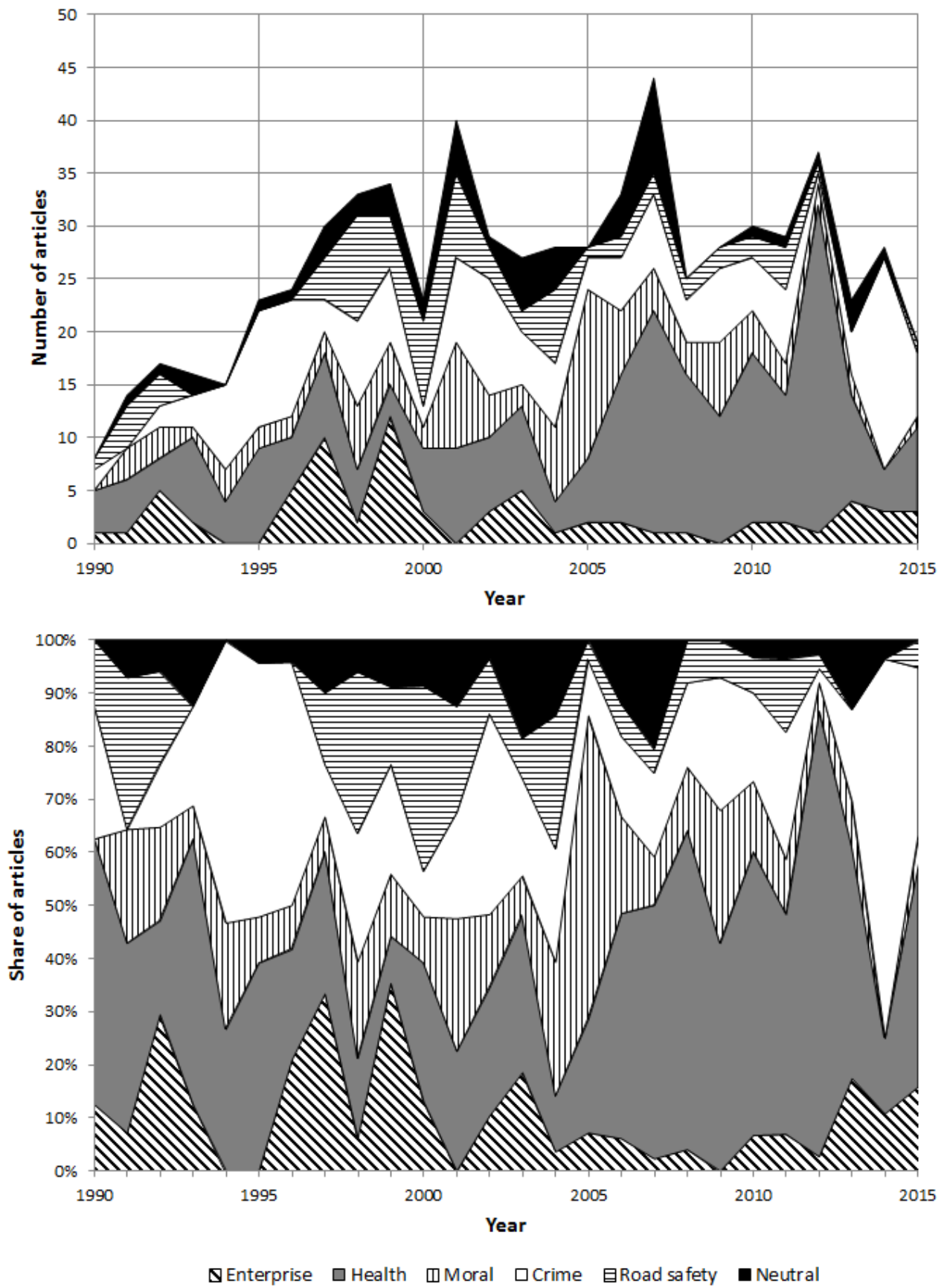
Figure 5. Policy images used in the public debate concerning alcohol. Top panel represents absolute numbers, bottom panel represents percentage of total per year.

