

Non-implementation of road pricing policy in the Netherlands: An application of the 'Advocacy Coalition Framework'

Özgül Ardiç¹

Transport and Logistics Group, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands.

Jan Anne Annema²

Transport and Logistics Group, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands.

Bert van Wee³

Transport and Logistics Group, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands.

The implementation of road pricing policies is dependent on political support for the policy. It is frequently argued that many pricing proposals fail to be implemented due to the opposition of one or a group of policy actors (e.g. political parties, interest groups). This study considers this issue and examines the reasons for non-implementation of proposals for Dutch road pricing policies by analysing the policy position changes of 26 major policy actors and the changes in consensus and conflict among these actors over a policy process of 16 years. The "Advocacy Coalition Framework" (ACF) is used as the theoretical lens. Our findings show that in the Netherlands non-implementation cannot be ascribed to only the opposition of one policy actor or to one group of policy actors, but rather to features of the Dutch political system/culture and complications peculiar to the road pricing subsystem (socio-cultural values related to mobility, complex design issues). We found that internal and external shocks, and policy-oriented learning affected the subsystem and alerted the power balance between pro-and anti-road pricing coalitions. However, these factors did not produce a major policy change, namely, the introduction of a road pricing scheme.

Keywords: Advocacy coalition framework, policy actor, policy process, road pricing.

1. Introduction

Road pricing policies have been debated in the political agenda in several countries but only a limited number of road pricing proposals have so far been implemented (see Vonk Noordegraaf et al., 2014). Various policy actors, individuals (e.g. experts) or representatives of various organizations (e.g. political parties, interest groups) who have expertise in road pricing policies, seek to influence road pricing policy processes. A review of the literature on road pricing implementation cases shows that the level of political support, determined by the degree of (dis-) approval of the policy by these policy actors, is the main determinant of how the policy process progresses and the eventual policy outcome: implementation or non-implementation (Vonk Noordegraaf et al., 2014). This argument is generally justified by illustrating, in a narrative manner, the opposition or support of one (or a few) specific policy actors or by highlighting (dis) agreements between a few actors on a specific occasion during the policy process (e.g. Isaksson

¹ A: Jaffalaan 5, 2628BX Delft, The Netherlands T: +31 152 788 912 F: +31 152 782 719 E: o.ardic@tudeft.nl

² A: Jaffalaan 5, 2628BX Delft, The Netherlands T: +31 152 788 912 F: +31 152 782 719 E: j.a.annema@tudelft.nl

³ A: Jaffalaan 5, 2628BX Delft, The Netherlands T: +31 152 782 719 F: +31 152 782 719 E: g.p.vanwee@tudelft.nl

and Richardson, 2009; Rye et al., 2008). However, policy outcomes are the consequences of a series of events that occur over a long period of time (Sabatier and Weible, 2007; True et al., 2007) and involve a diverse set of policy actors in interaction (Adam and Kriesi, 2007; Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Zahariadis, 2007). To our knowledge, no study so far has dug into the policy process of road pricing policies by empirically exploring the policy positions of all the major policy actors and their conflicts and consensus over time to understand how they play a role in the policy process and policy outcome: implementation or non-implementation.

This study aims to understand how conflict and consensus among policy actors might result in (non-) implementation of road pricing and to explore the factors which affect conflict and consensus among policy actors and contribute to (non-) implementation. To achieve this aim we analysed the Dutch road pricing policy process. In the Netherlands, cars are taxed independently of the level of car use, although the levies on fuel are relatively high. The idea of road pricing started to appear on the political agenda in 1977 when it was mentioned in a national policy document (van der Sar and Baggen, 2005). However, the intense debate arose in the early 90's. Since 1994 two main road pricing proposals were discussed, "Rekeningrijden" and "Kilometerheffing", although neither was implemented. Rekeningrijden was a proposal to charge road users during peak hours on ring roads surrounding the four big Dutch cities (Den Haag, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Amsterdam) and was discussed between 1994 and 2001. Kilometerheffing was proposed to replace both (at least: part of) the fixed taxes on new cars and the annual taxes with a per kilometre charge dependent on vehicle type (based on environmental impacts), time and place. This proposal was discussed between 2001 and 2010 and the charge would have applied to the country's entire road network. This long policy process (1994 – 2010) was not only marked by intense (sometimes moderate) levels of conflict but also with some instances of consensus among major policy actors. Seidel et al. (2004) argued that the opposition of some policy actors in this policy process played an important role in the failure of the introduction of road pricing policies in the Netherlands.

To achieve our research aims, this study used the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, as a theoretical lens. The ACF aims to understand policy stability (e.g. non-implementation of road pricing policy) and change (e.g. implementation of road pricing policy) by analysing conflicts and consensus among multiple policy actors in the policy process over a period of a decade or longer (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). Within the field of policy research there are a few alternatives to the ACF which aim to understand policy processes (e.g. the institutional analysis and development framework (IAD) or punctuated equilibrium theory) (see Sabatier and Weible, 2014). An overview of studies of policy research shows that all these theories or frameworks share a similar scope, similar concepts and mechanisms as the ACF (Schlager, 2007). This study does not aim to systematically compare all these alternative theories. The ACF was chosen for this study for the following reasons: Firstly, the ACF incorporates the most components of policy processes explained by the other theories (Schlager, 2007). Comparing all these theories, Schlager (2007, p. 317) concluded that "the family resemblance among the policy process theories and comparative policy models has become more pronounced, to the point where they probably belong under a single roof, and that roof is the currently entitled advocacy coalition framework.". Secondly, several scholars suggest that the ACF (as well as IAD) is the most elaborate and/or useful theoretical lens to understand policy processes (e.g. Burton, 2006; Schlager, 2007; Sobeck, 2003). Finally, the ACF is considered particularly suitable for understanding policy processes in policy areas which are "characterized by substantial political conflict and high technological complexity" (Nohrstedt, 2005, p. 2). This makes the ACF particularly attractive (compared with other theories) for this study since Dutch road pricing policy process has been marked by "political conflicts" and road pricing policies involve "complex technological issues".

In Section 2 we outline the ACF and, based on its structure, pose our research questions. Section 3 links the Dutch road pricing policy and its policy process with the main concepts (and mechanisms) suggested by the ACF. Section 4 presents the methodological aspects of the study. Section 5 presents our results. Finally, Section 6 finishes with our conclusions.

2. The advocacy coalition framework and research questions

We firstly elaborate on how the ACF conceptualizes policy actors, their interactions and the requirements for policy change (and stability), and will then pose our research questions accordingly. The ACF assumes that a policy making process occurs in a "*policy subsystem*" which consists of various policy actors who are actively concerned with an issue (e.g. agriculture, road pricing) and regularly seek to influence public policy in that domain" (Sabatier, 1998, p. 99). Policy actors with shared beliefs are grouped into one or more advocacy coalitions. Policy actors within an advocacy coalition coordinate their strategy and policy activity to translate their beliefs into policies in practice (Sabatier, 2014).

The ACF conceptualizes the belief system of policy actors into a three-layer hierarchical structure, classified from broadest to narrowest as: *deep core beliefs*, *policy core beliefs* and *secondary beliefs*. The broader the belief layer, the more resistant it is to change. *Deep core beliefs* are the fundamental values of policy actors such as the traditional left/right cleavage and the relative priority of the welfare of different social groups. This broadest layer shapes the beliefs of policy actors in all policy subsystems. *Policy core beliefs* and *secondary beliefs* involve a specific policy and similarities in these beliefs lead to the formation of advocacy coalitions in a policy subsystem. *Policy core beliefs*, the second layer, are the attitudes of policy actors towards the main policy components in a specific policy subsystem. For instance, the general idea of charging road users for the use of the road network and the seriousness of congestion and the environmental problems arising from road transport can be considered as policy core beliefs in the road pricing policy subsystem. Finally the ACF calls the lowest layer of the belief system *secondary beliefs*. They involve practical matters, rather than beliefs, related to the design and implementation of policy such as budgetary allocations, administrative rules or information about the effectiveness of the policy implementation (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). We therefore refer to this layer as the *secondary aspects* of the policy in our study.

"Within a subsystem, an advocacy coalition is said to be "dominant" when the beliefs it advocates have been translated into real policies" whereas others are considered as "minority" coalitions (Moyson, 2014). "Most policy subsystems have one dominant coalition and one or more minority coalitions"⁴ (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p. 204; Sabatier and Weible, 2014). The distribution of political resources among coalitions in a given subsystem is indicative of the dominance of advocacy coalitions in this subsystem. Political resources are sources of political power (e.g. legal decision making authority, financial resources, public opinion), which can be employed by policy actors to achieve their policy objectives (Sewell, 2005). "The greater a coalition's relative power, the more likely that it will dominate the subsystem and ensure that policy outcomes are consistent with its belief system and policy objectives." (Sewell, 2005, p. 75). Some political resources are more important to coalitions than others in gaining influence in the policy process (Sabatier and Weible, 2014; Sewell, 2005; Nohrstedt, 2011). So far, no study has hierarchically arranged all political resources, but it is agreed that the legal decision making authority is the most important resource because having a coalition member with this resource provides the coalition with veto power for policy change in the policy process. Thus, an

⁴ We note that some studies observe the existence of two competing advocacy coalitions for a period of time (Sabatier, 2014). For instance, (Leifeld, 2013) shows bipolarization of one dominant advocacy coalition in advance of policy change.

important feature of a dominant coalition is that it has more of its members holding legal decision-making authority than other coalitions (Sabatier and Weible, 2014; Weible, 2007).

The ACF hypothesizes that major policy change, for instance a policy decision to implement a road pricing policy, "is unlikely as long as the same advocacy coalition remains in power." (Sabatier and Weible, 2014, p. 202). According to the ACF, a major policy change has two precursors: a change in the beliefs of a dominant coalition or changes in the distribution of political resources and the available policy venues⁵. Such changes are brought about by external and internal shocks and policy-oriented learning (Sabatier and Weible, 2014; Weible, 2007)⁶. External shocks are events which originate from outside the policy subsystem such as changes in governing coalitions after elections or policy decisions from other subsystems. Such events induce major policy change in the subsystem in two ways: First, they may redistribute political resources or open (or close) decision-making venues. Second, they may change the policy core beliefs of the dominant advocacy coalition. Internal shocks occur within the subsystem (e.g. disasters) and highlight the failures of policies in practice. These events may change the beliefs by confirming the belief system of minority coalitions and increasing doubt about the effectiveness of the policies of the dominant coalition (Sabatier and Weible, 2014). Another pathway to policy change is policy-oriented learning, which is defined as "relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioural intentions that result from experience and/or new information and that are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p. 123). Belief changes through policy-oriented learning are likely to happen gradually over a long period of time and usually only lead to changes in the beliefs about secondary aspects of the policy. In addition, policy-oriented learning may change policy core beliefs if it is associated with an external or internal shock (Nohrstedt and Weible, 2010; Sabatier and Weible, 2014). The ACF hypothesizes that the existence of a professional discussion forum in which major policy actors participate and the availability of scientific and technical information facilitate belief change through policy-oriented learning (Sabatier and Weible, 2014). However, it is important to note that the ACF hypothesizes that external and internal shocks, and policy-oriented learning, "or some combination thereof are necessary, but not sufficient, sources of major policy change" (Sabatier and Weible, 2014), p. 203). In other words, the ACF admits that such events increase the likelihood of major policy change, but do not always result in major policy change. However, intervening steps between major policy change and such external and internal shocks are not well established in the ACF (Weible et al., 2009). The process of policy change actually remain a "black box" in the ACF, as stated by Leifeld (2013, p. 171). Sabatier and Weible (2014, p. 202) state that some "enabling factors" should emerge after these shocks for major policy change to appear in a subsystem: the heightened political attention (and agenda change), the redistribution of political resources and the exploitation of shocks and political resources by members of pro-road pricing coalition to advance their policy objectives (see also Sotirov and Memmler, 2012; Nohrstedt, 2010; Weible et al., 2009).

