

Contesting media frames and policy change

The influence of media frames of immigration policy-related incidents contesting dominant policy frames on changes in Dutch immigration policies

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Abstract

Incidents related to government policies often spur media attention that puts current policies into question. Contesting issue frames in media coverage may eventually lead to policy change. Immigration policies are politically contested and therefore often gain media-attention. In this study we analyse the media coverage of 16 incidents related to the Dutch immigration policies. We are studying under what circumstances the dominant framing in media coverage of sixteen immigration policy-related issues is contesting the framing of policy responses and in what cases contesting media framing has spurred policy change.

Keywords

Media frames, Policy frames, Frame conflict, Agenda setting, Immigration Policies, Frame analysis

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Introduction

Media attention for public policies is often initiated by incidents related to the policy that put the policies itself into question. While media-attention for policies is desirable from a democratic perspective of transparency and accountability, media attention for policy-related issues also tends to put pressure on policy processes as it may contest the current policies. The ‘framing’ of policies in the media often differs from and contests the dominant policy frame. In some cases this contesting media attention leads to policy change while in other cases, policy processes are resilient to media attention. Theories on agenda setting explain policy change as a result of media attention (Cobb & Elder 1971; Baumgartner & Jones 1993; 2005; Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006) We aim to contextualize theories on agenda setting by focussing on issue frames in media coverage and on the policy agenda.

Not all policy fields are equally prone to media attention. Particularly policy fields which are politically contested are sometimes in the media spotlight. One of these policy fields is immigration. Immigration policies are in many Western democracies politically contested. Around such ‘intractable controversies’ (Rein & Schön 1994) often a multiplicity of contesting frames exists. Some stakeholders argue for generous policies while others propagate restrictive immigration laws. They do so based on different interpretations of the issue. Incidents related to immigration policies can be used by such actors as windows of opportunities to initiate debate about the current immigration policies and propagating policy change. Other actors can frame such incidents as proof for the need of sustaining the current policy situation. Media attention of policy-related issues thus often includes various issue-frames.

We have studied media- and policy-framing of sixteen cases related to Dutch immigration policies. Based on a typology of four ‘master-frames’ we have analysed whether the dominant frame in the media-attention is congruent with or different from the dominant frame in current policies. Furthermore, we analysed which cases are characterized by a change in dominant policy frames within a period of a year after the onset of the media-attention. Based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods we addressed the following research question: *Under what conditions do contesting media frames of incidents related to immigration policies influence the framing of the policy agenda?* The aims of this research are twofold. First of all we wish to contribute to literature on media and policy-framing of immigration issues. An evaluation of media frames and policy frames relating to a diversity of sixteen immigration-policy related incidents will provide opportunities to nuance in what cases certain frames occur. Second, we aim to contribute to literature on second level agenda setting in case of contesting media frames and the policy agenda.

In the following paragraphs we first introduce our theoretical framework. After a short introduction to frames as heuristic devices in research, we provide an overview existing literature on framing of immigration in media and policy. Subsequently we turn to literature on frame conflicts and contesting frames and how this may initiate frame reflection and policy change. Based on this theory, we introduce a number of expectations on under what conditions frame contestation between the dominant media frame and policy frames will lead to changes in the framing of the policy agenda. The findings are structured along three sub-questions. First we address the question *Which frames dominate in media coverage and policy responses related to immigration policies?* Second, we ask *How can contesting media and policy frames be understood from the types of incidents that generated media-attention?* Third and finally we address the question *Under what conditions does media-attention characterized by contesting frames lead to policy change?*

Theoretical framework

Media- and policy-frames, frame conflict and agenda setting effects

The concept of framing has become popular in media and communication studies and more recently also in policy science. In covering public issues, policies as well as media inevitably represent the issue from a certain frame. They describe the issue in terms of a specific problem definition, casual rationale and proposed solution (Entman 1993: 52; Schön & Rein 1993: 146). These representations of the issue resonate with broader cultural frames of reference in society. Therefore frames are seldom unique but re-occur in debates about different issues. They do not only represent an issue, but also constitute structuring principles with performativity as they become socially accepted.

