


# Ministerial influence on the machinery of government: insights on the inside

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## ABSTRACT


The structure and organisation of the machinery of government is key to the ambitions of political coalitions. When portfolio allocation and agencification are a function of political choice, political volatility should also affect internal structure of government administrations. This study tests the effects of political turnover of individual ministers and of the political ideology of coalitions on a dataset of intra-ministerial changes in Dutch ministries between 1980 and 2014. Findings indicate that the turnover of political heads of departments and the shifts in policy preferences between successive coalitions indeed affects the internal structure of ministerial departments. Political variables have a strong impact, particularly changes in the left–right position of the government. A clear pattern for how precisely politics affect the structural design of public organisations remains absent, in spite of the robustness of the findings. Most ministries experience significant effect of executive turnover, sometimes increasing the hazards of intra-organisational transitions and sometimes increasing stability. It turns out that ministers can substantially rearrange their organisations in line with their policy preferences but do not necessarily do so. Sometimes the effect of liberal ideology dominates, sometimes the effect of the policy preferences with respect to a specific domain prevails.

**KEYWORDS** Structure of government; survival; organisational demography

## Introduction

The structure and organisation of the machinery of government is key to the ambitions of political coalitions for a variety of reasons. Not only does the machinery of government form the main tool of elected politicians to exercise control, to formulate and to implement their preferred

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 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2020.1768737>.

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43 policy programmes, but it also signals the agenda and policy priorities of  
44 the incumbent government to the public (Hammond 1986; Mortensen  
45 and Green-Pedersen 2015; Tosun 2018). Moreover, with certain structural  
46 designs incumbent politicians attempt to hardwire their favoured policies  
47 and increase the transaction costs for their future opponents should they  
48 attempt to ‘kill’ their programmes (Lewis 2002; Moe 1995). When a new  
49 coalition gains control over the government machinery after elections,  
50 reorganising the central government lends politicians tools to – not sel-  
51 dom symbolically, however – herald new policies and programmes (Pollitt  
52 and Bouckaert 2011). Finally, the organisation of central government  
53 defines how well incumbent coalitions can steer and coordinate complex  
54 and interdependent policy programmes (Bouckaert *et al.* 2010).

55 The study of the machinery of government has gained traction among  
56 political science and public administration scholars in parliamentary sys-  
57 tems. While the relationship between (conservative or neo-liberal) polit-  
58 ical ideology and the organisation of central government was central to  
59 New Public Management (NPM) studies (Aucoin 1986; Pollitt and  
60 Bouckaert 2011), institutionalist analyses of the ‘machinery of govern-  
61 ment’ emerged in the studies on Westminster parliamentary systems in  
62 particular. These studies point at the importance of political and adminis-  
63 trative drivers, especially the role of the prime minister and bureaucratic  
64 (self-)interests such as bureau-shaping (Davis *et al.* 1999; Pollitt 1984;  
65 White and Dunleavy 2010). In contrast to most Americanist studies, the  
66 Westminster-oriented machinery of government studies are qualitative  
67 case studies on the role of political drivers as regards portfolio redesign.  
68 Though these Westminster studies acknowledge the role of political par-  
69 ties, cabinet ministers or cabinet policy positions, they do not systematic-  
70 ally analyse the influence of political factors on structural changes in  
71 government bureaucracies.

72 Recently, political science scholars have given more systematic and  
73 careful attention to the political dynamics at the intersection of politics  
74 and bureaucracy. Mortensen and Green-Pedersen (2015), taking  
75 Hammond’s (1986) basic premise that the structure of a public bureau-  
76 cracy reflects the agenda of the incumbent coalition, examined issue  
77 attention and parliamentary agenda-setting processes as the most import-  
78 ant drivers of ministerial design. They examined the effects of political  
79 agendas on ministerial reforms in Danish central government. More pre-  
80 cisely, Mortensen and Green-Pedersen examined the creation and termin-  
81 ation of entire ministries as a function of the length of parliamentary  
82 debates on specific issues. They found that substantial changes in political  
83 attention to certain issues indeed influenced the number of ministries.  
84 While their study confirms the relationship between political ideology and  
85

86 ministerial design, their study is limited to the Danish parliamentary sys-  
87 tem where the presence of single-party minority governments allows for  
88 models on direct effects of agenda-setting processes on the number of  
89 ministries. Whereas Mortensen and Green-Pedersen examined portfolio  
90 design as a function of agenda dynamics, Sieberer *et al.* (2019) examined  
91 the politics of portfolio design as a function of coalition formation  
92 dynamics. In a comparative study comprising in nine Western European  
93 parliamentary systems, they estimated the effects of changes in the parti-  
94 san composition of the cabinet, a change of the prime minister, a change  
95 of cabinet policy positions, and the number of parties in cabinet on the  
96 change between competencies among ministries or between the heads of  
97 ministries. The authors found that the design of ministerial portfolios will  
98 most likely change within one year after the partisan composition of the  
99 cabinet has changed or after the appointment of a new prime minister.  
100 Changes in the ideological position of subsequent cabinets or the number  
101 of effective governmental parties had a negative but very weak effect on  
102 portfolio redesign. Both studies of Mortensen and Green-Pedersen (2015)  
103 and Sieberer *et al.* (2019) confirm herewith U.S. theories of structural  
104 choice politics that the structure of central government is a function of  
105 political logics (Lewis 2002; Moe 1995).