In addition to these dynamic factors, major policy change is affected by relatively stable system parameters, which are "the basic social, cultural, economic, physical, and institutional structures that embed a policy subsystem" (Sabatier and Weible, 2014, p. 193). These system parameters are usually stable over decades and rarely trigger major policy change as external shocks do, but they affect how the policy subsystem operates and constrain (or enhance) the resources available to policy actors (Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Nohrstedt, 2011; Nohrstedt, 2010).

⁵ Policy venues are decision settings through which policy actors can influence policy making to advance their policy objectives (Nohrstedt 2011). There might be multiple venues available for policy actors in a subsystem, for instance, opportunity to take the process to the court, to attend parliamentary debates or to hold a referendum.

⁶ Another pathway to major policy change is "negotiated agreement" (See Sabatier, 2014). We do not discuss it here since it is not relevant to our analysis.

Based on the framework explained above, we formulate the following questions to gauge policy stability and the link between conflict and consensus among policy actors and policy stability in the Dutch road pricing policy subsystem:

RQ-1: How, and to what extent, did external and internal shocks change the structure of advocacy coalitions (coalition membership, belief system and resources) without, at the same time, inducing major policy change in the Dutch road pricing subsystem?

RQ-2: To what extent did scientific and technical information facilitate policy oriented learning and affect the policy beliefs of policy actors in the Dutch road pricing policy process?

RQ-3: To what extent did a professional discussion forum facilitate policy oriented learning and affect the policy beliefs of policy actors in the Dutch road pricing policy process?

RQ-4: What was the role of relatively stable system parameters in policy stability in the Dutch road pricing subsystem?

3. The ACF and the Dutch road pricing policy process

Before explaining the methodological aspects of our study, we elaborate firstly on the link between the main concepts of the ACF and the Dutch road pricing policy process and how we operationalized these concepts. In Section 3.1 the stable system parameters are described and how they shaped both the policy actors and the political resources available in the subsystem as well their influence on the functioning of the subsystem. Section 3.2 sets out the method used for operationalizing the belief system and coordination patterns of policy actors. Finally, external and internal shocks, the release of scientific/technical information and the establishment of a professional discussion forum were all specific occasions in the Dutch road pricing policy process which also guided us when identifying our research period. These four concepts are therefore discussed concurrently in Section 3.3 together with other important events during the policy process.

3.1 Relatively stable system parameters

The ACF defines three types of stable system parameters: "(I) Basic attributes of the problem area and distribution of natural resources (II) Basic constitutional structure of political system (III) Fundamental sociocultural values and social structure" (Sabatier and Weible, 2014, p.193,194). The first one (I) relates to physical conditions of subsystem. Our analysis excludes this parameter and focuses on the latter two because of the fact that there were no specific physical circumstances in the Netherlands which may affect policy making in road pricing policy subsystem.

System parameter II, the basic constitutional framework and political system/culture of a country, determines the policy actors, political resources, available decision-making venues, the degree of consensus required for major policy change in the policy subsystem and how the policy subsystem operates, thereby being a critical factor in determining dominant advocacy coalition and major policy change (Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Sewell, 2005). The subject of this study, the Netherlands, has a multi-party parliamentary system and the most evident feature of the political system is coalition governments including at least two or three political parties originating from different social and/or religious roots. The foundation of a new government requires many compromises by political parties in different policy areas which, by means of a coalition agreement, become officially binding for the involved political parties and ministers. The Dutch political system is characterized by a high degree of corporatism and consensus, involving negotiations between government and interest groups for policy decisions (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). Consensual systems are known for their low capacity for innovation (Fischer, 2014). The Netherlands, where the "policy making process moves slowly", is not an exception and this

feature of the policy making system generally "reduces the space for radical departures from existing policies" in all policy domains (Andeweg and Irwin 2009, p. 223, 224).

The Netherlands has a highly centralized political system and the introduction of road pricing policies requires the approval of related legislation by the national parliament. Local governments have autonomy in only a limited number of issues, depending on the authorization of the central government (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). In the road pricing policy subsystem local governments have no autonomy and are not authorized to introduce road pricing policy in their area of jurisdiction (Smaal, 2012). Furthermore, the referendum, a critical policy venue in some democracies (e.g. Sweden, the UK), is not common practice in Dutch policy making (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009). A consultative referendum law was only recently adopted, in April 2014 (Zandstra 2014).

Five main groups of policy actors exist in the Dutch policy making system in general: ministers representing the government, political parties in the government, political parties in the opposition, local governments and interest groups. Section 4.2 presents the policy actors from these groups which operate in the Dutch road pricing policy subsystem and the selection procedure for these subsystem actors. All political parties, ministers and local government possess a formal decision making authority, but to a varying extent. In this study, we distinguish two levels of decision making authority. The primary level, referred to as "veto power" (VP) from now on, ascribes such power to a policy actor that his/her disagreement or concerns regarding policy content can block or delay the policy process even when all other policy actors support the policy. In this study, ministries and the political parties forming the coalition government are considered to have veto power as road pricing policy proposals must be enacted by central government and the opposition or disagreement of one coalition party or minister regarding the policy content could block or at least delay the policy process. We consider the opposition parties in parliament and local governments to have secondary level power, referred to as "decision making authority" (D) from now on, because of the fact that policy decisions can still be taken despite their disapproval. In addition, financial resources, information, skilful leadership and public opinion are also regarded as resources available to policy actors (Sabatier and Weible, 2007; Sewell, 2005). As these resources, in particular public opinion, are very difficult to operationalize for each policy actor (Sewell, 2005; Sabatier and Weible, 2007), they are only discussed qualitatively (whenever they are used by policy actors in the policy process) by referring to the literature, news articles and policy documents when presenting our results.

System parameter III that affects policy stability or change in the subsystem is a fundamental sociocultural value in Dutch society. The main sociocultural values of the Dutch society relevant for the road pricing policy subsystem are car dependency and the notion that car use is an indispensable part of life and individual freedom, which has gradually developed with increasing car ownership levels since the 1960's and is today deeply rooted in Dutch society (Smaal, 2012). Thus, road pricing policies which aim to intervene in the on-going relationship between people and cars by restricting car use or at least changing car use patterns have a high potential to come under the spotlight in the public sphere. In this study this generates two sources of influence on the road pricing policy subsystem and policy process. Firstly, this makes road pricing policies a very sensitive issue for political actors who have electoral concerns. This is because the cost of pricing implementation (road charge) is much more visible to car users (voters) than the benefits of the policy (e.g. reduced congestion) (Schneider and Weck-Hannemann, 2005). Political actors might therefore hesitate to promote such policies (with visible costs) which receive so much public attention. In addition, public opinion becomes an important political resource for all policy actors especially when they want to change the course of the policy process because public attention, in other words the voter's attention, is easily attracted to policy process.

3.2 The identification of advocacy coalitions: belief system and coordination patterns of policy actors

There are two main features of an advocacy coalition: "shared beliefs" and "coordinated activities" of coalition members (Sabatier and Weible, 2014). How actors' belief systems were operationalized and policy actors' coordination patterns were identified is explained below.

Members of advocacy coalitions are identified based on the similarity of their policy core beliefs. Policy core beliefs consist of 11 components such as "the priority of different policy-related values, whose welfare counts, relative authority of governments and markets, the proper roles of the general public, elected officials, civil servants, experts, and the relative seriousness and causes of policy problems in the subsystem as a whole" and policy core policy preferences (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p.195). Policy core policy preferences are specific policy instruments or proposals which "are broad in scope (affecting virtually all members of the subsystem), involve very salient beliefs, and have been the source of long-term conflict" (Sabatier, 1998, p. 117) and "the stickiest glue that binds coalitions together" (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p. 195). Policy core policy preferences were operationalized to identify advocacy coalitions in the Dutch road pricing subsystem, following Leifeld (2013). Two policy proposals, Rekeningrijden and Kilometerheffing, are considered as policy core policy preferences. These proposals became the main source of cleavage among policy actors in the Dutch road pricing policy subsystem throughout the policy process. The policy debate developed mostly around these two proposals such that the other components of policy core beliefs (e.g. charging road users for the use of the road network) occupied a negligible place in the debate⁷. Furthermore, secondary aspects of the policy were used to outline belief compatibility within coalitions. Six *secondary aspects* of the policy were distinguished and are listed below. Around half of the actor statements in our data could be classified under these issues, the other half directly referred to Kilometerheffing or Rekeningrijden with no reference to any *secondary aspects* (see section 4 for details of coding procedure).

Effectiveness: The extent to which Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing may alleviate congestion and environmental problems such as CO₂ emissions, air quality and noise, and the extent to which road pricing lowers car use and improves accessibility by reducing congestion levels.

Household welfare: The extent to which (some) households (e.g. drivers/auto owners, drivers with a particular type of vehicle, non-drivers) are better or worse off after the introduction of Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing.

Price variation by time, place or vehicle type: The idea of price differentiation according to time, place or vehicle type.

Technical adequacy of system: The extent to which the technical system (e.g. toll ports, gps system) can work properly and does not violate the privacy of car users.

Revenue use: The extent to which revenue from the system should be allocated to the transport system (e.g. via earmarking budgets to road infrastructure, public transport, or to compensate drivers by reducing existing road taxes).

Cost of the system: The financial cost of the system including operation, installation and maintenance costs.