Frames and framing can be used as a perspective, a theory -when it comes to frame building or framing effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury 2007; 2009; Vliegenthart & Van Zoonen 2011) - or a heuristic device in research. As we are focusing on ‘frames’ as such we primarily use it as a heuristic concept in our analysis. We analyse media coverage and policy documents in terms of ‘frames’ of a policy issue. Hereby we assume that a limited number of possible frames of immigration issues exist that can be promoted in media-attention and policies addressing the issue. We also assume that in most documents one dominant frame will prevail, even though the issue can be portrayed from different viewpoints and by different actors in one message. As frames resonate with cognitive structures, one cannot approach an issue from multiple frames at once. In most media- and policy documents, one dominant frame can be recognized.

Based on definitions of frames in communication and policy science we conceptualize four elements of which frames consist (cf. Entman, 1993; Schön & Rein 1993; Scholten 2011). First, a problem-definition that gives a certain interpretation of the issue at hand. For example, immigration as a valuable addition to society or as an unwelcome threat. Second, a causal narrative of how to explain why the issue arose. For example, relative deprivation of immigrants in their countries of origin, or attractive welfare regimes in the countries of destination. Third, a frame defines one of multiple target groups. These may entail immigrant groups who are subject of discussion as well as for example officials who are held responsible for immigration policies. Fourth and finally, a strategy for solving the problem. For example, more restrictive or liberate immigration policies. In some frames, sustaining the current policies is proposed.

Frames in media coverage and policy documents are rhetorical structures combining these elements. In some cases, all elements of the frame are addressed, but in other cases, only one or two of the elements are outlined (Dekker, 2015). In order to resonate with socially shared cognitive frames of reference, frames include so-called ‘framing devices’ to communicate the message to the greater audience (Gamson & Lasch 1983: 399-400; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Van Gorp 2006: 83). Metaphors, catchphrases, examples, visual images and statistics are used to communicate the frame.

Whether alternative frames contribute to the policy agenda is a question related to agenda setting theory. Agenda setting theory asserts that media can put issues on the policy agenda (Cobb & Elder, 1971; Baumgartner & Jones 1993; 2005; Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). As such, media can act as bearers of the public sphere and communicate public preferences to policymakers. Most agenda setting studies are macro studies, focusing on how the salience of different policy issues in the media corresponds with prioritization of issues on the policy agenda. More recently, agenda setting studies have focused on contingent factors determining whether issues arrive on the policy agenda. It is stated that an agenda setting effect varies based on the amount of attention, the type of media outlet and the framing of the issue (Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006). Agendizing how to think about an issue rather than what to think about, is what McCombs refers to as ‘second level agenda setting’ (McCombs et al. 1997).

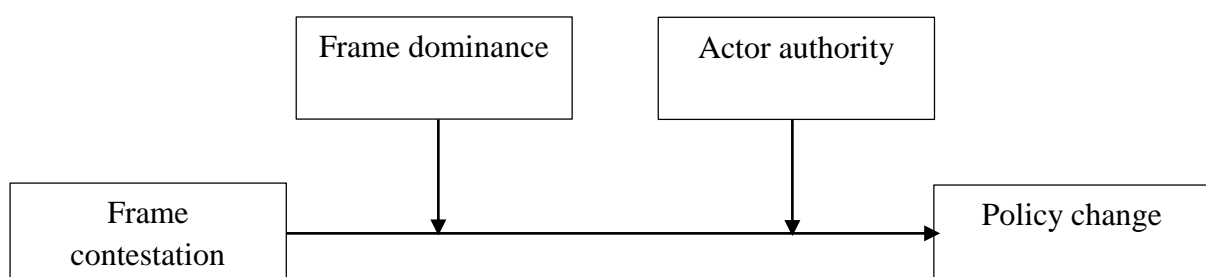
Rein and Schön (1994; 1996) describe how policy controversies often lead to ‘frame conflicts’: struggles over the interpretation of policy issues. They locate these conflicts within the policy among different stakeholders. According to Rein and Schön (1994; 1996), frame conflicts can lead to frame reflection among policymakers. This may lead to frame shifts of the