Figure 6 shows the amount of yearly unique actors per year and the percentage of those actors per type. Five peaks in the number of yearly unique actors can be observed, namely in: 1997, 1999, 2001, 2007, and 2012.The peaks in 2007 and 2012 both align with a growth in the relative usage of the health frame in the public debate. The peak in the amount of yearly unique actors is larger in 2007 than it is in 2012, but in 2012 the health frame is used more frequently, both absolute and relative, than in 2007.
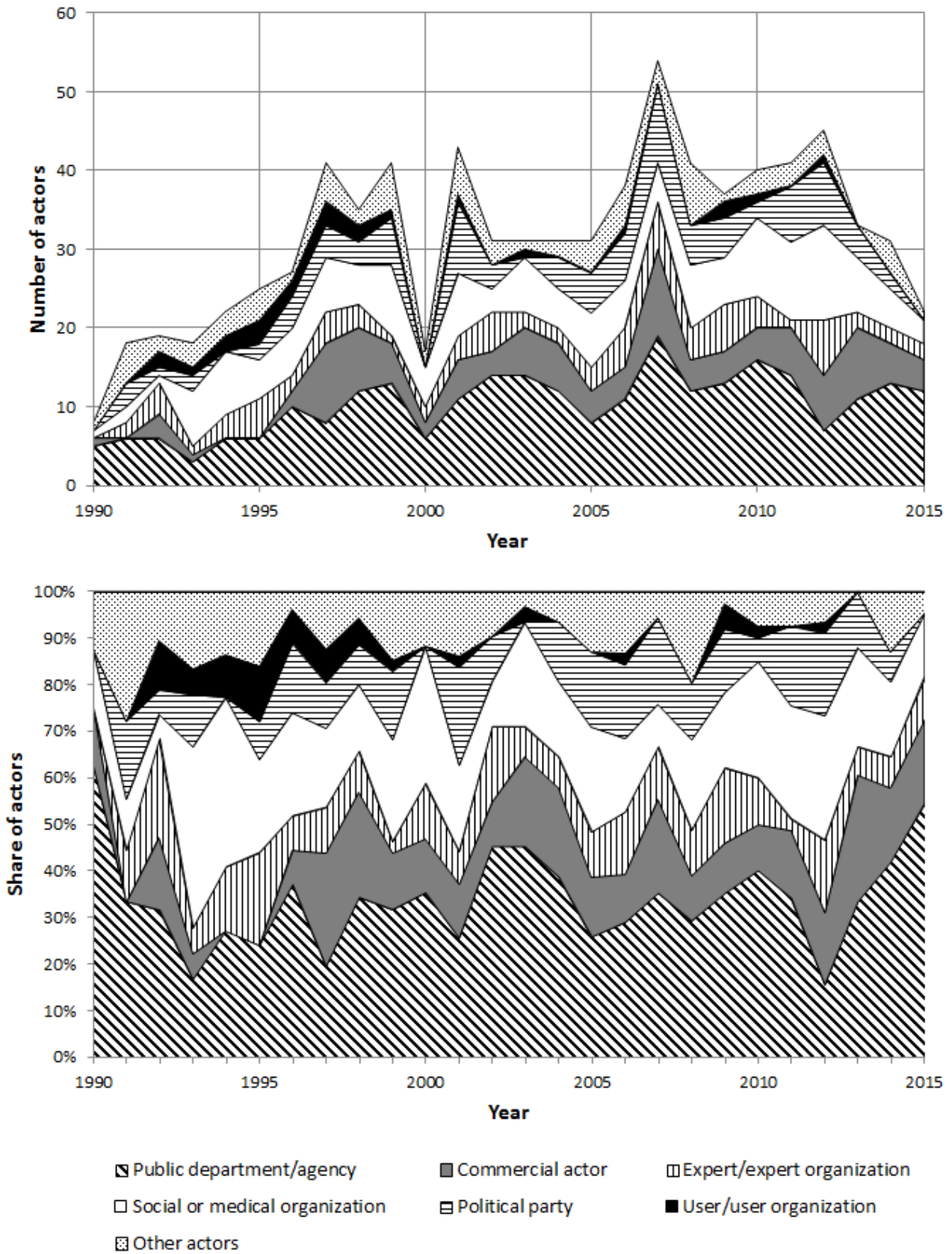
Figure 6. Amount of yearly unique actors in the public debate concerning alcohol. Top panel represents absolute numbers, bottom panel represents percentage of total per year.