Besides belief similarity, the second feature of an advocacy coalition is coordination among its members. "The level of coordination within a coalition varies from "strong" (e.g., developing a common plan and implementing that plan) to "weak" (e.g., monitoring ally activities and responding with complementary strategies)" (Schlager, 2007, p. 307). According to these definitions, in this study, the only strong coordination in the Dutch road pricing subsystem is the

⁷ Only less than 0.05% of all arguments used by policy actors were involved with other components of policy core beliefs (see section 4 for details of coding procedure).

inclusion of Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing in coalition agreements. The contracting political parties involved in the coalition officially agreed to implement road pricing policies within a given government period. "Strong coordination", as defined by the ACF, was therefore established. Two sources of data were employed to gain insight into weak coordination patterns within coalitions. Firstly, the level of cooperation between the political parties when initiating motions⁸ in the Dutch parliament was examined, which included requesting the government to introduce a road pricing policy (Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing), starting the required work (e.g. trial, prepare implementation plan/schedule) for its implementation, or stopping all ongoing preparations serving to that end. The voting behaviour of political parties (voting for or against) on these motions was also examined. Accordingly, we consider that weak coordination exists among political parties which jointly initiate motions and vote for these motions, and also among political parties which votes against these motions. This method reveals the coordination patterns of the political parties only. For other policy actors, we searched news articles in our sample for joint statements of policy actors or actor statements which explicitly endorsed the actions of other policy actors.⁹

3.3 The identification of the analysis period, external and internal shocks, scientific/technical information and professional discussion forum

Although road pricing policy first appeared on the political agenda in 1977 when the idea of pricing was mentioned in a national policy document (van der Sar and Baggen, 2005), our analysis covers 16 years of policy process between 1994 and 2010 because of three reasons. Firstly, before 1994 the policy subsystem was not mature according to the ACF¹⁰. As road pricing policy was a new issue in the transport policy debate policy actors did not require specialization in the policy area to manage the debate and formulate policies. The policy debate was chaotic, with a diverse set of pricing forms and policy objectives put on the agenda by ministries and political parties within a short period of time (Smaal, 2012), implying that policy beliefs were in the process of being formed. The spokesman of one political party (D66) for the road pricing policy reflected the ambiguity of the policy for policy actors in this very early stage of policy process: "an instrument which is yet to be invented" (Smaal, 2012, p. 402). Secondly, the four ACF concepts related to our research questions (*external and internal shocks, scientific/technical information and professional discussion forum*) are all connected to specific policy events occurring in the policy process. We therefore ensured that at least one policy event related to each concept occurred in the selected research period. Finally, the ACF stipulates that the research period is at least 10 years. Table 1 presents the changes in government (elections, the duration of the governments and governing political parties) and major policy events related to road pricing policy during these 16 years. Below we explain the link between these events and four ACF concepts related to our research questions.

⁸ In the Netherlands, members of parliament may introduce a motion requesting the government to take, or refrain from, certain actions. Motions are voted on in parliament and may be adopted or rejected by a majority vote (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009; Laver 1994).

⁹ One alternative method to identify coordination patterns among policy actors could be to survey policy actors to learn about their coordination activities (see Elgin and Weible (2013) for more information about this method).

¹⁰ "Policy subsystem, as the unit of analysis, must be stable over the prolonged period (10-20 years) over which policy change is to be studied. Denying the stability of a subsystem would undermine the possibility to define, and distinguish between, the three layers of relevant policy belief systems" (Fischer et al., 2007, p. 208).

Table 1. Government periods and major policy events between 1994 and 2010

Government periods	Policy events	
	No Date	
<i>Period 1</i> <i>Election:</i> 03 May 1994 <i>Duration:</i> Aug 1994 - Aug 1998 (\approx 4 years) <i>Trans. Min:</i> Jorritsma (VVD) <i>Coalition parties:</i> PvdA/VVD/D66	1 08.11.1994 2 23.08.1996	Following the truck accident and the parliamentary debate about Rekeningrijden, the decision was taken to implement Rekeningrijden after 2000. Rekeningrijden was included in the National transport policy document (Nota Samen Werken aan Bereikbaarheid) as an instrument to mitigate congestion.
<i>Period 2</i> <i>Election:</i> 06 May 1998 <i>Duration:</i> Aug 1998 - Jul 2002 (\approx 4 years) <i>Trans. Min:</i> Netelenbos (PvdA) <i>Coalition parties:</i> PvdA/VVD/D66	3 18.07.1998 4 19.01.1999 5 19.05.2000 6 10.04.2001	Rekeningrijden was included in the coalition government agreement. The car lobby (ANWB) started a public campaign against Rekeningrijden. Rekeningrijden was included in National transport policy document (BOR). Following the Mobimiles report on technological possibilities for Kilometerheffing, Rekeningrijden was removed from the political agenda.
<i>Period 3</i> <i>Election:</i> 15 May 2002 <i>Duration:</i> Jul 2002 - May 2003 (<1 year) <i>Trans. Min:</i> de Boer (LPF) <i>Coalition parties:</i> CDA/LPF/VVD		No progress
<i>Period 4</i> <i>Election:</i> 22 Jan 2003 <i>Duration:</i> May 2003 - Jul 2006 (\approx 3 years) <i>Trans. Min:</i> Peijs (CDA) <i>Coalition parties:</i> CDA/VVD/D66	7 30.04.2005 8 08.09.2005	Major Dutch policy actors (Nouwen Committee, established by the transport ministry) agreed on the implementation of Kilometerheffing. National transport policy document (Nota Mobiliteit) was announced, which delayed implementation of Kilometerheffing.
<i>Period 5</i> <i>Duration:</i> Jul 2006 - Feb 2007 (<1 year) <i>Trans. Min:</i> Peijs (CDA) <i>Coalition parties:</i> CDA/VVD		No progress
<i>Period 6</i> <i>Election:</i> 22 Nov 2006 <i>Duration:</i> Feb 2007 - Oct 2010 (\approx 4 years) <i>Trans. Min:</i> Eurlings (CDA) <i>Coalition parties:</i> CDA/PvdA/CU	9 05.02.2007 10 13.11.2009 11 18.03.2010	Kilometerheffing was included in the coalition government agreement. Kilometerheffing, as a final proposal, was sent to parliament. Kilometerheffing was removed from the political agenda.

CDA: Christian Democratic Appeal

CU: Christian Union

PvdA: Labour Party

VVD: Liberal Party

LPF: Pim Fortuyn's Party

The ACF proposes that *external shocks* include changes in governing coalitions, changes in socio economic conditions, public opinion and policy decisions from other subsystems. In the road pricing subsystem in the Netherlands, the only events which can be regarded as external shocks

were changes in governing coalitions. Table 1 shows that there were 6 different governments in the 16 years. However, as the government periods 3 and 5 were less than 1 year long and no progress was made in road pricing policy in these brief periods we consider only government periods 1, 2, 4 and 6 as external shocks.

Internal shocks are events such as disasters, which "occur in the policy subsystem and highlight failures in current subsystem practices" (Weible et al., 2009, p. 124). There was only one such event in the Dutch road pricing policy process: a truck accident took place in October 1994 in the Randstad (the most densely populated and commercial region in the Netherlands including the four biggest Dutch cities), causing congestion for the whole day (see policy event 1 in Table 1) (Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005).

Two important policy events allow us to analyse the effect of *scientific/technical information* and *professional discussion forum* on the policy positions of policy actors. The first one, related to *scientific/technical information*, is the release of the Mobimiles report (see policy event 6 in Table 1). The core of the report was that it was organizationally and technically possible to implement a nationwide road charging system (Kilometerheffing). The second one, related to *professional discussion forum*, is the publication of the Nouwen committee's advice (see policy event 7 in Table 1). In this committee major policy actors discussed possibilities for implementing a form of road pricing to deal with mobility problems and came out in support of the implementation of Kilometerheffing (Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005).

4. Data collection and content analysis

This study uses two sources of data: The first one is parliamentary documents (parliamentary motions and their voting results). They were selected from the free-access digital database on the website of the Dutch parliament (<http://www.tweede kamer.nl/>). The second one is news articles published during our research period in five leading Dutch national newspapers: De Telegraaf, Algemeen Dagblad, de Volkskrant, NRC Handelsblad and Trouw. We considered a full range of national newspapers with different policy position regarding road pricing policies and the inclination to cover some actors more than others (see Ardiç et al., 2013). Our data thus includes all relevant positions and policy actors in the subsystem. We conducted content analysis on news articles to trace four variables: *policy actors*, *policy core policy preferences* (Rekeningrijden and Kilometerheffing), *secondary aspects* and eventually *policy position of policy actors* regarding *policy core policy preferences* and *secondary aspects*. In order to answer our research questions these variables need to be observed at multiple time points during the policy process. We sampled news articles during 11 policy events (see Table 1), spanning four government periods. During these major policy events, the policy debate was triggered and in parallel to this, attracted more media attention and statements by policy actors which were reported in newspapers. For each policy event, a period of two weeks, comprising the week prior and following the event, was analysed. Using a search string comprising all the name variations used for road pricing (Rekeningrijden and Kilometerheffing in the Dutch language) 427 news articles were selected from the digital newspaper archive LexisNexis.

Paragraphs of news articles were taken as the unit of analysis. The names of all the policy actors in a paragraph were assigned to *policy actor*. All *secondary aspects* (e.g. technical adequacy) referred to by each *policy actor* in a paragraph were determined. The *policy core policy preference* indicated which of the two policy proposals (Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing) each *secondary aspect* referred to. Each paragraph was evaluated individually, but *policy actor & secondary aspect* pairs present in several paragraphs were recorded only once per news article. *Actor tone* was determined for each *policy actor & secondary aspect pair* in a news article after reading all the paragraphs in the news article which included this *policy actor & secondary aspect pair*. *Actor tone* indicates the position of a *policy actor* on a *secondary aspect* and might be positive, negative, mixed

or neutral. In some cases, *policy actors* stated only their general position for a *policy core policy preference* (Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing proposals) without any reference to a *secondary aspect*. For instance, one *policy actor* stated only that s/he was (not) in favour of the introduction of Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing without any further deliberation. In such cases, *actor tone* was recorded as a position in their *policy core policy preference*. We applied an inter-coder reliability test after completing coding of all the news articles. The results were at a satisfactory level to proceed with data analysis (see Ardic et al., 2013) for details of reliability tests).

4.1 The calculation of policy positions regarding policy core policy preferences and secondary aspects

After the coding process was completed, we calculated three types of policy position for each policy actor per policy event and government period: *policy position* regarding *secondary aspects* (e.g. technical adequacy), *general* and *total policy positions* regarding *policy core policy preferences* (Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing). All *policy position* variables range from 1 (very positive) to -1 (very negative) and were calculated by the method used by Leifeld and Haunss (2010) and Koopmans and Statham (1999).

In this method, for all three types of policy position variables, the number of records whose *actor tone* is negative was subtracted from the number of positive ones for each actor. After that, the remainder was divided by the total number of records for this actor. To calculate *policy position* regarding a specific *secondary aspect* (e.g. technical adequacy), we only consider records of this actor related to this specific *secondary aspect*. For instance, if one actor is reported 5 times as being negative (*actor tone*) regarding the technical adequacy of Kilometerheffing, 3 times positive and 2 times mixed, then the *policy position* of this actor regarding the technical adequacy of Kilometerheffing is -0.2 ((3 - 5) / 10).

To calculate the *general policy position* regarding Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing, we included records in which the *actor tone* indicated the *policy position* regarding Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing without any reference to a specific *secondary aspect* (see section 4.2).

Finally, the *total policy position* regarding Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing takes into account all the records related to all six *secondary aspects*, and also records the *actor tone* in which the *policy position* regarding Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing was made without any reference to a specific *secondary aspect*.

If the value of a *policy position* variable (*policy position* related to *secondary aspects*, *general policy position* or *total policy position*) is equal to 0, this might indicate different positions. Firstly, it is possible that all the statements of an actor had a neutral/mixed tone. The second reason could be that the actor had an equal number of positive and negative statements. Thirdly, it could mean that the actor did not make any statement related to the respective *secondary aspect*, Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing.