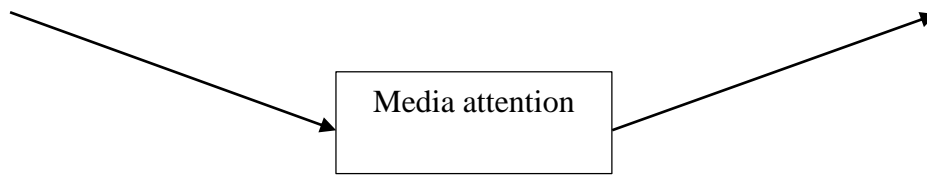
dominant policy frame involving policy change. In this study we look at frame conflicts located in the margins of the policy process: the media coverage of policy-related incidents. In answering the second research question, we evaluate in what types of cases contesting frames are likely to dominate the media attention. We specifically focus on two case-characteristics.

First, we analyse whether the case concerns a personally relatable case of individual immigrants or immigrant groups. We compare this to cases concerning a more abstract policy proposal, specific implementation or evaluation. We expect that such cases will generate less contesting frames as the media discussion will be more dependent on information from government officials and the type of event will evoke less emotional responses which concerns frames that are likely to oppose the policy frame. Second, we analyse whether the occurrence of political controversy related to the case correlates with the occurrence of frame contestation. We expect that cases characterized by political controversy and opposition will provide grounds for contesting frames to prevail in the media coverage of the event.

The third sub-question focuses on the second level of agenda setting: whether antagonist framing of a diversity of issues within a policy field leads some issues to cause policy change while others do not. Recent agenda setting literature teaches us that second level agenda setting is contingent with a number of other variables (Walgrave & Van Aelst 2006). We hypothesize effects of two moderating and two mediating variables. First of all, we expect that the effect on the policy agenda is moderated by the ratio of different frames in the media coverage. When a frame has a major dominance over the other share of frames, we expect a higher likelihood of policy change. Second, we expect that the authority of the actors promoting the dominant frame moderates the relationship between frame contestation and policy change. When the dominant frame is promoted by more authoritative actors in the media – such as independent experts rather than ordinary citizens – we expect that frame contestation is more likely to influence policy change. Lastly, we expect that the amount of media-attention will mediate the relationship between frame contestation and policy change. When the dominant frames in the media and in policy are incongruent, this will lead to more media attention. This, in turn, will put pressure on the existing policies and make policy change more likely.

Figure 1: Conceptual model





Framing immigration

Being a politically contested field in many Western countries, media and policy framing of immigration and immigrants has been a topic of several earlier studies (D’Haenens & De Lange 2001; El Rafaie 2001; Horsti 2003; Van Gorp 2006; Nickels 2007; Vliegthart 2007; Benson & Wood 2015). We make use of these earlier research findings to construct an analytical framework for frame-analysis of immigration issues.

D’Haenens and De Lange (2001) apply a typology of generic news frames in studying framing of four new asylum centres in Dutch local newspapers. These entail an attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). In two cases, the local community was generally positive toward the new asylum centre and in two other cases the local community showed resistance. D’Haenens and De Lange expected that media attention for the former two cases would primarily be framed in terms of human interest or morality and the latter two cases would primarily be framed in economic and conflict-terms. This proved untrue: human interest framing of the issue prevailed in media-attention of all four cases. In contrast, El Rafaie (2001) and Horsti (2003) found that most media-coverage of asylum seekers frames them as a threat of illegal behavior. Horsti (2003) studied Slovenian Roma in Finland. El Rafaie (2001) studied Austrian newspaper articles on asylum seekers. Both identify the use of many metaphors to describe the immigrants such as a ‘flood’ or ‘tsunami’, an ‘invasion’ and the country as a ‘fort’ in need of defence.