Figure 7 shows, for each year, the percentage of actors that want to liberalize the alcohol policy, restrict the policy, and the percentage of actors that want to keep the status quo. Overall there has been a restrictive tendency towards alcohol policy in the public debate on alcohol policy. Over the years the percentage of actors that want to restrict the policy slowly grew.
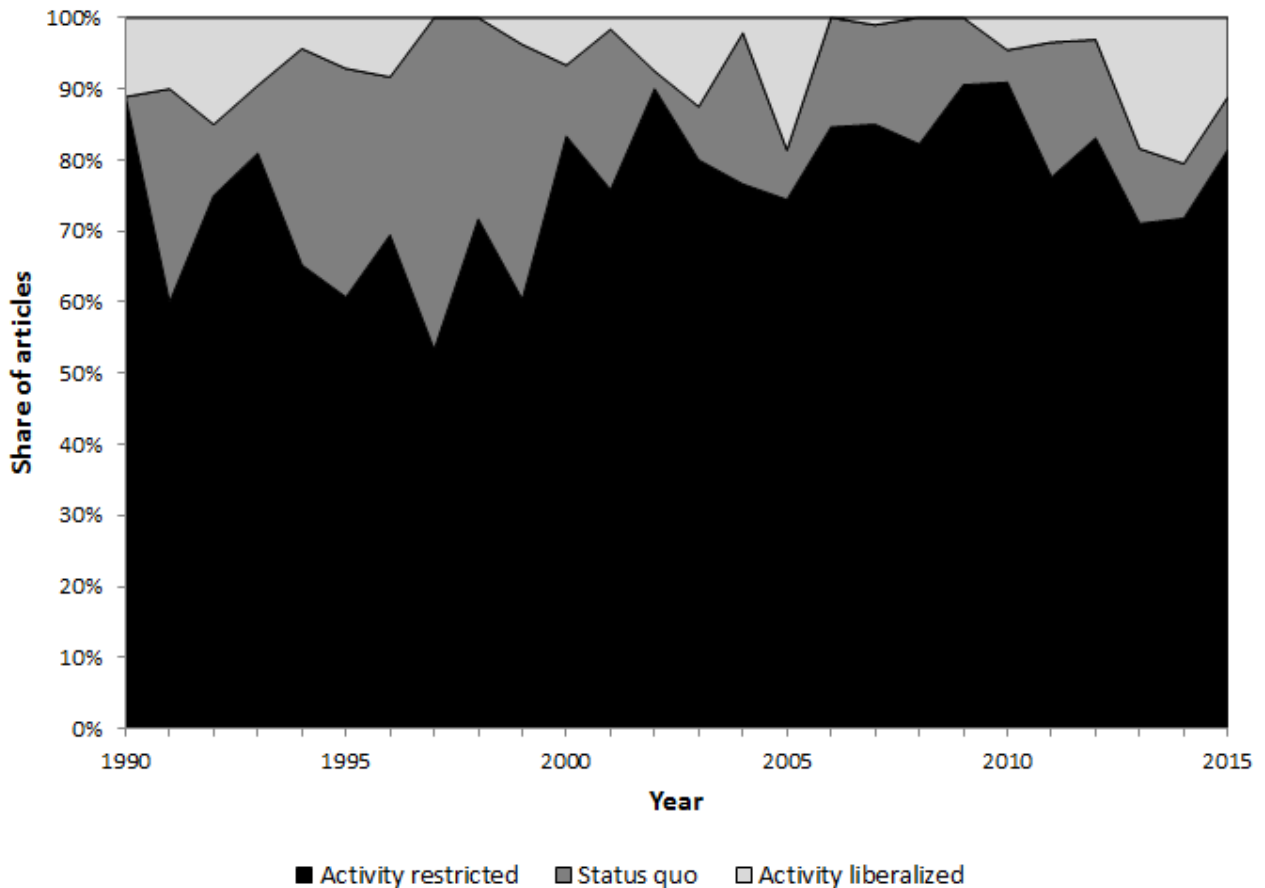