4.2 The identification of policy actors in the road pricing policy subsystem

According to the ACF, policy actors in a subsystem are individuals (e.g. experts) or representatives of various organizations (e.g. political parties, interest groups) who have expertise in a given policy area and "regularly seek to influence policy within a policy subsystem" (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, p. 192; Sabatier and Weible, 2014). We therefore identified policy actors who are frequently mentioned over time in the news articles in our sample. We rather arbitrarily assumed that policy actors who appeared in more than three policy events were frequently mentioned policy actors and thus members of the Dutch road pricing policy subsystem. We determined 21 policy actors who met this criterion. In addition to that, five policy actors which appeared in only two policy events were also included in the subsystem actors: PVV (a political party), the local governments of The Hague and Utrecht, Roel Pieper (an expert preparing the technical report, called "Mobimiles", for the implementation of Kilometerheffing) and the Nouwen committee (a discussion platform for road pricing policy). The reason is that

these five policy actors were quite active considering the fact that they were involved with the policy for only a short period of time. PVV was established in 2005 and so only joined the policy debate at that point. Roel Pieper and the Nouwen committee were temporarily involved with the policy in 2001 and 2005 due to their assignments by the transport ministry. The Hague and Utrecht were involved with the policy particularly until 2001 since the implementation of the policy proposal on the agenda at that time, Rekeningrijden, was going to affect their regions. Table 2 presents all the selected policy actors in the Dutch road pricing policy subsystem and the number of statements ascribed to them for each policy event.

Table 2. Policy actors in the road pricing subsystem and the number of statements by policy actors

Policy actors	Policy events											Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
<i>Ministries:</i>												
Finance minister				5	8		2			13	2	30
Prime minister				6	3					2	1	12
Transport minister	30	8	2	65	66	38	15	45	8	178	38	493
<i>Local governments:</i>												
Amsterdam					1	5		2	2		2	12
The Hague					1	5		1				7
Rotterdam					4	5						9
Utrecht					2	8						10
<i>Political parties:</i>												
CDA (Christian Democratic Party)	5			4	3	2	5	8	4	12	26	69
CU (Christian Union)	4			1	1	6			4	4	2	22
D66 (Democrats '66)	11	1		1	5	4		7		1	1	31
GL (GreenLeft)	10					3		4		3	4	24
PvdA (Labour Party)	11			3	8	5	2	7	3	5	6	50
PVV (Party for Freedom)										13	3	16
SP (Socialist Party)	2									23	7	32
VVD (Liberal Party)	9			15	17	7	10	10		30	10	108
<i>Interest groups:</i>												
ANWB	1	1	76	7	11	3	8	2	29	11	149	
FNV					4			4		2		10
Environmental lobbies			2	6	7	3	2			18		38
MKB-Nederland			7			3	1			2		13
RAI and Bovag							3	6	12			21
VNO-NCW		8	3	3	1	2			7	3		27
<i>Others:</i>												
Nouwen Committee							44	16				60
Roel Pieper (expert)							53	5				58

ANWB: The Royal Dutch Touring Club

FNV: Federation Dutch Labour Movement

MKB-Nederland: Dutch Federation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

RAI and Bovag: Manufacturers and Importers of Cars and Trucks, and Employers of Companies related to Mobility

VNO-NCW: The Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers

5. Results

5.1 The advocacy coalitions between 1994 and 2010

The two research questions seek to probe into the extent to which (and how) both external and internal shocks, as well as relatively stable system parameters affect the structure of advocacy coalitions (coalition membership, belief system and resources) and promote policy stability or change in the subsystem. This section therefore firstly depicts the advocacy coalitions after each election (external shock) and the truck accident in 1994 (internal shock, which also coincides with the elections in 1994). Sections 5.2 and 5.3 then aim to answer the two research questions by elaborating on the structure of advocacy coalitions and subsystem affairs after such shocks. Below we present the advocacy coalitions identified based on the belief similarities of policy actors and discuss the coordination patterns within (and across, if any) coalition members.

Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 visualize pro- and anti- road pricing coalitions in separate government periods based on belief similarities (policy core policy preferences and secondary aspects). In these Figures, the x-axes represent policy actors and the y-axes show the policy positions of actors regarding policy core policy preferences and secondary aspects which range from 1 (very positive) to -1 (very negative). The x-axes order policy actors according to the value of their total policy position for Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing (black bar on Figures). The policy actor with the most positive total policy position is placed on the extreme right of the Figures, while the most negative one is on the extreme left. Policy actors whose total policy position for Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing are above 0 are members of pro-Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing coalitions while those whose total policy position are below 0 are members of anti-Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing coalitions. The general policy positions and policy positions regarding six secondary aspects (e.g. effectiveness) are placed alongside the total policy position bars in these Figures. Except in government period 2, the advocacy coalitions (pro- and anti-) in each government period involve either only Rekeningrijden (see Figure 1) or Kilometerheffing (see Figures 4 and 5). In government period 2, advocacy coalitions (pro- and anti-) existed for both Rekeningrijden (see Figure 2) and Kilometerheffing (see Figure 3) since both proposals were discussed together in this government period.

There is plausible evidence that policy actors with shared beliefs, placed in the same advocacy coalition as depicted in Figures 1,2,3,4 and 5, indeed coordinate their policy activities to a large extent in the course of the policy process. Tables 3 and 4 present the coordination patterns of policy actors in government periods 1, 2, 4 and 6. Table 3 shows that strong coordination, which is an agreement on the implementation of road pricing policies in the coalition agreement, was established mostly among pro- road pricing coalition members. However, one should consider that in the Netherlands a government coalition agreement is the result of compromises in all policy fields. It is possible that a political party strategically agreed on the introduction of road pricing policies in this agreement for the sake of gains in other policy fields despite this position contradicting their policy beliefs about road pricing. The evidence regarding changes in policy positions because of short-term political objectives is discussed in section 5.2. Table 3 also shows that weak coordination can be observed among fellow (pro- or anti-) coalition members. Or, to put it precisely, fellow (pro- or anti-) coalition members jointly initiated motions to urge the government to introduce road pricing policies (Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing), or to refrain from their introduction. In addition, they supported motions initiated by their fellow members and voted against those initiated by members of a competing coalition. However, in Table 3 we see that in some instances members of competing coalitions cooperate by initiating joint motions or voting for or against the same motions (e.g. CDA in government period 6 and, both VVD and CDA in government period 2 (see Table 3). This does not indicate that policy actors sometimes

coordinate¹¹ with members of a competing coalition, but that some political parties shifted from one extreme position to another within one government period, thereby joining the opposing advocacy coalition and cooperating with its members. Whether such changes are because of belief change or short-term political objectives are discussed in section 5.2. Interest groups who were members of the same advocacy coalition demonstrated weak coordination by issuing joint press releases and writing joint letters to the minister, as illustrated in Table 4. Finally, we note that SP (in government periods 1, 2 and 4), CDA (in government period 2), CU (in government period 4), D66 (in government period 6) and FNV (in government period 6) belong to neither pro- nor anti-road pricing coalitions in terms of belief similarities (see Figures 1-5). For these policy actors, represented with a yellow colour in Tables 3 and 4, their coalition membership is identified based on their coordination patterns (e.g., CU is considered a member of pro-Kilometerheffing coalition in government period 4).

5.2 External and internal shocks and policy stability/change

Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 show that after external and internal shocks, political resources were redistributed and policy positions changed, as suggested by the ACF. In fact, sometimes policy positions changed to such a large degree that shifts in coalition memberships were observed. As a result of these changes, in some government periods, pro-Rekeningrijden and Kilometerheffing coalitions stood alone (see Figures 1 and 3) or pro-coalitions became relatively more powerful than anti-Rekeningrijden and Kilometerheffing coalitions (at least in terms of having decision making power) (see Figures 2 and 5). However, pro-coalitions could not transfer their belief system to real policies and, therefore, policy stability was preserved throughout the research period in the subsystem. This section examines the internal subsystem affairs in each government period following external and internal shocks to shed light on how the advocacy coalition restructured after such events and how policy stability reigned in the subsystem even after plausible changes in the power balance among advocacy coalitions. Sub sections *government period 2 (1998 - 2002)* and *government period 4 (2003 - 2006)* discuss, among others, whether or how technical information and professional discussion forum facilitated policy learning respectively.

¹¹ Coordination here refers to joint or complementary policy actions of actors to achieve common policy objectives. Members of competing coalitions might interact for some other reasons, for example, functional interdependence or resource interdependence (Weible and Sabatier 2005), but this analysis does not include such interactions.

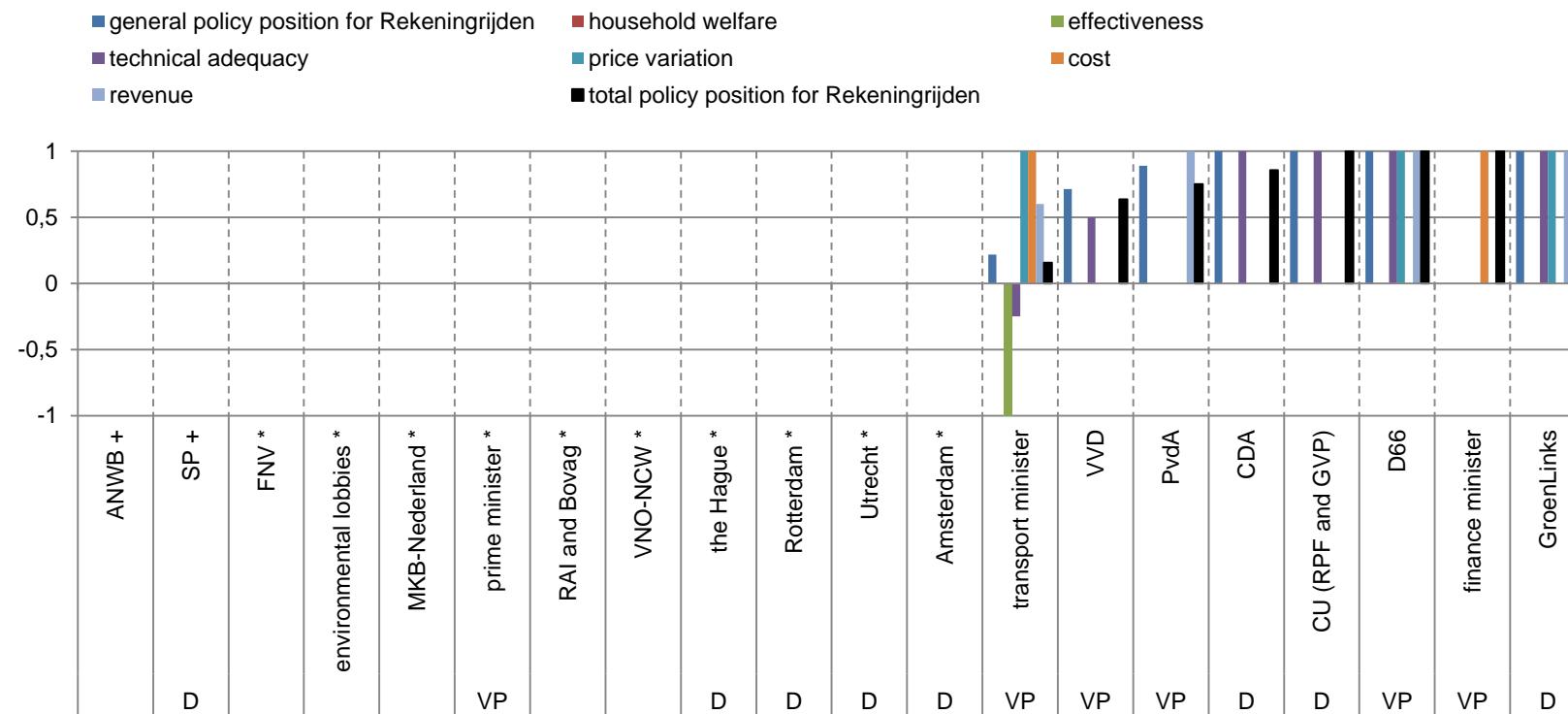


Figure 1. Pro- and anti- Rekeningrijden advocacy coalitions in government period 1 (1994 – 1998)

VP: veto power

D: decision making authority

+ Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor tone of statements are mixed/neutral.

* Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor has no statement.

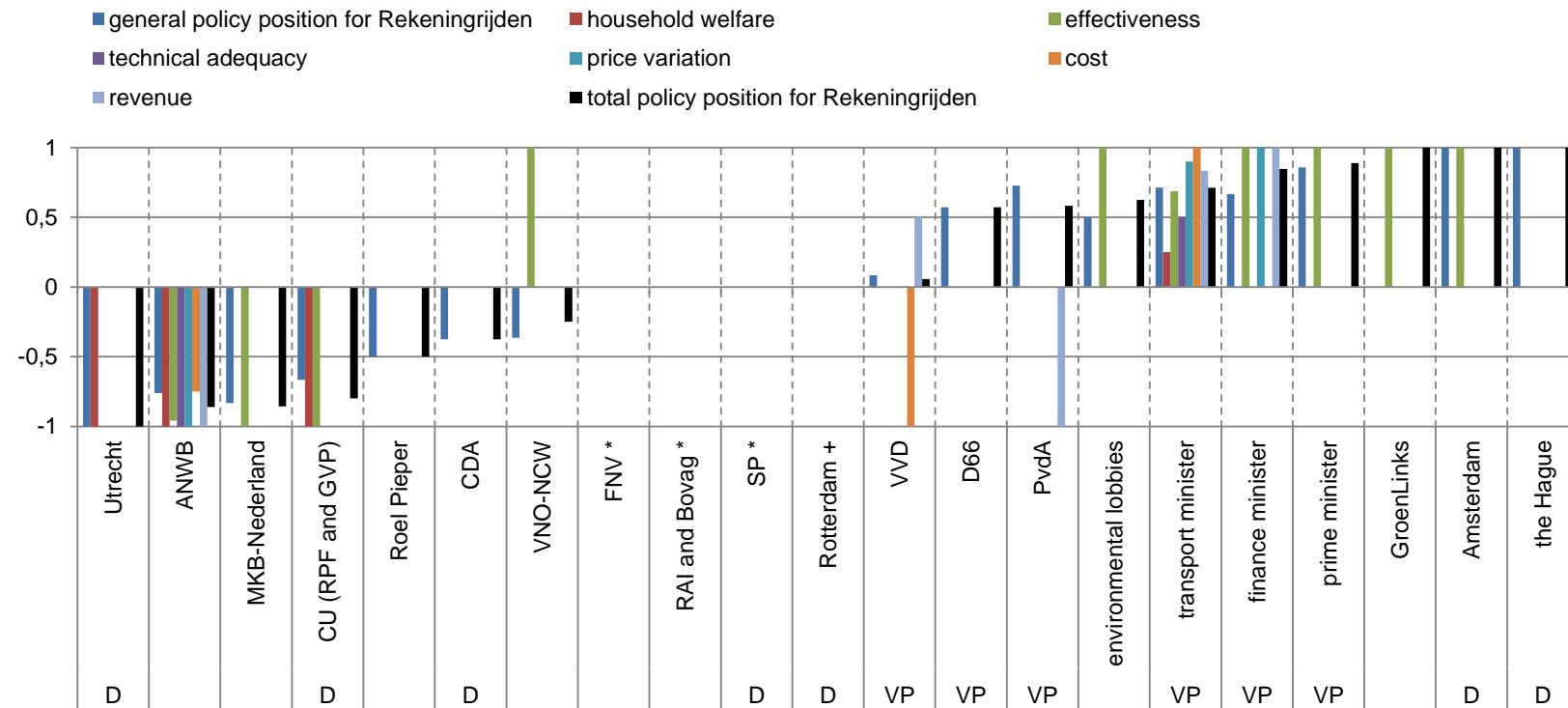


Figure 2. Pro- and anti- Rekeningrijden advocacy coalitions in government period 2 – before the Mobimiles report (1998 – 2002)

VP: veto power

D: decision making authority

+ Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor tone of statements are mixed/neutral.

* Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor has no statement.

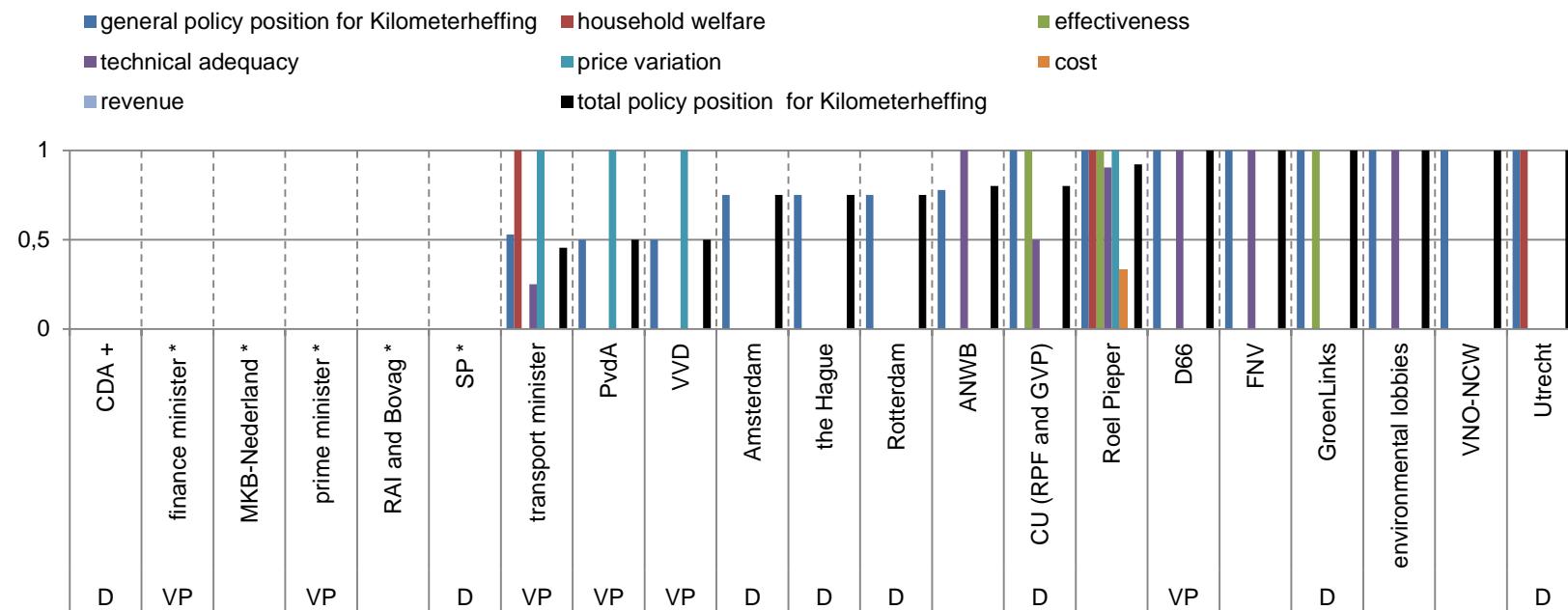


Figure 3. Pro- and anti- Kilometerheffing advocacy coalitions in government period 2 –after the Mobimiles report (1998 – 2002)

VP: veto power

D: decision making authority

+ Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor tone of statements are mixed/neutral.

* Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor has no statement.

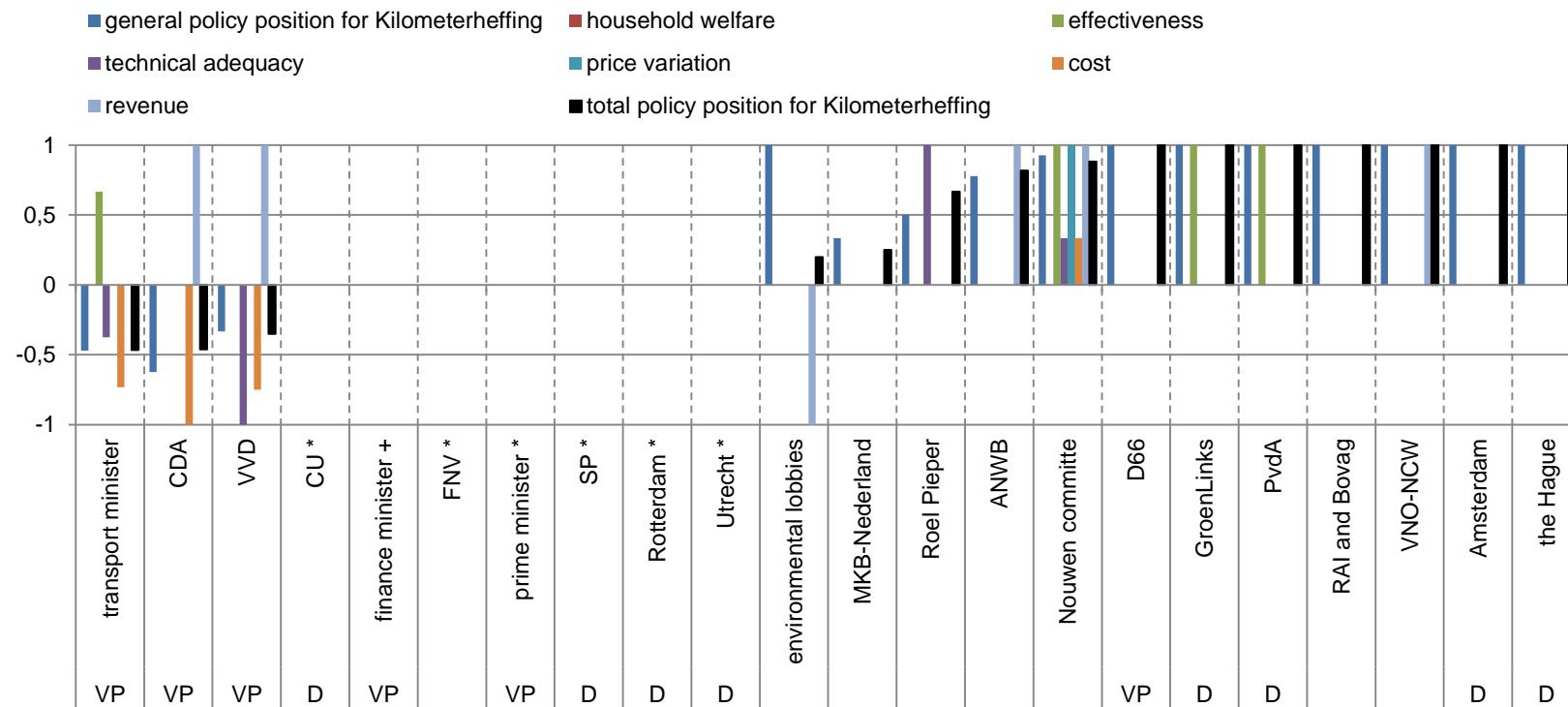


Figure 4. Pro- and anti- Kilometerheffing advocacy coalitions in government period 4 (2003 - 2006)

VP: veto power

D: decision making authority

+ Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor tone of statements are mixed/neutral.

* Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor has no statement.

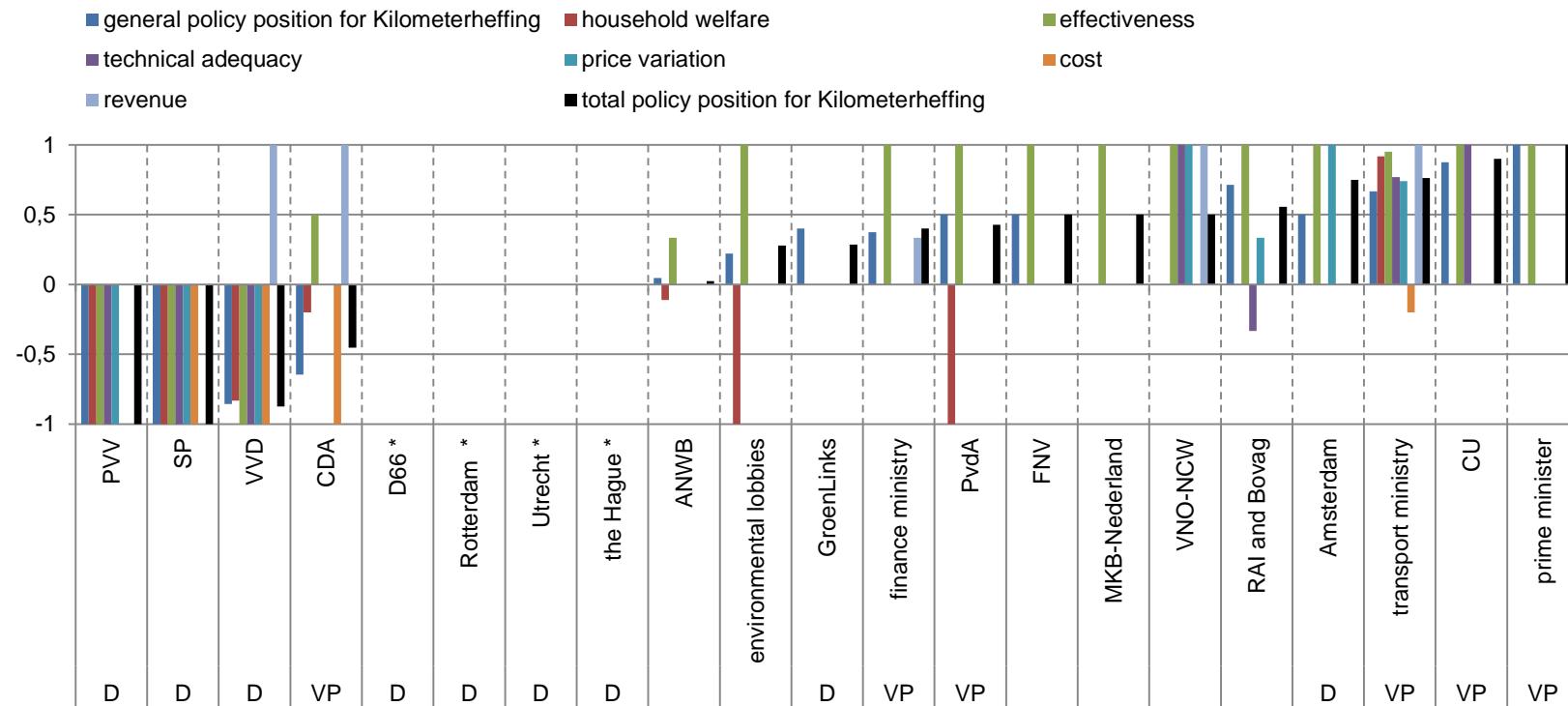


Figure 5. Pro- and anti- Kilometerheffing advocacy coalitions in government period 6 (2007 - 2010)

VP: veto power

D: decision making authority

* Total policy position for Rekeningrijden is 0 since the actor has no statement.

Table 3. Coalition agreements including Rekeningrijden (RR) / Kilometerheffing (KH) and motions for or against RR / KH

Govern. period	Coalition agreement ^{a b}	Motions					
		Date	Number	The initiator(s) ^{a b}	Content ^c	Votes for ^{a b}	Votes against ^{a b}
Period 1		09.11.1994	23900-XII/10	PvdA/VVD/D66/CDA/CU	for RR	PvdA/GL/D66/CU/VVD/CDA	SP
Period 2	PvdA/VVD/D66 (incl. RR)	04.11.1999	26800-XII/31	CU	for KH	GL/VVD/CU	PvdA/D66/SP/CDA
		14.12.2000	27400-XII/50	CU	for KH	PvdA/GL/CU/D66/SP	VVD/CDA
		06.02.2002	27455/49	CDA	against KH	SP/CDA	PvdA/GL/CU/D66/VVD
Period 3		18.02.2004	29280/6	GL/PvdA	for KH	GL/PvdA/D66/CU/SP	VVD/CDA
		18.02.2004	29280/8	PvdA	for KH	GL/PvdA/D66/CU/SP	VVD/CDA
		24.11.2004	29800-XII/14	PvdA/VVD	for KH	GL/PvdA/D66/CU/SP/VVD	CDA
		15.12.2005	29644 nr.54	VVD/CDA	for KH	PvdA/D66/CU/CDA/VVD	GL/SP
Period 4	PvdA/CU/ CDA (incl. KH)	06.12.2007	31200-XII/42	VVD	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		06.12.2007	31200-XII/50	PVV	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		03.07.2008	31305/64	PVV	against KH	PVV/VVD	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA/SP ^d
		26.11.2008	31305/92	PVV/VVD	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		22.04.2009	31305/131	SP/VVD	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		12.11.2009	31305/161	PVV	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		26.11.2009	32123-XII/24	PVV/VVD	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		26.11.2009	32123-XII/30	PVV	against KH	PVV/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA/VVD ^e
		18.03.2010	31305/171	SP	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA
		18.03.2010	31305/172	PVV/VVD	against KH	PVV/VVD/SP	GL/PvdA/CU/D66/CDA

^a Table 3 does not include political parties which are not considered policy actors (SGP, AOV and Unie 55+) in the Dutch road pricing subsystem (see section 4.2).

^b Green coloured political parties are members of pro-Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing coalitions (see Figures 1-5), red coloured political parties are members of anti-Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing coalitions (see Figures 1-5) and yellow coloured political parties are not a member of either coalition in the relevant government period.

^c Motions which focus on secondary aspects (e.g. revenue use) are not included. Motions in favour of the introduction of Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing are presented in green, others in red.

^d SP was a loyal member of the anti-Kilometerheffing coalition during the entire government period 6 (in terms of both policy position and coordination patterns). This motion requests the government not only to abandon Kilometerheffing, but also to use financial resources to reduce fuel tax and expand road infrastructure. It is very likely that SP voted against this motion because it did not agree with the use of financial resources in this way.

^e VVD was a loyal member of the anti-Kilometerheffing coalition during the entire government period 6 (in terms of both policy position and coordination patterns). It is very likely that VVD actually did not vote against this motion, but rather did not bother to vote and its members were absent during the voting session as a similar motion (32123 nr. 30) voted on the same day had already been rejected by a majority vote. Tweede Kamer (2009) reports the voting results for this motion as "present members of SP and PVV voted against this motion and members of others voted for it".

Table 4. Endorsing statement/actions and joint statements

Govern. period	Policy actors ^a	Policy action ^b
Period 2	MKB/ANWB	Endorsing statement against Rekeninrijden ¹
Period 2	CDA/ANWB	Endorsing action against Rekeninrijden ²
Period 2	ANWB/VNO-NCW/Environmental lobby	Joint press release for Kilometerheffing ³
Period 2	ANWB/VNO-NCW/Environmental lobby	Joint letter to minister for Kilometerheffing ⁴
Period 4	ANWB/VNO-NCW/Environmental lobby/ RAI and Bovag/MKB/FNV	Nouwen committee advise for Kilometerheffing ⁵
Period 6	VNO-NCW/MKB Nederland	Joint press release for Kilometerheffing ⁶

^a Green coloured policy actors are members of pro-Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing coalitions (see Figures 1-5), red coloured policy actors are members of anti-Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing coalitions (see Figures 1-5) and yellow coloured policy actors are not a member of either coalition in the relevant government period.

^b Policy actions in favour of Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing are presented in green, others in red.

¹ (see De Jong, 1999)

² (see Paradijs, 1999)

³ (see van der Kaaij, 2001)

⁴ (see Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005)

⁵ (see Trouw 2005a)

⁶ (see De Telegraaf, 2009; VNO-NCW and MKB-Nederland, 2009)

Government period 1 (1994 – 1998)

Figure 1 shows that the pro-Rekeningrijden coalition stood alone in the subsystem in this government period. The analysis indicates that an internal shock (severe congestion problems following a truck accident in October 1994) highlighted the failure of status-quo policies and skilful exploitation of this event by some policy actors affected the policy beliefs of all subsystem actors, as suggested by the ACF (see Sabatier and Weible, 2014).

When the truck accident occurred in October 1994, road pricing policies were not on the political agenda. The work related to the implementation of road pricing policies was suspended in the previous government period, in May 1992, due to lack of political support (Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005). When the new government took office at the end of August 1994, road pricing policies were not part of the coalition agreement of the new government (see Tweede Kamer, 1994b). In October 1994 the transport minister (Jorritsma, VVD) mentioned that the introduction of road pricing policies would only be possible at the turn of the century because of a lack of public support and the technology required (Tweede Kamer, 1994a). In October 1994 the truck accident caused congestion for the whole day on a main arterial road in a densely commercial region of the Netherlands. This event put the spotlight on road pricing policies as well as other possible remedies to solve congestion problems in the subsystem. One of the interest groups (VNO), representing the business sector, brought this traffic disaster to politicians' attention and called on the government to introduce Rekeningrijden to alleviate congestion (Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005). This event and the subsequent lobbying activities created broad support in parliament for road pricing policies. Indeed, the concerns of the business sector regarding congestion problems became the main issue among the transport experts of political parties in parliament (Het Parool, 1994). Subsequently, five political parties jointly initiated a motion to urge the government to introduce Rekeningrijden before 2000. This motion was almost unanimously adopted (see Table 4), reflecting the coalition structure in Figure 1. After that, the transport minister started to work on the policy (see Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005).