Van Gorp (2006) distinguishes six frames in Belgian media coverage on a newly built asylum centre: A ‘not in my backyard’ (NIMBY)-frame, a frame of distrust towards politicians, a frame of the government as provider, a frame of immigrants as intruders, a frame of immigrants as innocent victims and an ‘everything in the garden is lovely’-frame that ignores possible negative implications of immigration. His results show that various frames are used in different phases of media attention. Initial media-attention for the case focused on conflict between politicians and citizens and the responsible policymakers. The NIMBY-, distrust- and intruders-frame are used. The policies legitimizing the built of the asylum centre are

characterized by a provider-frame or 'everything in the garden is lovely'-frame. The initial conflict-framing remains dominant in the subsequent time period. A 'focusing event' initiated a change of dominant framing toward a human interest frame.

Nickels (2007) studied framing of newspaper coverage of asylum seekers from 1993-2000 and in immigration policies in Luxemburg. He encountered four different frames: an administrative frame, a genuineness frame, a human dignity frame and a return home frame. The human dignity frame adheres to the human interest frames of asylum seekers as victims. The administrative frame frames immigration as an administrative issue and the return frame frames all immigration as an undesirable phenomenon. The genuineness frame distinguishes between 'real', political refugees and 'bogus', economic asylum seekers. A small 'deserving' group of asylum seekers is framed in contrast to a larger 'undeserving' group. This frame justifies a restrictive immigration policies to ensure entrance for 'real' refugees. This distinction that is also sometimes made by the use of the terms 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers' was also described by Kaye (2001), Cawley (2005) and Van Gorp (2001; 2002). As Kaye (2001: 68) remarks: *"It has become apparent that the term [asylum seeker, RD] is increasingly used almost as a term of abuse in the media, and that those who are seeking asylum are seen as in effect asking for something to which they are not entitled, whereas the term 'refugee' is still seen as having a legitimate status, and those fleeing from conflict should be offered refuge."*

Vliegenthart studied the framing of immigration and integration-related issues in the media and parliamentary documentation in his dissertation (2007) and in two articles with co-author Roggeband (Vliegenthart & Roggeband 2007; Roggeband & Vliegenthart 2007). He identified five frames during an inductive pre-study that were used in subsequent deductive analyses. Firstly, they identify a multiculturalist frame that defines immigration and diversity as a positive contribution to society. Secondly, they identify an emancipation-frame that problematises the deprived position of immigrants in society. Thirdly, they define a restrictive frame that problematizes the immigration of economically dependent immigrants. Fourthly, they define a victim-drame that mostly applies to migrant women. Fifth and finally, they define a frame of Islam as a threat to Western culture which focuses on the religious beliefs of some groups of immigrants. They found that the multicultural frame and Islam as a threat frame are dominating media-coverage. In parliamentary documentation the prevalence of the different frames is more in proportion.

Benson (2013) studied media coverage of immigration in France and the US from the early seventies to 2006. In both countries the framing of immigration as a threat to public order

and a 'victim'-frame with a focus on individual immigrants dominated the media coverage. In an article with Wood (Benson & Wood 2015) this frame analysis is extended to Norway. They distinguish four problem frames (2015: 807): 'problems for society', 'problems for immigrants', 'problems for authorities', and 'no problem'. The frames 'problems for society' and 'problems for immigrants' entail respectively the 'threat to public order'- and 'victim'-frame. The 'no problem'-frame matches Van Gorp's (2006) 'everything in the garden is lovely'-frame.

Based on this discussion of the literature, we have developed a typology of four 'master-frames' to guide our analysis of media- and policy documents. This analytic framework is issue-specific for immigration issues, but can be applied to various types of cases including individual immigrants, immigrant groups, the built of asylum centres or announced policies. 'Master-frames (Snow & Benford 1992) or 'enduring cultural themes' (Gamson & Modigliani 1989) are frames that can potentially be applied across different issues.

Firstly we distinguish a 'human interest' frame that encompasses frames of target groups as victims and other frames that focus on the moral question of immigration. This frame focuses on personal stories and appeals to human morality. Secondly, we distinguish a 'threat'-frame that employs 'othering' and focuses on negative consequences for broader society. This frame appeals to moral values as well, but takes another approach to immigration. Thirdly, we distinguish a 'governance-frame' that focuses on political and administrative requirements and processes. Fourth and finally we distinguish an economic frame that focuses on economic consequences of immigration and proposed measures. Based on inductive and deductive frame analysis, we analyse traditional and social media coverage for sixteen immigration-policy related issues in the Netherlands and the respective attention for the issues on the policy agendas. The following paragraphs explain in detail what data and methods were selected.