106 In our study, we aim to build further on these insights by examining  
107 politics as the driver of changes in the structure and organisation of cen-  
108 tral government. We will examine the effects of political change on the  
109 structure and organisation of ministries. We look at political changes at  
110 two levels: a change in the composition of a coalition and a change in the  
111 party of the minister heading a ministry. In addition, we will also include  
112 portfolio re-designs within ministerial departments. Our argument is that  
113 when the structure and organisation of central government is a function  
114 of political choice, this should also be the case for the internal structure  
115 of government agencies. To this end, we look at its effects on different  
116 levels of structural reform: not only at the ministerial portfolio level, but  
117 also the directorates-general and sub-directorates below.

118 For our first aim, to estimate the effects of ideological preferences at  
119 different levels of executive government on structural change, we have  
120 developed models with minister-level and cabinet-level political preferen-  
121 ces. Our minister-level measure examines the turnover of the political  
122 executive that is heading a ministry to one from a different political party  
123 (with, arguably, a different ideological position). The minister-level vari-  
124 able serves as an adjustment to the existing models by accounting for the  
125 fact that in certain cabinet models, individual ministers enjoy a high  
126 amount of autonomy as regards the management and design of their own  
127 portfolios (Andeweg 2000). Theoretically, our study expands the previous  
128

129 studies by zooming in on the influence of ministers. While our variables  
130 are causally ‘closer’ to the dependent variable than Mortensen and Green-  
131 Pedersen (2015), we do not run the risk of overestimating the single role  
132 of the prime minister as in the Westminster studies, and go a level deeper  
133 than the Sieberer *et al.*’s (2019) study by including the individual minis-  
134 ter level.

135 Next, because we realise that individual ministers do not operate only  
136 guided by the ideological positions of their political party, we take into  
137 account the average position of the coalition. We therefore look at the  
138 effects of the particular ideological policy position (for instance on  
139 expanding military policy) of the incumbent coalition on structural  
140 changes in specific domains (ministry of Defense). Then we zoom out  
141 further, by looking at the differences between rightwing and leftwing coa-  
142 litions in terms of how shifts between left and right affect structural  
143 changes of government.

144 For our second aim, we will focus on the politics of structure *inside*  
145 central government ministries, instead of focusing merely on the structure  
146 and government *of* central government. In prevailing studies, focus has  
147 been on explaining changes at the level of entire ministries: mergers, fis-  
148 sures, or termination of entire ministerial departments and portfolios.  
149 Existing studies on portfolio allocation included the transfer of divisions  
150 between ministries when new portfolios are formed or existing ones  
151 dissolved, but they did not study the effects of political factors on intra-  
152 departmental changes directly. There has been scant attention to the polit-  
153 ics of structural choice that occurs inside public organisations. Ministries  
154 may retain their names and legal status uninterruptedly over longer peri-  
155 ods of time. Studying administrative reorganisation at the ministry level,  
156 will therefore merely signal the persistent need of their functions, i.e.  
157 social welfare, financial regulation, or defense. It will conceal to observers  
158 the changes that take place under the surface of organisations, i.e.  
159 the more subtle shifts within a policy domain. Mortensen and Green-  
160 Pedersen (2015) and Tosun (2018) have shown that the design of  
161 ministries indeed reflects policy changes not only by name changes of  
162 administrative units but also by mergers or splits within ministerial organi-  
163 sations. What is less known, is how ministerial policy preferences influence  
164 levels below the apex of ministerial departments (see also Lichtmannegger  
165 2019). What lies beneath, hence are the structural changes within ministries  
166 that may be very consequential for the policy domain governed. If  
167 Hammond ‘structure equals agenda’ is right, the political ideology of the  
168 governing political parties should affect these structural changes directly.

169 The theoretical refinement, however, comes at an empirical cost. In  
170 order to study the estimated effects of the two levels of the executive, we  
171

172 limit ourselves to the case study of the Netherlands. Portfolio design in  
173 the Netherlands is the resultant of a process of coalition and cabinet for-  
174 mation where multiple parties are involved. Portfolios are allocated on  
175 the basis of a mix of electoral results and bargaining among parties. As  
176 Sieberer *et al.* (2019: 1) already show how ‘the makeup of ministries is  
177 often reformed in the context of coalition formation’. Unlike some of for-  
178 eign counterparts, the Dutch prime minister does not have the (final)  
179 authority to decide on the allocation of the portfolio among parties and  
180 ministers and merely acts as a *primus inter pares* (Andeweg 2000). Given  
181 the combination of the facts that Dutch cabinets are subjected to the  
182 principle of collective decision-making as well as to the principle of non-  
183 interventionism between ministers, which lends them a substantial degree  
184 of autonomy on matters that are exclusively within their own domain of  
185 competence, it is a good case to study the two-level decision-making  
186 structure with regard to portfolio allocation.

187 In sum, we aim to dig deeper on two fronts: First, we look at both the  
188 effects of ideology shifts caused by turnover of political executives heading  
189 each department, and at ideology shifts between coalitions. Second, we  
190 argue that this influence becomes visible not only in portfolio allocation  
191 but through transitions within Ministerial departments at the level of  
192 Directorates-General and the sub-directorates below. To this end, we test  
193 the effects of political turnover and political ideology at the individual  
194 minister level on a dataset of intra-ministerial changes in the Dutch min-  
195 isterial departments that existed between 1980 and 2014. The dataset con-  
196 tains observation on transition events experienced by 2682 ministerial  
197 divisions and sub-divisions – directorate generals and directorates respect-  
198 ively – of all ministries that have existed during the period of study.<sup>1</sup> The  
199 structure of this paper is as follows. First, we will discuss the prevailing  
200 literatures and formulate our hypotheses. Second, we will illustrate from  
201 our dataset the types of intra-ministerial changes that we have studied.  
202 Third, the design of the research, data and method, is explained. The  
203 fourth section presents the findings and the paper ends with a discussion,  
204 followed by a conclusion.  
205