However, the dominant pro-Rekeningrijden coalition did not bring about major policy change because of disagreements regarding secondary aspects appeared towards the end of the government period and the forthcoming election which interrupted the policy process. The

transport minister was concerned from the outset about the adequacy of the available technologies (see Tweede Kamer, 1994a). Local governments raised concerns about the effectiveness of the policy (Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005). Some political parties (CDA and CU) and some interest groups (e.g. VNO-NCW) revealed a preference for applying the charge to only one lane on roads (see Tweede Kamer, 1997a; Tweede Kamer, 1997d). Some political parties (CU and GL) started to consider the possibility of introducing Kilometerheffing (see Tweede Kamer, 1997b). Under such circumstances, a Rekeningrijden act was finally presented to parliament in December 1997 (see Tweede Kamer, 1997c), but was not dealt with by parliament due to the forthcoming election (Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005).

Government period 2 (1998 - 2002)

Government period 2 became a transition period in the subsystem: in 2000 the policy agenda changed from Rekeningrijden to Kilometerheffing. Disputes over Rekeningrijden encouraged policy actors (especially the transport minister (Netelenbos, PvdA)) to search for a policy design which accommodated all the different policy positions. Towards the end of this government period the results of research into Kilometerheffing (and the available technologies for its implementation) promoted policy-oriented learning and created overall agreement on Kilometerheffing.

The election in 1998 did not change the distribution of the political resources, in other words, the three coalition partners from government period 1 remained in government. As a consequence, the coalition partners agreed to introduce Rekeningrijden and the policy debate resumed almost from the point where it had halted prior to the election. Disagreements which had already started to emerge at the end of government period 1 (see section 5.1.1) deepened and ultimately led to the emergence of an anti-Rekeningrijden coalition and fragmentation within the pro-Rekeningrijden coalition (see Figure 2). Members of the anti-Rekeningrijden coalition used their political resources effectively to remove Rekeningrijden from the agenda. ANWB (an interest group of car drivers with 4 million members) mobilized public opinion by organizing a public campaign against Rekeningrijden (Trouw, 1999). This opposition from the ANWB was also supported by other interest groups (see Table 4). The ANWB campaign was widely covered by the media and the coverage of the policy in one of newspapers with the highest readership rate in the Netherlands (De Telegraaf) was negative (see Ardic et al., 2014; Ardic et al., 2013). Such furious opposition by the anti-Rekeningrijden coalition, coupled with negative coverage of the policy in the media, affected the policy positions of members of pro-Kilometerheffing coalition (e.g., the VVD) (Hendriks and Tops, 2001).

This circumstance forced the minister to constantly update the Rekeningrijden proposal (and implementation plans) and to search for alternative policy designs in order to reconcile the demands of all the policy actors. In this process, Kilometerheffing was under consideration and the support slowly grew as positive research results were published by different policy actors about its effectiveness, efficiency and technical system (e.g. environmental lobbies, de Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat) (see Raad voor Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2005). Finally, in April 2001 the Mobimiles research, commissioned by the transport ministry, announced that available technologies were adequate to implement Kilometerheffing (see Pieper, 2001). This report was welcomed by almost all policy actors, reflecting the coalition structure in Figure 3. Motions in favour of Kilometerheffing had the support of only some parties in 1999 and 2000 before the release of the Mobimiles report (see Table 3), but in 2002 after the release of the report the motion which requested the government not to commit to Kilometerheffing was rejected by the majority (except by SP and CDA). This suggests that new scientific and technical information affected policy positions regarding policy core policy preferences (Kilometerheffing) by facilitating policy oriented learning, which confirms the hypothesis of the ACF. We, however, deduce that the shift in policy position of the VVD was a strategic decision rather than an enduring change in its

policy beliefs as the party shifted its policy position several times thereafter (see sub sections *government period 4 (2003 - 2006)* and *government period 6 (2007 - 2010)*).

However, the overall agreement on Kilometerheffing did not lead to a policy decision for its introduction because it was already the end of government period and there were still disagreements regarding secondary aspects which needed to be negotiated among policy actors. In parliament, plenty of motions about secondary aspects (e.g. price variation based on time, and place) were only supported by some political parties (e.g. Tweede Kamer, 2002), which signalled the upcoming conflicts on the concrete policy design.

Government period 4 (2003 - 2006)

The election in January 2003 redistributed political resources: in the new government coalition PvdA, a member of pro-road pricing coalitions before 2003, was replaced by CDA, a member of anti-road pricing coalitions before 2003. This meant that Kilometerheffing was not included in the coalition agreement. The anti-Kilometerheffing coalition was much stronger than the pro-Kilometerheffing coalition in spite of the fact that the pro-Kilometerheffing coalition had more members (see Figure 4). Nevertheless, proponents in parliament constantly pushed the government to put Kilometerheffing on the political agenda again. In the parliamentary debate in November 2003, they (PvdA, D66 and GL in particular) verbally urged the government to put road pricing policies at the centre of mobility policy. Reactions of opponents (CDA and VVD) were negative. But the transport minister (Peijs, CDA), on the other hand, had already a rather moderate position and hinted that there might have been a mention of road pricing policies in the transport policy document (Tweede Kamer, 2003b). This was followed by two motions in February 2004 for the introduction of Kilometerheffing, which was supported by all political parties except the CDA and VVD (see Table 3).

Meanwhile, in October 2003 the transport minister established a national platform (Nouwen Committee) with the participation of representatives of all major interest groups and local governments¹², referred to by the ACF as a "professional discussion forum". The platform agreed on the introduction of Kilometerheffing in April 2005 (Platform Anders Betalen voor Mobiliteit, 2005). All members of the platform had already reacted positively to Kilometerheffing following the release of the Mobimiles report (see Figure 3), but within the platform policy actors agreed on a detailed policy design (secondary aspects) including revenue use and price variations (see Platform Anders Betalen voor Mobiliteit, 2005). From the ACF perspective, this indicates policy oriented learning facilitated by the professional discussion forum. However, the transport policy document released in September 2005 did not adopt the recommendation of the platform and postponed the introduction of Kilometerheffing to the next government (see Tweede Kamer, 2005a). This postponement was initially supported by VVD and CDA (Oomkes, 2005; NRC Handelsblad, 2005). In fact, it is argued that the minister was pressured by the VVD to postpone the introduction of Kilometerheffing (van der Kaaij, 2005). A short time later (December 2005) the VVD and CDA initiated a motion to adopt the advice of the national platform and they proposed an amendment to the transport policy document to that end (see Table 3). This shift in policy position within a couple of weeks is not likely to be the result of policy oriented learning, but rather a strategic decision to achieve political objectives due to conflict within both parties about road pricing policies (see Oomkes (2005) for CDA and Tweede Kamer (2003a) for VVD¹³) and heavy pressure from proponent political parties (see Tweede Kamer, 2005c) and members of the platform (see Trouw, 2005b). In fact, both parties shifted their policy position once again in the next government period (see sub section *government period 6 (2007 - 2010)*). This confirms studies

¹² Members of this platform included all interest groups and local governments (except Utrecht) considered to be policy actors in this study (see Table 2) as well as three scientists, a representative of transport ministry and three other local governments.

¹³ The transport spokesman for the VVD, Hofstra had a rather moderate position regarding Kilometerheffing and initiated the joint motion (submitted in November 2004 with PvdA) in favor of Kilometerheffing (see Table 3). However, the party leader, van Aartsen, did not support Kilometerheffing and demanded postponement of the introduction, as proposed in the transport policy document, as mentioned in Tweede kamer (2003a).

of Nohrstedt (2010) and Nohrstedt (2005) which show that strategic decision rather than policy oriented learning can be a source of position change for political parties. It is also noteworthy that two proponents, GL and SP, unexpectedly voted against the motion to adopt the advice of the platform in December 2005 (see Table 3) as they did not agree with the advice of the platform regarding secondary aspects despite supporting Kilometerheffing in general. These parties were against revenue earmarking on road infrastructure and SP was also against price variation according to time and place (see Tweede Kamer, 2005b; Tweede Kamer, 2005c). This confirms the findings of Munro (1993) that "extreme coalition actors might defect to prevent the adoption of "balanced" policies" (Sabatier and Weible, 2014, p. 195).

This was the first time that such a broad consensus on road pricing policy had emerged, not only in terms of policy core policy preferences (Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing) but also in terms of its secondary aspects despite the fact that VVD and CDA were reluctant in their support and GL and SP disagreed on some secondary aspects. However, such a broad consensus was reached in January 2006, almost at the end of a government period. D66 (with veto power) opted out of the government in June 2006 (Smaal, 2012), tipping the power balance in the subsystem in favour of the anti-Kilometerheffing coalition. Under these circumstances, major policy change was not likely.

Government period 6 (2007 - 2010)

The election in November 2006 substantially changed the distribution of political resources. Firstly, a new policy actor was introduced into the subsystem, PVV, which became a member of the anti-Kilometerheffing coalition with the most extreme policy position (see Figure 5). Secondly, the new government consisted of two members of the pro-road pricing coalition from the previous government periods: PvdA and CU. Thus, as one would expect, the coalition agreement included the introduction of Kilometerheffing. The pro-Kilometerheffing coalition was much stronger than the anti-Kilometerheffing coalition in terms of political resources (see Figure 5). However, opponent political parties actively worked to block the policy process by frequently submitting motions aimed to drop Kilometerheffing from the political agenda (see Table 3). In addition, the media attention for the policy peaked towards the end of government periods (the highest level of the whole policy process¹⁴) with overall negative coverage (Ardic et al., 2014). De Telegraaf, a national newspaper with the greatest readership, was particularly negative. Indeed, De Telegraaf conducted an opinion poll about Kilometerheffing on its website and announced its results in January 2010, demonstrating that the majority of people were against Kilometerheffing (De Telegraaf, 2010). This negative media coverage facilitated the activities of the anti-Kilometerheffing coalition (the results of this survey were used by opponents in the parliamentary meeting (see Tweede Kamer, 2010a) whereas it most probably affected proponents in the parliament negatively considering the fact that politicians usually regard the media coverage of their policies as a proxy for public opinion (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010)).

Besides active opposition of opponents, there were disagreements within the pro-Kilometerheffing coalition regarding secondary aspects (see Figure 5). In addition the ANWB, which had the power to mobilize public opinion (as it did in government period 2), was the most peripheral member of the pro-Kilometerheffing coalition and did not provide full support. In fact, the ANWB started to conduct a public opinion survey about Kilometerheffing via its website in January 2010 after the Kilometerheffing act was sent to parliament in November 2009. The ANWB's reluctant support had an adverse effect on other members of the pro-Kilometerheffing coalition in parliament¹⁵. This can be illustrated by the statement of the transport minister

¹⁴ It is measured by comparing the number of news articles about road pricing policies, which was published monthly in the five biggest national newspapers (De Telegraaf, AD, Trouw, de Volkskrant, NRC Handelblad and Trouw) between January 1999 and March 2010. The measurement does not include the time period before January 1999 because of the lack of a digital newspaper archive.