Methodology

Data

This study comparatively analyzes media coverage and the policy agenda related to sixteen immigration-cases in the Netherlands that took place between 2011 and 2015¹. These cases

¹ The cases are: Mauro Manuel, Aleksandr Dolmatov, Abdul Ghafoor Ahmadzai, Dennis Butera, Eritrean asylum seekers, Hunger strike among asylum seekers in detention centre Rotterdam, LHBT asylum seekers from Uganda, Return of asylum seekers to Rwanda and Burundi, the 'refugee church', the asylum centre in Oranje, the asylum centre in the IJsselhallen, Family reunification of asylum children, the complaint-website Eastern European immigrants, amnesty for asylum children, an ministers' official warning about EU-mobility and a new policy for au pairs.

vary in terms of media attention and abstractness of the case, enabling us to review how different media events amount to different framing and policy impact. For each case, we quantitatively mapped the media attention over a period of six months from various media outlets: the four major newspapers, three opinion magazines, television news and current affairs reports of the public television channels and social media including weblogs, microblogs, forums and social network sites. Relevant newspaper and opinion magazine articles from the four largest national newspapers (two quality newspapers and two popular newspapers) and from the three largest national opinion magazines were collected through the LexisNexis database covering full-text publications. TV items in images and sound were collected from the databased of the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision. Queries for relevant TV items were made in a database with subtitles of Dutch public television programmes. Social media data were collected by a Dutch commercial social media monitoring tool 'OBI4Wan'. This tool crawls over 430 000 of the most popular Dutch websites and stored the contents and metadata in a database. This database was searched for relevant content and exported for further analysis. Boolean search strings were developed for queries in the different databases in order to collect relevant media data for each case. Different search strings were developed to ensure sensitivity and specificity of the queries for each type of media. For the sixteen cases in total, we collected 1738 traditional media reports including newspaper articles, opinion magazine articles and TV items. Additionally, we collected 101693 pieces of social media content.

Relevant policy documents and parliamentary documentation was collected via the designated website by the Dutch government 'zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl'. Based on similar Boolean queries, we collected data on developments on the policy agenda from the start of each case until one year after that date. The framing of the issues on the policy agenda was analysed based on answers of Ministers and State Secretaries during parliamentary debates and letters from the Government to parliament.

Methods

The first step in the analysis was conducting frame analysis of all written traditional media content guided by our analytic framework of four master-frames. Based on this step in the analysis we identified for each case a maximum of four frames including a problem definition, causal narrative, definition of a target group and strategy for a solution and different framing devices. Based on an operationalization of these case-specific frames, we annotated each piece

of traditional media content based on the dominant framing of the message. This was done for social media content as well. In cases that generated over 1000 pieces of social media content, a stratified sample of the social media content was annotated. This second step in the analysis enabled us to quantify the prevalence of different frames over time in the media coverage.