## 206 **Political effects on ministerial design**

207 The design of administrative agencies is a function of political choice. In  
208 multiparty parliamentary systems, general elections are followed by the  
209 formation of a coalition government. The game ends with the design and  
210 allocation of ministerial portfolios among parties and the appointment of  
211 individual office-holders to the resultant ministries. Political parties that  
212 have managed to become part of the government will bargain for the  
213  
214

215 ministerial portfolios that are closest to their most preferred policy issues  
216 (Laver and Shepsle 1994; Druckman and Warwick 2005). Incoming coalitions  
217 bargain over the (re-)allocation of portfolios between coalition partners.  
218 After the distribution of portfolios, the parties' leadership appoint  
219 ministers tasked to implement their party's part in the coalition agree-  
220 ment within their ministries. But portfolios are not carved in stone; they  
221 can be shaped and reshaped. Over a longer time span we can see mergers  
222 and fissures of ministries often accompanied by changes of ministerial  
223 names. Hence, ministries need not remain the same over a longer period;  
224 each new incoming cabinet can reshuffle ministries, rename them and then  
225 reorganise the units within ministries. Important determinants of this pro-  
226 cess are changes regarding political parties' preferences, issue and agenda  
227 dynamics, changing cabinet ideologies, the composition of the cabinet, and  
228 the role of the prime minister (Mortensen and Green-Pedersen 2015;  
229 Sieberer *et al.* 2019; Tosun 2018; White and Dunleavy 2010).

230 However, while these studies underscore the importance of political  
231 factors, they do not systematically address the fact that structural changes  
232 can be the outcome of the preferences of either the party of the individual  
233 office-holder heading a ministry, or the incumbent coalition. Existing  
234 studies conceive of the process of ministerial design as the outcome of a  
235 cabinet formation process and neglect the autonomous space that individ-  
236 ual ministers may have to redesign their ministries in line with the prefer-  
237 ences of their specific party. The leadership of coalition parties delegates  
238 the implementation of the government programme to the cabinet as a  
239 collective actor, but individual ministers heading specific ministries have  
240 ample discretion to fine tune the *internal* design of their ministries in  
241 accordance to their parties' programme. The assignment of ministerial  
242 portfolios to political parties is a first step for cabinet coalitions to re-  
243 shape governmental policies, but in order to substantially alter policies,  
244 ministers may substantially reorganise the lower levels within a ministry  
245 as well. The changes to ministerial portfolios may be accompanied by  
246 changes to directorates-general and/or their subordinate divisions. These  
247 changes can vary from name changes to entire overhauls of directorates-  
248 general and divisions. At these levels, a minister can reorganise the  
249 administration without parliamentary approval. Yet, these pockets of sub-  
250 units contain the core of the policy-making machinery of ministries. It is  
251 at those levels where the policy preferences of cabinet coalitions and indi-  
252 vidual parties can be cast into the form of an agenda through the design  
253 of the departmental structure (Hammond 1986). In more general terms,  
254 the government agreement is an incomplete contract imposed on cabinet  
255 whose details are determined by individual ministers who act as the del-  
256 egatees of their party (Andeweg 2000; Thies 2001).  
257

258 We assume that the Manifesto's data reflect the combined ideological  
 259 preferences of the coalition on a given policy domain central to a minis-  
 260 try. We also take the ideological preference of a political party as the indi-  
 261 cator of the agenda of the individual executive from that particular party,  
 262 when he/she starts leading a Ministerial department. To illustrate, if the  
 263 political party of a new Minister is in favour of expansion of Education  
 264 (as opposed to his/her predecessor who represents a different political  
 265 party ideology), we expect that the number of organisational transitions  
 266 (hence, its hazard rate) within the Department of Education will increase.

267 It is our expectation, then, that political preference changes at both the  
 268 cabinet level and at the level of the office-holder who is appointed to  
 269 head a specific ministry will affect the *internal* design of ministerial  
 270 departments, and not only the redesign of portfolios at the ministry level.  
 271 Hence, we will examine the relationship between political turnover at the  
 272 level of individual ministers and structural changes within ministries (cf.  
 273 Bertelli and Sinclair 2018; Boin *et al.* 2010; Davis *et al.* 1999; Götz *et al.*  
 274 2018; Greasley and Hanretty 2016; James *et al.* 2016; Laegreid *et al.* 2010;  
 275 Lewis 2002; MacCarthaigh 2014, O'Leary 2015; Pollitt 1984; Sieberer *et al.*  
 276 2019). We start with the influence of political choice at the individual  
 277 level and zoom out to look at the effects of the coalition's policy preferen-  
 278 ces and then the influence of the coalition's rightwing versus leftwing sig-  
 279 nature. This leads to the following hypotheses:

280 H1: If there is political turnover of the individual executive heading the  
 281 ministry, whereby the successor represents a different political party than  
 282 the previous minister, the hazard rate of administrative units within that  
 283 ministry will increase.

284 Our second hypothesis concerns the effects a change in cabinet may  
 285 have on the hazard rate of administrative organisations. We hypothesise  
 286 that the domain-specific ideological position of incoming government  
 287 coalitions is likely to be reflected in organisational transitions (i.e. name  
 288 changes, merger, split, abolition or privatisation of individual public  
 289 organisations or their sub-units) within specific Ministries.