Figure 7. Percentage of actors that either want to liberalize alcohol policy, restrict alcohol policy, or keep the status quo.

All in all, a successful expansion of conflict in the alcohol policy field can be observed. The expansion of conflict starts in 2006 and ends in 2013. There are two peaks in the expansion of conflict, the first peak is in 2007, and the second peak is in 2012. In 2007 there were over 50 unique actors participating in the public debate about alcohol policy and roughly half of all articles written on alcohol policy in that year approached the policy as a health issue. In 2012, over 40 unique actors participated in the public alcohol policy debate and more than 80% of the articles written about alcohol policy in that year approached the topic as a health issue.

The start of a successful expansion of conflict

Does it take more time to successfully expand the conflict in the gambling policy field than in the alcohol policy field? Above it is shown that an expansion of conflict started in the gambling policy field in 2015, in the alcohol policy field this happened in 2006. In order to answer the question raised above, it is necessary to discover when the first attempts to expand the conflict were made.

In the gambling policy field, the expansion of conflict either started in 2003, when the first online commercial actor demanded access to the Dutch gambling market, or in 2006 when there is a large spike in the usage of the enterprise policy image, the European Commission becomes involved, and when the majority of the articles are pro liberalization. In both cases, the following year shows a decrease in the usage of the enterprise policy image, and an increase in the usage of the health policy image, which resonates with the observation that the actors that form the gambling policy monopoly use the health policy image to ward off policy change.

In the alcohol policy field, the first attempts to expand the conflict can be dated back to 2005, when the foundation Stichting Alcoholpreventie (STAP) made an appeal to raise the minimum legal drinking age to eighteen. The appeal quickly gained traction as the following year other organizations joined the appeal, and the start of the successful expansion of conflict has become observable.

So, does it take more time to successfully expand the conflict in the gambling policy field, which has a strong policy monopoly, than in the alcohol policy field, which has a less strong policy monopoly? The evidence shown above does provide support for the hypothesis that states it is indeed the case. The expansion of conflict in the gambling policy field either started in 2003 or 2006, and became successful in 2015, which is at least nine years later. The expansion of conflict in the alcohol policy field started in 2005 and became successful in 2006, which is one year later.

Expansion of conflict and large-scale policy change

In both the gambling and alcohol policy field an expansion of conflict is observed. It is too early to

conclude whether the expansion of conflict in the gambling policy field will lead to large-scale policy change, but the first cracks in the policy can already be observed as the Amsterdam district court ruled that the Dutch Gaming Authority can no longer limit the amount of licenses for lotteries that it gives out to a maximum of four. There is also a potential large policy change in preparation in the form of a bill that, when accepted, significantly liberalizes the online gambling market.

The evidence suggests that the large-scale policy change observed in the alcohol policy field can be explained by a successful expansion of conflict. In 2008, a year after the expansion of conflict peak of 2007, more health-oriented organizations were granted access to the alcohol decision making process. In 2013, a year after the expansion of conflict peak of 2012, the minimum drinking age was raised from 16 to 18 on the basis of public health arguments and with the help of the lobby efforts of many actors that were not involved in the discussion before the expansion of conflict started.