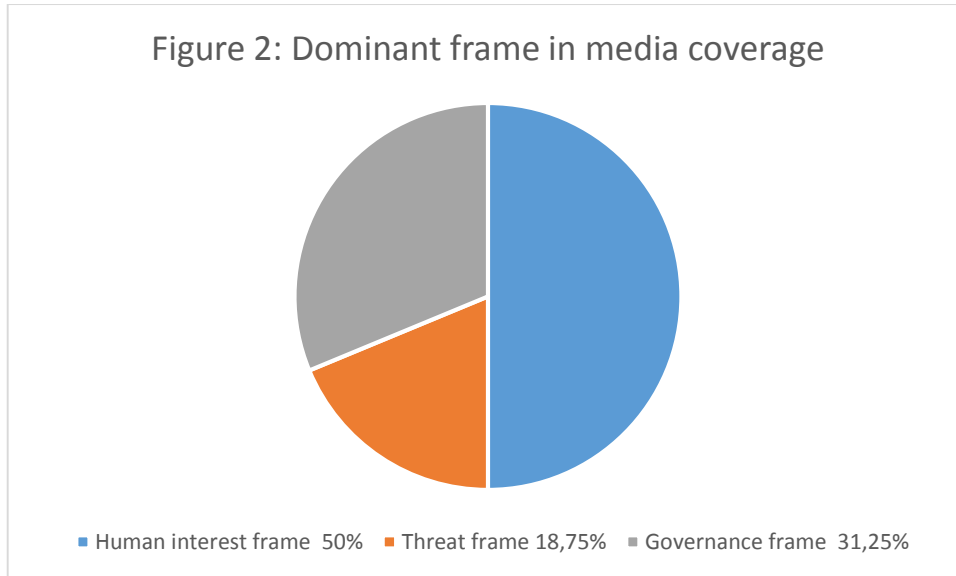
Parliamentary and policy documentation related to the sixteen issues were annotated as well based on its dominant framing in order to establish the dominant framing on the policy agenda and whether this was affected by antagonist media frames. A difficulty in agenda setting research is to establish causality. When agenda correspondence occurs between the media and policy agenda, it often remains unclear whether the media affected the policy agenda or the other way around. In this study we focus on cases in which there was initially incongruence between the dominant framing of the issue in the media and on the policy agenda. Subsequently we analysed whether changes on the policy agenda took place. In these cases it can be logically assumed that policy changes occurred due to the presence of antagonistic frames in society. However, we cannot distinguish whether this was the presence of antagonistic frames in the media, among the general public or political opposition parties.

Results

Which frames dominate in media coverage and policy responses related to immigration policies?

In each of the cases, 2-4 most prevalent frames were identified based on frame analysis of written traditional media coverage. This frame analysis was guided by our typology of four master-frames and the case-specific frames were linked to the four master frames. In eight cases a human interest-frame dominated the *media coverage*, in five cases a governance frame and in three cases a threat-frame. An economic frame was present in media coverage of two cases, but did not dominate in any (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Dominant frame in media coverage



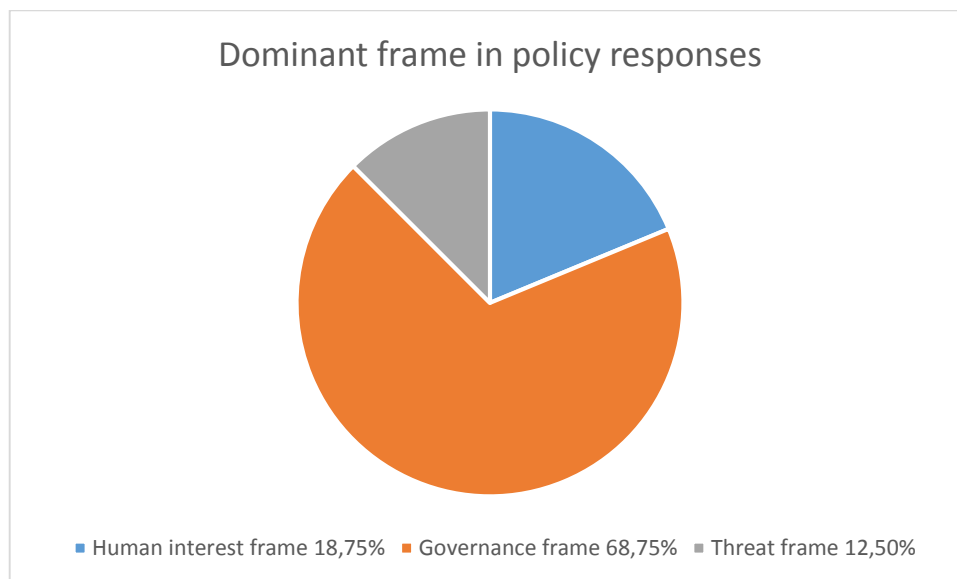
In general, we found that in cases related to individual immigrants or specific immigrant groups, a human interest framing dominated in media reports. These frames are propagated in the media by the lawyers of the refugees, politicians, NGO's, or others supporting the refugees. This frame asserts that these specific cases of immigrants are treated unjustly as a result of restrictive immigration rules. The policies and government officials have no empathy to individual differences that deserve attention in the admission procedures. This frame calls for exclusionary decisions related to specific groups or more generous policies towards immigrants in general.