291 H2: If the average policy preference of the coalition with respect to a  
 292 particular ministry's policy domain changes from one incumbent  
 293 government to another, the hazard rate of administrative units within that  
 294 particular ministry will increase.

295 In line with Lewis (2002), and Götz *et al.* (2015) we also expect that  
 296 some more generic ideological characteristics of government matter across  
 297 the board for all ministries. Rightwing ideology has a likely effect on  
 298 administrative survival across all Ministries, since it favours free markets,  
 299 economic incentives, economic orthodoxy and law and order (to name a  
 300 few more rightwing aspects) over market regulation, economic planning,

301 protectionism, nationalisation and expansion of state provisions in for  
302 instance welfare and education (at the left side of the political landscape).  
303 The effect is not by definition negative though, it merely implies organisa-  
304 tional change rather than downsizing of government. Both Götz *et al.*  
305 (2015) and Greasley and Hanretty (2016) find that leftwing governments  
306 are less inclined to terminate public organisations than rightwing govern-  
307 ments, unless budgetary pressure increases. We therefore hypothesise that  
308 ideology matters, either rightwing or leftwing, for the organisational haz-  
309 ard rates in all departments.

310 H3: If the preferences of political parties in the coalition change from  
311 rightwing to leftwing or vice versa, the hazard rate of administrative  
312 organisations within ministerial departments will increase.  
313

### 314 **Machinery changes in Dutch central government**

315 We are testing the hypotheses on a dataset of ministerial changes in the  
316 Netherlands between 1980 and 2014. The Netherlands is a parliamentary  
317 democracy. Executive authority rests with the cabinet. The cabinet is  
318 chaired by the prime minister, as a first among equals, and consists of  
319 10–20 ministers and a similar number of junior ministers, appointed by  
320 and usually from the political parties that form a governing coalition after  
321 the parliamentary elections. Most ministers head a ministerial department,  
322 though some ministers do not have their ‘own’ executive organisation  
323 (such as the Minister for Developmental Aid, who resides at the Ministry  
324 of Foreign Affairs). Ministerial portfolios are typically re-allocated and rede-  
325 signed in the formation process of a new coalition after parliamentary elec-  
326 tions. An important feature of the Dutch case for the present study is the  
327 presence of ministerial autonomy, exemplified by the ‘non-intervention’  
328 principle (Andeweg 2000). After cabinet formation and the allocation of  
329 ministerial portfolios over the coalition parties, party leadership appoints  
330 individual ministers to individual ministries. Ministers have discretionary  
331 powers to reorganise their ministries without interference of other minis-  
332 ters, including the prime minister, as long as organisational changes do not  
333 involve transfers of units between ministries. This feature of the Dutch cen-  
334 tral government system allows us to examine the effects of cabinet- and  
335 minister-level changes on the structure and design of ministerial depart-  
336 ments as two interlinked but analytically separate drivers of change.  
337

338 The Dutch case is also interesting because it has a number of charac-  
339 teristics that allow for the study of the effect of political volatility on  
340 administrative structure. According to Sieberer *et al.* (2019), the  
341 Netherlands shows a high number of Ministerial reforms when compared  
342 to eight other European democracies. It regularly has changing coalition  
343



344 governments which makes the effect of changes in composition of govern-  
345 ment both feasible to study and likely to occur. It has a more or less sta-  
346 ble political landscape represented in its various coalitions. It has no  
347 tradition of patronage, or Ministerial cabinets that make administrative  
348 organisation likely as the result of mobility of upper-echelon staff with  
349 every move of their political chief. Finally, its administrative reorganisa-  
350 tion requires only Royal or Ministerial decrees (depending on level of  
351 reorganisation), which disables the effect of veto players and makes the  
352 relation between political preferences and administrative change more  
353 clear and straightforward (Sieberer *et al.* 2019).

354 After national elections, ministerial portfolio reshuffles and major reor-  
355 ganisations of ministerial departments take place when a new government  
356 is installed. Yet, intra-ministerial reorganisations and transitions occur on  
357 a more frequent basis. To illustrate this, we take a closer look at a par-  
358 ticular individual department, such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs.  
359 Major transitions within the ministry from an energy-producing depart-  
360 ment to a regulator of private-sector competition took place after turn-  
361 over of political executives. The centre/rightwing coalition of prime  
362 minister Ruud Lubbers (Lubbers I, 1982–1986) put a conservative-liberal  
363 at the helm of the Economic Affairs Department, later succeeded by a  
364 conservative Christian-Democrat who had a long career as civil servant in  
365 the Ministry of Economics. In those years, organisational units such as  
366 ‘sub-directorate mining and coal’ were replaced by ‘sub-directorate  
367 energy-saving and diversification’ and ‘energy policy and mining’. These  
368 transitions indicated a new policy strategy regarding energy production  
369 and use: moving away from fossil fuels and a production-orientation  
370 towards alternative energy sources, energy efficiency and governance.  
371 Ultimately, the policy shift visible in departmental transitions was formal-  
372 ised in the Electricity Law of 1989, which separated production from con-  
373 sumption (Agterbosch *et al.* 2004), and the Multi-Year Agreements  
374 (*Meerjarenaafspraken*) with industry on Energy efficiency which the  
375 Ministry initiated in 1992 (Court of Audit 2015). This re-orientation is  
376 further illustrated by the next round of administrative changes. A new  
377 Minister from the liberal party D66 entered the scene in 1994 and intro-  
378 duced novel research programmes and policy initiatives on increased  
379 competition in the Dutch energy market (Derde Energie Nota 1995).  
380 Around the turn of the century, again under the reign of a liberal (now  
381 conservative) minister, changes become visible in the names and composi-  
382 tion of DGs and sub-directorates. The Directorate-General (up until  
383 now called ‘DG Energy’) and its sub-directorates all changed from  
384 energy-producing sub-directorates (with illustrative names such as  
385 ‘electricity’, ‘oil and gas’) to market regulating units (now named ‘energy  
386

387 market', 'energy strategy and use', 'energy production'). The policy-makers  
388 clearly shifted from producing to regulating. They pushed the envelope  
389 even further when the DG that governed the energy market merged  
390 with the DG regulating Telecom in 2007. These organisational units had  
391 little else in common than the fact that they were both regulating private  
392 market commodities.