The evidence discussed above lends support to the second portion of the third hypothesis, which concerns the causal link between a successful expansion of conflict and large-scale policy change. The large-scale policy change in the alcohol policy field appears to be the consequence of a successful expansion of conflict. The possible imminent large change to the gambling policy field also seems to be the consequence of an expansion of conflict. The evidence, however, does not provide irrefutable proof of causation.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study has focused on whether two mechanisms of PET, namely policy monopolies and expansion of conflict, can explain the policy dynamics of the Dutch policy fields of alcohol and gambling over the last 25 years. By studying the rhetoric of actors, the diversity of actors, and the frames used in the public debate, this study has made a step towards extending the level of analysis in punctuated equilibrium theory research. The results indicate that policy monopolies and expansion of conflict can indeed explain the Dutch gambling and alcohol policy dynamics.

Three hypotheses were tested in this paper. The first hypothesis concerns the characteristics of the policy dynamics and whether they are characterized by both periods of stability and large-scale change. The second hypothesis concerns policy monopolies. The first portion of the second hypothesis states that the gambling policy monopoly is stronger than the alcohol policy monopoly. The second portion concerns the relation between policy stability and policy monopolies. The third hypothesis concerns the expansion of conflict. The first portion of the third hypothesis states that it takes more time for an expansion of conflict to be successful in the gambling policy field than in the alcohol policy field. The second portion concerns the relation between large-scale policy change and an expansion of conflict. The research question and hypotheses were studied through both qualitative and quantitative means. The policy dynamics are analyzed by looking at the legislative changes, an analysis of government documents is used to analyze policy monopolies, and the expansion of conflicts are measured through a newspaper analysis.

Even though there is no irrefutable proof of causation, the evidence gathered in this paper does lend support to all the hypotheses. This leads me to conclude that the policy monopoly concept and the expansion of conflict concept appear to successfully explain the policy dynamics of the Dutch alcohol and gambling policies. The long periods of policy stability apparent in both policy fields seem to be the consequence of the existence of policy monopolies in both fields. The large change in the alcohol policy field seems to be the consequence of an expansion of conflict focused

on the health consequences of the alcohol policy.

The results of this study suggest that non-elected actors have a large influence on the policy process. By being part of the policy monopoly, stakeholders have the possibility to stop policy from changing even though the general opinion may desire the policy to change. The main way in which this can be overcome is when interest groups mobilize, focus on different aspects of the policy, and in turn cause the policy to equate to the pressures in the policy environment.

I have also observed a relation between the strength of a policy monopoly and the size of an eventual policy change. In both fields, policy monopolies were present, but the gambling policy monopoly was stronger than the alcohol policy monopoly. There is evidence that suggests that the potential policy change in the gambling policy field is larger than the observed change in the alcohol policy field. The ruling by the Amsterdam district court that ordered the Dutch Gaming Authority to increase the number of licenses it gives out and the proposed legislation for regulating the online gambling market both foreshadow a large change in the structure of the Dutch gambling policy. The foreshadowed change in the gambling policy sector seems to be larger than the actual change in the alcohol policy sector. Raising the minimum age is a large change, but it is not as drastic as changing the whole structure of the Dutch gambling market.

One limitation of this paper is that it has studied a limited number of cases in relatively comparable policy fields. Even though there are many differences between the alcohol and gambling policy fields, they are similar types of policies. Both policies concern the regulation of addictive goods. This similarity in these cases makes it not possible to generalize the findings of this study to a broad spectrum of policy fields.

Another limitation is that the qualitative aspect of this study has not provided enough evidence for the conclusion that policy monopolies cause policy stability and that large-scale policy changes are only caused by expansion of conflicts. Even though the correlation is shown, and some empirical support for causation is provided, the data does not provide irrefutable evidence for the causal links between policy monopolies and policy stability, and expansions of conflicts and large-

scale changes.

The results of this paper have shown that the mechanisms of policy monopolies and expansion of conflict as discussed in PET are indeed present in the Netherlands. Future research can study whether this is also the case in other European countries or build on these findings and study Dutch cases in policy fields that do not concern the regulation of addictive goods. Future research can also seek to provide evidence that proofs the causal relation between policy monopolies and policy stability, and expansion of conflicts and large-scale policy change.

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