In cases relating to policy proposals or implementation, often a governance frame was dominant. This frame was either the start of the discussion when the government announced new regulations or it was part of opposition to such plans by citizens and other stakeholders. In these cases, proposals were not objected to based on moral reasons, but they aimed to contest them by proposing alternative managerial reasons. For example, hosting less asylum seekers in a small village or better monitoring of au pair regulations instead of making the regulations more strict. In such cases the frames countering the policy frame, tried to approach the issue from an administrative perspective as well in order to gain more impact. Human interest-frames or threat-frames were often dominant as well in opposing new regulations.

In most *policy responses* related to each case, initially a governance-frame dominated throughout the cases. This was brought forward in policy responses and the media by the responsible minister. This frame sees the current rules and regulations related to immigration as necessary and justified. For example, there is political support for strict immigration procedures and to take care of deserving immigrants, we need to exclude underserving

immigrants. This frame argues that each rule creates cases that do not match the rules, even just by an inch. This however does not mean that the rules should be bend in each case. The responsible minister has the power to make discretionary decisions for exceptional cases and that is sufficient. In other cases it is stated that the government is confronted with a higher influx of refugees and that shelter needs to be organized for them. This burden must be shared by many municipalities. No moral arguments for helping refugees are named, only managerial arguments.

In eleven cases a governance frame was dominant, in three a human interest frame and in two cases a threat-frame (Figure 3). In the latter cases, policy-related incidents were portrayed from a human interest or threat-frame in policies. Moral obligations or threats were named as reasons for policy change. For example, the influx of large numbers of EU workers to the Netherlands, the new regulations for au pairs or the treatment of gays in Uganda. Such frames helped to politically motivate policy changes. On the policy agenda as well, economic frames were not dominant in any case.



How can contesting media and policy frames be understood from the types of incidents that generated media-attention?

In ten of sixteen cases, the dominant frame in media-coverage was not congruent with the dominant frame of related policies of the responsible Minister or State Secretary. We define this as the occurrence of ‘frame contestation’. In the other six cases it was (Table 1). How can

we understand the occurrence of frame contestation between media frames and policy frames from characteristics of the incident covered by the media attention?

First of all we found that cases concerning more abstract policy proposals instead of individual immigrants or immigrant groups do not evoke less frame conflict between the dominant media frame and policy frame. While one would expect that incidents introduced to the media as more abstract proposals would be less controversial, this is not the case. On the contrary: seven of the eight cases concerning policy proposals evoked frame contestation (Table 1). Of the cases about concrete individuals or groups, five out of eight no frame antagonism between the dominant media frame and the framing of the policy response occurred (Table 1).

Table 1: Case characteristics and contesting frames

	No frame contestation	Frame contestation	Total
Individual or group	5	3	8
Policy proposal	1	7	8
Total	6	10	16

Secondly, we looked at the political controversy of the case. In general, it is assumed that cases characterized by (political) conflict adhere to media conventions or news values (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). Therefore we expect that cases which were characterized by political controversy - measured by parliamentary questions and debate – are more likely to generate contesting media frames. Table 2 shows that in ten of twelve cases where political controversy emerged, the dominant media frame was contesting the dominant policy frame. In all four cases where no political controversy was present, no frame contestation existed. This correlation is significant, measured by a Pearson Chi square test. This suggests that without political controversy, media have insufficient input to let a contesting frame dominate the media attention.

Table 2: Political controversy and frame contestation

	No frame contestation	Frame contestation	Total
No political controversy	4	0	4
Political controversy	2	10	12

<i>Total</i>	6	10	16
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All in all, we found that contesting frames prevail in media coverage relate to cases characterized by political controversy. However, the type of incident leading to media attention does not seem to explain frame contestation. Abstract cases are just as likely to have a dominant contesting media frame as concrete cases to which the general public can personally relate.

Under what conditions does media-attention characterized by contesting frames lead to policy change?