393 Similar shifts are visible in the Ministry of Housing, where the  
394 Directorate-General *Volkshuisvesting* (which means 'Housing' in the sense  
395 of providing houses) turned into the DG *Wonen* (which means 'Living' in  
396 the sense of residing in a house) in 2003, after a conservative-liberal minister  
397 took over from a social democrat (cf. Ekkers and Helderma 2010).  
398 Its sub-directorates meanwhile changed their names related to 'building',  
399 to organisational labels such as 'city and region' and 'information management'.  
400 These examples not only illustrate how political turnover goes  
401 hand in hand with organisational restructuring, but also how liberal agendas  
402 on (welfare) state retrenchment become visible in changes within  
403 Ministries (ibid.).  
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## Research design

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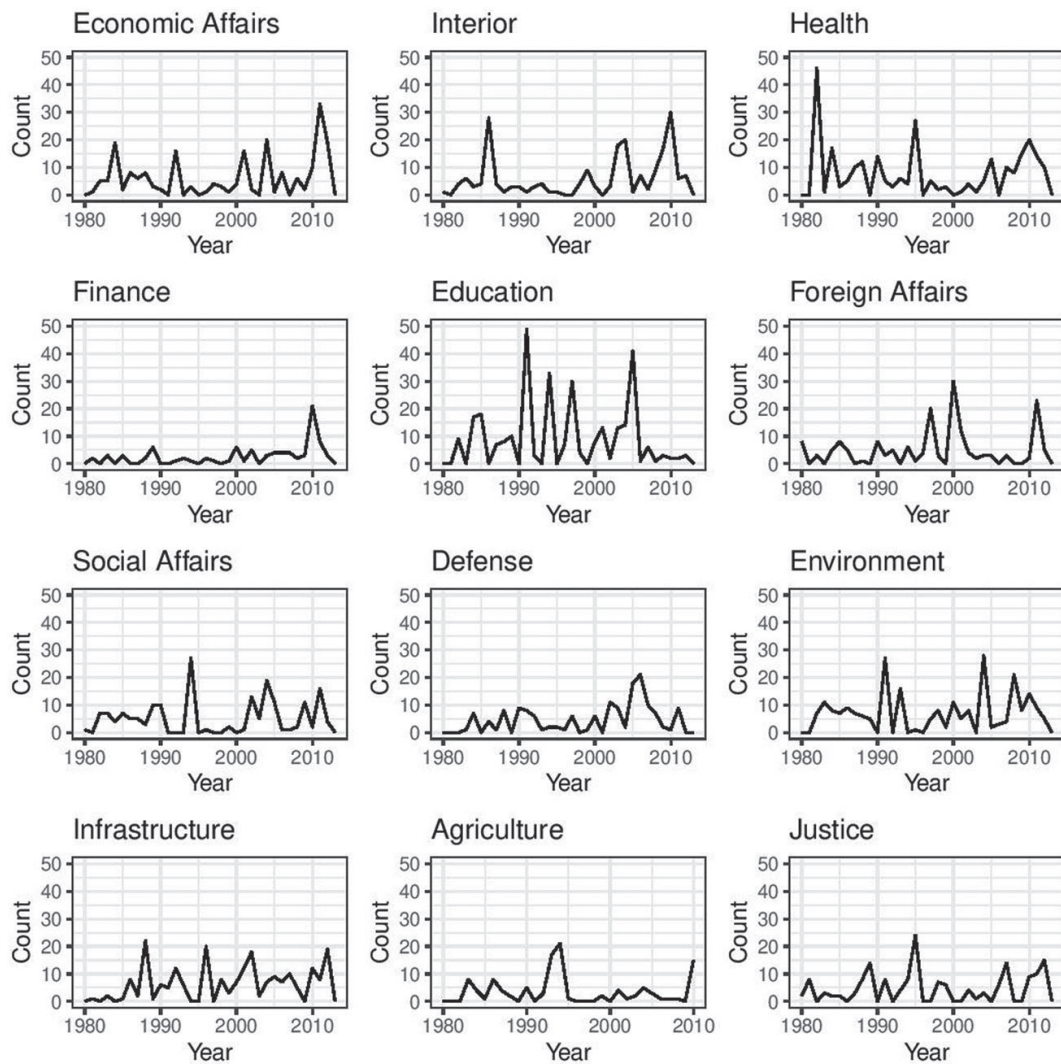
We test the above hypotheses across administrative reorganisations in 12 ministries of the Netherlands from 1980 to 2014. Our dataset, developed as part of the SOG-PRO project, records the year that each organisational entity within a ministry experiences a transition that signals an administrative reorganisation for that entity (see also Bertels and Schulze-Gabrechten 2020). For the 12 ministries (see Table 1), we include all entities at both one and two hierarchical levels below the ministry itself (directorates and sub-directorates). The dataset contains an entry for each entity for every year that it exists, beginning in the year of its creation (or 1980 if it existed prior to the sampled period) and ending in the year that it experiences a transition. Transitions comprise pure eliminations, name changes, hierarchical level transfers, lateral transfers (e.g. the transfer of a sub-directorate from one directorate to another), splits, secessions, mergers, absorptions, and other more complex reorganisations involving several entities transitioning to multiple successors.<sup>2</sup> In our models we pool all these transitions: any transition is considered the end of a unit phase. The main reason for pooling is that we are here primarily interested in observable effects of political change. Due the fact that the Dutch government does not release data on budget or personnel sizes at the level of individual sub-units, we remain agnostic about the weight of each transition. That is, a name change may signal a more substantial policy change than the merger of two or more units.<sup>3</sup> For the same and some other practical reasons, pooling of