¹⁵ The ANWB announced the outcome of their survey on 31 March 2010. The majority of respondents did not support some secondary aspects of Kilometerheffing such as the technical system and price variation according to time and place despite being in general in favour of

(Eurlings, CDA) when discussing the ANWB survey in parliament: "You need ANWB's support from the beginning to the end" (Tweede Kamer, 2010a, p. 4362). Meanwhile, the government fell in February 2010 and the CDA, a member of the pro-Kilometerheffing coalition, shifted its policy position and announced in March 2010 that it did not support Kilometerheffing because of the fact that the proposal design was too complex (Tweede Kamer, 2010b) and that public support was lacking (Schonewille and Vermeer, 2010). Smaal (2012) states that the survey of ANWB affected policy positions of some political parties. It seems that CDA was at the top of the list. Kilometerheffing was eventually removed from the political agenda.

5.3 The effect of relatively stable system parameters on policy stability

Section 5.2 shows that internal and external shocks disturbed the subsystem and triggered a chain of internal subsystem affairs. This resulted in changes in the power balance in the subsystem in each government period, in some instances in favor of pro-road pricing coalitions. In fact, broad agreement was reached for the introduction of Kilometerheffing on some occasions (at the end of government periods 1, 2 and 4) despite some disagreements on secondary aspects. However, policy stability prevailed in the subsystem during the policy process of 16 years. The review of the whole policy process with some deliberation on stable system parameters indicates that political system/culture, sociocultural values and their interplay affected the structure of advocacy coalitions and impeded major policy change in two different ways.

Firstly, in the Dutch political arena, there are several powerful policy actors with different deep core beliefs (e.g. three political parties with various social and/or religious roots form the government). This diversity in deep core beliefs led to disagreements between these powerful actors (e.g. governing coalition partners) in the road pricing policy subsystem regarding policy core beliefs and secondary aspects. The disagreements were deepened by the fact that road pricing schemes can be designed in numerous different forms by differentiating secondary aspects of the policy. This is because design choices differ widely in terms of effectiveness and the financial impact on different social groups in society¹⁶. Policy actors diverged in terms of their preferences for secondary aspects in the design stages of negotiations even if they initially agreed on Rekeningrijden or Kilometerheffing in the early stages of policy discussions (see section 5.2). The high level of consensus needed for major policy changes in the Dutch policy making, could therefore not be reached.

Secondly, the high level of consensus requires lengthy negotiations in all policy fields in the Netherlands. Negotiations over an extended period of time are required particularly in the road pricing subsystem because of complex design issues (see above). Elections (at least every 4 years) interrupted the negotiations, altered the policy positions and political resources of policy actors, and ruined agreements made in pre-election periods. The period covered by this study was typified by three-party coalitions in government. Political parties frequently revised their policy positions pre-and post-election according to their position in parliament (in or out of the government) and the compromises made in coalition agreements. Such a system sometimes gave little room for political parties to act based on their policy beliefs in one subsystem, but forced them to determine their policy position in the subsystem based on short-term political objectives. Furthermore, basic values of Dutch society fostered these frequent shifts of policy positions (e.g. CDA in government period 6) even further. Road pricing policies easily came under the spotlight in the public sphere (especially in government periods 2 and 6) because road pricing policies, which not only affect car users financially, but also aim to change their driving behaviours, threatened these basic values: car dependency and the notion that views car use as an

the idea of charging for kilometres driven. The ANWB stated that there was not enough public support for such a system and more time was needed for the system to be well received by the public (Haighton, 2010).

¹⁶ The complexities of road pricing design can be illustrated by the fact that in the Dutch road pricing process tens of different design options were scrutinized using cost benefit analyses (see Besseling et al., 2005; Lebouille et al., 2007; Vervoort and Spit, 2005).

indispensable part of life. More importantly, car users (voters) were well organized via their interest group, ANWB, with 4 million members (a quarter of the population). This made road pricing policies a very sensitive issue for political actors because of their electoral concerns.

6. Conclusions

The road pricing policy field is one of the most controversial ones in the Netherlands. A road pricing policy in any form could not be introduced despite being part of the political agenda since 1977. In an attempt to shed light on this long-standing controversy and policy stability, we found that internal and external shocks, and policy-oriented learning affected the subsystem and the power balance (between pro-and anti-road pricing coalitions) in the subsystems, but these changes did not result in major policy change (the introduction of road pricing policies). The analysis indicates that stable system parameters, namely the Dutch political system/culture and complications peculiar to the road pricing subsystem (sociocultural values related to mobility and complex design issues), played a major role in explaining policy stability. The rest of the conclusions below address each factor respectively by elaborating on how they affected the subsystem and promoted policy stability and change in the road pricing subsystem.

Our analysis shows that internal and external shocks disturbed the subsystem and triggered a chain of internal subsystem affairs. Although these shocks did not produce a major policy change (the introduction of road pricing policies), several "enabling factors", which are required for major policy change, emerged after these shocks in our study (Sabatier and Weible, 2014, p. 202): the heightened political attention (and agenda change), the redistribution of political resources and the exploitation of shocks and political resources by members of pro-road pricing coalition to advance their policy objectives. For instance, the internal shock (congestion problems following a truck accident) highlighted the seriousness of the congestion problems and called into question the effectiveness of policies in practice. This affected the policy beliefs of some policy actors. As a result, road pricing policies rose on the political agenda and policy discussions were heated (in government period 1). External shocks, in our case restricted to elections, redistributed political resources (in terms of decision making power). After elections proponents used their political resources in an attempt to advance their policy objective by using multiple policy venues (e.g. coalition agreements, initiating motions, joint letters and press releases) (see Tables 3 and 4). On the other hand, opponents responded to these attempts in similar ways. Among them, a public campaign (against Rekeningrijden) organized by the ANWB and supported by other opponents affected the course of policy process in government period 2. The effect of negative media coverage on the policy process was noteworthy in government periods 2 and 6. This suggests that the magnitude of these shocks or "enabling factors" were not sufficient to produce major policy change. For instance, perhaps congestion problems should have been more serious, namely, prevailed over days, or proponents should have possessed more political resources or better exploited their resources to hand for major policy change to happen.

With respect to the effect of policy oriented learning, we found that the accumulation of scientific/technical information over a few years in government period 2 had a major impact by changing policy positions regarding Kilometerheffing through policy oriented learning, as hypothesized by the ACF. However, this impact cannot be only attributed to scientific/technical information, but also to two other contextual factors. Firstly, disputes over Rekeningrijden urged policy actors to search for alternative policy designs to accommodate the demands of different policy actors. This consensus-seeking behaviour encouraged research activities and accelerated learning from new information. Secondly, the transport minister acted as "policy broker" by initiating research activities and negotiating with all sides, thus facilitating the learning process. Furthermore, the existence of a "professional discussion forum" provided overall agreement among policy actors who participated in this forum in government period 4, as hypothesized by

the ACF. In addition, our analysis suggests that changes in policy position did not always arise from enduring changes in policy beliefs through policy-oriented learning as suggested by the ACF. The policy position of some political parties frequently shifted (even within one governing period) because of strategic decisions to achieve short-term political objectives (e.g. party cohesion) (see section 5.2).

Finally, we found that the Dutch political system/culture and complexities peculiar to the road pricing subsystem (sociocultural values related to mobility and complex design issues) became an impediment for major policy change in the subsystem. Generally "radical departures from existing policies" are not often witnessed in any policy subsystems in the Netherlands (Andeweg and Irwin, 2009, p. 223, 224) because of the requirement for a high level of consensus, fragmentation in Dutch politics (and society), and cumbersome negotiation processes. We are nevertheless convinced that radical changes are probably more difficult in the road pricing subsystem because of two main complications peculiar to the subsystem. The first one is the complex design process, which fostered fragmentation in the subsystem. The second one is the sociocultural values related to mobility (car dependency and the notion that views car use as an indispensable part of life), making road pricing policies a very sensitive issue for political actors because of their electoral concerns and leading to frequent shifts in the policy position of political parties. We mentioned above that the higher magnitude of these shocks or "enabling factors" might have produced major policy change. In addition to that, we can argue here that changes in stable system parameters (although this is rarely observed) might facilitate major policy change in the Dutch road pricing subsystem. For instance, it is possible that, in the future, road pricing policy will become a popular measure across Europe. This may change the notion in the Netherlands that views car use as an indispensable part of life and individual freedom. This, in turn, may affect attitudes towards road pricing policy in Dutch society and eventually affect the road policy subsystem. A similar process has already been experienced in the Dutch coastal flooding policy subsystem. Major policy changes in the Dutch coastal flooding policy were observed primarily as environmental awareness increased in Dutch society (see Meijerink, 2005).

To sum up, by conducting a subsystem-wide empirical analysis (including all major policy actors) over 16 years of road pricing debate, we have shown that the non-implementation of road pricing policy in the Netherlands cannot only be ascribed to the support (or opposition) of one or a few policy actors or to consensus (or conflict) among a few policy actors at a specific point in time. Non-implementation can be well explained by the features of the Dutch political system/culture and the complexities peculiar to the road pricing subsystem (sociocultural values related to mobility, complex design issues). This result implies that future research related to policy actors and their role in the (non-)implementation of road pricing policy should adapt a subsystem-wide approach over time, as in our analysis. An analysis focusing on only a few actors and a specific point in time might reveal fallacious results.

Our research indicates that all the mechanisms and concepts of ACF are applicable to the Dutch road pricing policy processes. We think the ACF has an interesting and rich explanatory power for the non-implementation of Dutch road pricing policy. Our study has two main implications for the ACF. The first one is related to the main criticism to the ACF is that it underestimates the role of strategic action (Fischer et al., 2007; Nohrstedt, 2010). Our study suggests that strategic action sometimes better explains the position shifts of policy actors than enduring changes in policy beliefs. This might be attributable to the political system of the Netherlands, in which three-party coalitions govern the country and political parties sometimes need to compromise their policy beliefs in all policy subsystems for the coalition agreement. Indeed, in coalition agreements political parties sometimes officially (and publicly) agree on policies which contradict their policy beliefs. Under such conditions it becomes very likely to see frequent shifts in their policy positions especially in pre- and post-election periods. This implies that the role of strategic action might be more relevant in countries governed by coalition governments. The second

implication is related to the concept of "stable system parameters". Most of the ACF studies so far have focused on dynamic system events and the role of stable system parameters has mostly been overlooked (Weible et al., 2009), except for a few studies (e.g. Andersson, 1999; Montefrio, 2014). Our study shows that stable system parameters can be a critical variable to explain policy stability or change. This suggests that these parameters must be properly defined and considered when analysing policy stability and change even if the focus of analysis is dynamic system events. Finally, we recommend that future studies apply the ACF on the policy process of an implemented road pricing case in another country. We believe that an analysis of the policy process of road pricing policies in Sweden with the ACF lens could be interesting since two Swedish road pricing schemes (in Stockholm and Gothenburg) have been implemented so far and Sweden is relatively similar to the Netherlands in terms of stable system parameters (e.g. both consensus democracies). This research might provide additional insights and might be complementary to our findings.

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