In ten of sixteen cases, the dominant frame in media-coverage was not congruent with the dominant frame of related policies of the responsible Minister or State Secretary. In six of these cases policy change took place (Table 3). Of the six cases in which the dominant media frames were not contesting the policy frames, still in one case policy change occurred.

Table 3: Contesting frames and policy change

	No policy change	Policy change	<i>Total</i>
Congruent frames	5	1	6
Contesting frames	4	6	10
<i>Total</i>	9	7	16

The Pearson Chi-square test proved only weakly significant ($P=0,9$). This suggests that antagonism between the dominant media frame and the dominant policy frame alone does not sufficiently explain the occurrence of policy change. We suspect that other factors may play a role. Literature on frame effects suggests four other variables that may influence the relation between contesting frames and policy change: the ratio of the occurrence of the dominant frame in media reports (moderating variable), the authority of the actors promoting the dominant frame (moderating variable) and the amount of media attention (mediating variable). Qualitative analysis of media-reports and policy documentation provides several indications when

Via binary logistic regression analysis we tested for a set of ten cases in which frame controversy was present whether the amount of media attention, the frame dominance and the presence of authoritative actors promoting the contesting media frame influenced the likelihood

of policy change. Results indicate that these variables do not influence policy change in cases where frame contestation was present (Table 4). Non of the variables proved significant.

Table 4: Binary logistic regression analysis of the likelihood of policy change with media attention, frame dominance and actor authority as predicting variables (Method: Enter) (Odds ratios, standard errors between brackets).

	Model 1
Constant	.01 (4.39)
Media attention	1.00 (.01)
Frame dominance (%)	875.33 (5.66)
Authoritative actors (No=ref)	6.28(2.16)
Chi ²	2.97
Nagelkerke R ²	.35
N	16

***P<0.001; **P<0.01; *P<0.05; ~P<0.10

This study is still ongoing. A next step in the analysis will be to conduct qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) as a method for systematically comparing a number of conditions of the sixteen cases in relation to the outcome of policy change (Ragin 1987; Rihoux & Ragin 2009; Schneider & Wagemann 2012).

Conclusions

This paper asks under what conditions contesting media frames of incidents related to immigration policies influence the framing of the policy agenda. We aim to contribute to literature on framing and agenda setting effects of media coverage on the policy agenda. This paper is based on frame analysis of traditional and social media coverage and policy responses concerning sixteen incidents related to the policy field of immigration.

A frame analysis of media frames first lead to a more nuanced insight in dominant framing of immigration-issues in the media. While many studies point at the dominance of frames of immigrants and immigration as victims or a threat, our study indicates that this is only the case with certain types of incidents that led to media attention. When an individual immigrant or specific groups of immigrants receive media attention, for example when they are denied asylum or their life circumstances are under debate, human interest frames prevail in media coverage. When media attention is the result of an incident that is introduced in the media as a more abstract matter, such as a policy proposal or a new event of policy

implementation, this is more likely to be framed in the media primarily as a governance issue, pushing moral arguments to the background. Victim- and threat-framing of immigrants and immigration is still prevalent, but does not dominate the media debate. This is the case concerning media attention for focusing events such as the built of new asylum centres, or the publication of a report on the evaluation of a certain policy measure.

The dominant frames in the media contest the dominant policy framing by government in a majority of the cases. How can we understand this by looking at the case-characteristics? We found that issues that are politically controversial – characterized by parliamentary questions and debates - are more likely to receive media attention. A focus on conflict is one of the most popular news formats (cf. Semetko & Valkenburg 2000). As a result, contested frames are brought in the media and often dominate in media coverage.

Policy change is not fully explained by the occurrence of frame contestation around an issue. We hypothesize that this one factor does not fully account for policy change, but other factors related to contesting media framing such as authoritative actors promoting the contesting frame, the dominance of the contesting frame as a percentage of the total media coverage and the amount of media attention for the issue play a role. Due to the relatively small number of cases, binary logistic regression analysis does not yield any significant results. We believe that in for our type of in depth study of media and policy framing of sixteen incidents, qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) will be a more appropriate method (cf. Ragin 1987; Rihoux & Ragin 2009; Schneider & Wagemann 2012). We are working on these analyses.

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