430 **Table 1.** Dutch names of ministries and CMP sources.

| 431 | Ministry Names per Ministry Set  | Year                   | Policy Variable <sup>5</sup> |
|-----|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 432 | Economic Affairs   |                        | NA                           |
| 433 | Ministerie van Economische Zaken   | 1980–2010              |                              |
| 434 | Ministerie van Economische Zaken,<br>Landbouw en Innovatie               | 2010–2012              |                              |
| 435 | Ministerie van Economische Zaken<br>Interior                             | 2012–2014              |                              |
| 436 | Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en<br>Koninkrijks Relaties             | 1980–2014              | NA                           |
| 437 | Health   |                        |                              |
| 438 | Ministerie van Volksgezondheid en<br>Milieuhygiëne                       | 1980–1982              | NA                           |
| 439 | Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid<br>en Cultuur                    | 1982–1984              |                              |
| 440 | Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn<br>en Sport                      | 1984–2014              |                              |
| 441 | Finance  |                        |                              |
| 442 | Ministerie van Financiën   | 1980–2014              | NA                           |
| 443 | Education and Culture  |                        | Education expansion          |
| 444 | Ministerie van Onderwijs en Wetenschappen                                | 1980–1994              | index (per506–per507)        |
| 445 | Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en<br>Wetenschappen                    | 1994–2003              | Positive culture             |
| 446 | Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur<br>en Wetenschap                       | 2003–2014              | position (per502)            |
| 447 | Foreign Affairs  |                        | Internationalism             |
| 448 | Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken  | 1980–2014              | index (per107–per109)        |
| 449 | Social Affairs   |                        | Positive welfare             |
| 450 | Ministerie van Sociale Zaken   | 1980–1982              | position (per504–per505)     |
| 451 | Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en<br>Werkgelegenheid                       | 1982–2014              |                              |
| 452 | Defense  |                        | Positive defense             |
| 453 | Ministerie van Defensie  | 1980–2014              | position (per104–per105)     |
| 454 | Environment and Housing  |                        | Positive environment         |
| 455 | Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting en<br>Ruimtelijke Ordening               | 1980–1982              | position (per501)            |
| 456 | Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke<br>Ordening en Milieubeheer | 1982–2010 <sup>6</sup> |                              |
| 457 | Infrastructure   |                        | Positive technology          |
| 458 | Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat                                     | 1980–2010              | and infrastructure           |
| 459 | Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu                                  | 2010–2014              | position (per411)            |
| 460 | Agriculture  |                        | Positive agriculture         |
| 461 | Ministerie van Landbouw en Visserij                                      | 1980–1989              | position (per703)            |
| 462 | Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer<br>en Visserij                     | 1989–2003              |                              |
| 463 | Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuurbeheer en<br>Voedselkwaliteit             | 2003–2010 <sup>7</sup> |                              |
| 464 | Justice  |                        | Positive justice             |
| 465 | Ministerie van Justitie  | 1980–2010              | position (per605)            |
| 466 | Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie                                    | 2010–2014              |                              |

466 transitions has been common practice in virtually every prevailing study of  
 467 agency termination and survival (cf. Kuipers *et al.* 2018). When one or  
 468 more entities emerge from a transition (as from a split, for example), we  
 469 consider these to be newly created entities. As a result of this construction,  
 470 our dependent variable for administrative reorganisation is coded zero for  
 471 every year that an entity exists until the year it experiences a transition,  
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**Figure 1.** Number of units experiencing an end transition by the ministry.

when it is coded one. The year after an entity receives a code of one it drops out of the dataset. **Figure 1** displays the number of entities per year that experience an end transition for each ministry.

We include several independent variables to test the above hypotheses. To test the first hypothesis, we employ a binary political turnover variable that is equal to one for an entity if the political executive heading its parent ministry comes from a different party than the political executive in the previous year. Thus, if the political executive does not change or if the succeeding executive comes from the same party, the variable is coded zero. We obtained this information from the website '[www.parliament.com](http://www.parliament.com)' of the Parliamentary Documentation Centre (PDC, now independent but originally part of Leiden University – currently still partnering with Leiden University, Maastricht University, the Documentation Centre for Political Parties and the Centre for Parliamentary History in the 'Montesquieu Institute'. In order to test H2, we include variables for eight of the 12 ministries that express the weighted party position of incumbent

516 coalition on particular issues relevant to that ministry. These are drawn  
517 from Comparative Manifestos Project data<sup>4</sup> and are identical for all enti-  
518 ties within a specific ministry. For four ministries, we did not identify  
519 appropriate domain-specific variables from the Comparative Manifestos  
520 Project dataset and so do not test H2 for these ministries.

521 In order to measure the ideological preferences of the entire govern-  
522 ment in a given year (identical for all entities existing in that year) for  
523 H3, we use the RILE (Right–Left) index from the Comparative Manifestos  
524 Project by averaging the RILE score across coalition partners and using a  
525 party’s seat share from the previous election as weights. This index esti-  
526 mates parties on a right–left political dimension, with positive scores indi-  
527 cating rightwing positions, and negative scores indicating leftwing  
528 positions. For European countries without a communist past, such as the  
529 Netherlands, this is a reasonably valid indicator of ideological position  
530 (Mölder 2016). The precise specification for each is provided in Table 1  
531 and figures showing the annual number of transitions for each ministry  
532 alongside changes in the main explanatory variables are included in the  
533 [Online Appendix](#).

534 To test the hypotheses, we run a series of logistic regression models  
535 with one model for each ministry. Using logistic regression to estimate  
536 what is essentially survival data are particularly appropriate in our case  
537 because without knowledge of the precise date at which transitions occur,  
538 we instead model for each year the probability that a transition occurs.  
539 The close relationship between estimates obtained from such a model and  
540 those obtained by a Cox regression model has been established (Efron  
541 1988). We include an entity’s age (in years) since creation (which could  
542 be its actual creation or the year in which a new entity succeeded from  
543 another as a result of a name change or some other transition) and the  
544 annual unemployment rate as control variables. Controlling for age has  
545 been shown to reduce the bias of coefficient estimates when using logistic  
546 regression for event history analysis (Ngwa *et al.* 2016). To allow for flexi-  
547 bility in duration dependence, we use natural cubic splines for age unless  
548 doing so does not change the results of the model, in which case we use  
549 the more parsimonious linear duration dependence (Beck *et al.* 1998).

551 We additionally control for the effect of unemployment, in line with  
552 previous studies (Sieberer *et al.* 2019). For instance, Greasley and  
553 Hanretty (2016) state that in times of recession dismantling government  
554 organisations is unlikely because it will increase unemployment (cf.  
555 Kuipers *et al.* 2018). Because our entities are dependent on each other  
556 hierarchically (that is, an entity may experience a transition while its par-  
557 ent entity also experiences a transition and such a coincidence of events  
558 violates the independence of observations), we cluster the standard errors

559 of our estimates by the highest hierarchical level. The [Online Appendix](#)  
560 includes correlation matrices for the variables in each model.

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## Results

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[Table 2](#) reports the results for the 12 models (one model for each ministry). Figures in the [Online Appendix](#) display the substantive significance of all statistically significant model coefficients through predicted probability plots (plots of the predicted probability that an entity experiences a transition against the independent variable). Most of these plots reveal relatively modest substantive effects, with several notable exceptions indicated here. In 9 of the 12 models, the effect of the political ideology of the government (as measured by its average RILE index score) on the probability that an entity experiences a transition is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). For eight of these models the effect is positive, indicating that the more right on the right–left scale of the parties in government, the greater the probability that an event experiences a transition. For both Social Affairs and Health, the size of the effect is relatively large, with an increase of 50% and 70%, respectively, in the probability of transition across the range of the RILE score. In the case of Education and Culture, the effect is negative and substantively large, indicating the opposite relationship, which is to say that the probability of transition increases the more leftwing the parties in government (by 70% across the range of the score). For the Environment, Agriculture and Justice ministries, the effect is not significant. These ministries are typically held by ministers from the same political party (nearly always liberal ministers for Justice, nearly always Christian-Democrats for Agriculture), and so it is possible that the influence of politics on administrative reorganisations within those ministries is less volatile. Overall, however, the patterns show considerable support for H3.

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Regarding the influence of political turnover of the individual executive heading the ministry on the hazard rate of administrative organisations (H1), we found significant effects in eight of the 12 models ( $p < 0.05$ ). The direction of the effect can be either positive or negative, indicating that political turnover of the executive heading the ministry may be associated with increasing the probability of entities experiencing transitions or with decreasing this probability, a finding that is partially at odds with the direction we expected. On the one hand, the effects of turnover for Finance, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs, Defense, and Environment and Housing are all positive and thus in the expected direction. Political turnover of the executive is associated with an increase in the probability that an entity in that ministry experiences a transition. On the other hand, the

Table 2. Fixed effects logistic regression of units experiencing end transitions.

|   | Economic Affairs (1) | Interior (2)        | Health (3)            | Finance (4)         | Education (5)        | Foreign Affairs (6)  | Social Affairs (7)  | Defense (8)          | Environment (9)      | Infrastructure (10)  | Agriculture (11)       | Justice (12)        |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Right-left index                          | 0.336*<br>(0.138)    | 0.685***<br>(0.163) | 1.257***<br>(0.192)   | 0.689***<br>(0.179) | -1.062**<br>(0.338)  | 0.424*<br>(0.200)    | 1.341***<br>(0.284) | 1.144***<br>(0.161)  | 0.278<br>(0.214)     | 0.672***<br>(0.145)  | 0.308<br>(0.377)       | 0.133<br>(0.215)    |
| Turnover                                  | -0.751**<br>(0.249)  | 0.234<br>(0.317)    | 0.259<br>(0.292)      | 0.527<br>(0.275)    | -3.079***<br>(0.565) | 1.725***<br>(0.269)  | 1.367**<br>(0.422)  | 0.811**<br>(0.267)   | 0.331<br>(0.215)     | -0.941***<br>(0.213) | -3.347*<br>(1.460)     | 0.317<br>(0.281)    |
| Education expansion index                 |                      |                     |                       |                     | -0.119<br>(0.206)    |                      |                     |                      |                      |                      |                        |                     |
| Culture position                          |                      |                     |                       |                     | -0.744***<br>(0.125) |                      |                     |                      |                      |                      |                        |                     |
| Internationalism index                    |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      | 0.216<br>(0.135)     |                     |                      |                      |                      |                        |                     |
| Positive welfare position                 |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      | 0.128<br>(0.102)    |                      |                      |                      |                        |                     |
| Positive defense position                 |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      |                     | -0.540***<br>(0.114) |                      |                      |                        |                     |
| Positive environment position             |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      |                     |                      | 0.143<br>(0.078)     |                      |                        |                     |
| Positive tech and infrastructure position |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      |                     |                      |                      | 0.175***<br>(0.052)  |                        |                     |
| Positive agriculture position             |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      |                     |                      |                      |                      | -2.158*<br>(1.058)     |                     |
| Positive justice position                 |                      |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      |                     |                      |                      |                      |                        | 0.009<br>(0.110)    |
| Unemployment                              | -0.013<br>(0.048)    | -0.134*<br>(0.053)  | -0.135<br>(0.096)     | -0.236**<br>(0.082) | -0.740***<br>(0.094) | -0.272***<br>(0.082) | 0.045<br>(0.110)    | -0.231***<br>(0.059) | -0.073<br>(0.068)    | -0.411***<br>(0.062) | 0.154<br>(0.183)       | -0.045<br>(0.107)   |
| Age                                       | 0.112***<br>(0.022)  |                     |                       |                     |                      |                      | 0.459***<br>(0.048) | 0.051**<br>(0.017)   |                      | 0.046**<br>(0.017)   |                        |                     |
| bs(age)1                                  |                      | 2.829**<br>(0.891)  | 15.782***<br>(1.628)  | 2.390<br>(1.234)    | 12.386***<br>(1.938) | 4.199***<br>(1.086)  |                     |                      | 11.668***<br>(1.245) |                      | 25.927***<br>(4.856)   | 4.386***<br>(1.171) |
| bs(age)2                                  |                      | -0.377<br>(1.452)   | -24.300***<br>(3.803) | 1.946<br>(1.606)    | -16.244**<br>(4.994) | -3.276*<br>(1.461)   |                     |                      | -8.266***<br>(1.988) |                      | -71.706***<br>(17.853) | 1.783<br>(1.705)    |

(continued)

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Table 2. Continued.

|                                 | Economic<br>Affairs<br>(1) | Interior<br>(2)    | Health<br>(3)        | Finance<br>(4)    | Education<br>(5)      | Foreign<br>Affairs<br>(6) | Social<br>Affairs<br>(7) | Defense<br>(8)       | Environment<br>(9)   | Infrastructure<br>(10) | Agriculture<br>(11)    | Justice<br>(12)     |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| bs(age) <sup>3</sup>            | 0.650<br>(1.344)           | 0.650<br>(1.344)   | 48.941***<br>(7.571) | -1.425<br>(1.482) | 58.365***<br>(12.802) | -0.480<br>(1.225)         |                          |                      | 16.045***<br>(2.480) |                        | 278.483***<br>(58.134) | 6.671***<br>(1.942) |
| Constant                        | -0.410<br>(1.436)          | -2.602*<br>(1.170) | 17.708<br>(6522.638) | -1.623<br>(1.216) | 0.997<br>(2.126)      | 0.363<br>(1.552)          | -4.210*<br>(1.753)       | 18.603<br>(6522.638) | -3.588*<br>(1.441)   | 1.559<br>(1.376)       | 0.131<br>(2.767)       | -1.864<br>(1.701)   |
| Observations                    | 1168                       | 1186               | 1161                 | 1173              | 1899                  | 1353                      | 1018                     | 1605                 | 1311                 | 1355                   | 685                    | 976                 |
| Log likelihood                  | -430.917                   | -478.710           | -397.269             | -255.083          | -586.777              | -400.901                  | -313.215                 | -382.751             | -466.408             | -479.290               | -148.765               | -329.861            |
| Akaike information<br>criterion | 1053.833                   | 1095.419           | 1018.537             | 598.166           | 1381.553              | 979.802                   | 808.430                  | 871.502              | 1104.815             | 1126.581               | 443.530                | 855.722             |

Note: \**p*, \*\**p*, \*\*\**p* < 0.001.

Standard errors in parentheses. Fixed effects factors excluded from the table.





688 effects of turnover for Economic Affairs, Education and Culture, and  
689 Infrastructure are all negative. In these cases, turnover lowers the prob-  
690 ability of transition, perhaps indicating the resilience of the structures in  
691 these ministries to political interference. These effects are independent of  
692 the effects of the government's political ideology, however, and in all  
693 three of these ministries, a more rightwing government was associated  
694 with a higher probability of transition for its entities. For Interior, Health,  
695 Agriculture, and Justice, turnover neither raised nor lowered the probabil-  
696 ity that an entity experienced a transition. It could be that the latter three  
697 are somewhat less partisan departments than others, because professional  
698 identity (doctors run health policy, farmers run agriculture, jurists run  
699 justice) prevails over party politics.

700 When we turn to results that are specific to a ministry's policy area  
701 (H2), we rely on a shift of the position of the incoming coalition towards  
702 a particular policy area or issue. We do not test for policy area effects in  
703 the Economic Affairs, Interior, Health, and Finance ministries because we  
704 did not identify variables from the Comparative Manifestos Project data-  
705 set that were specific and appropriate for those ministries, as indicated  
706 above. For the remaining ministries, some policy area-specific results  
707 were significant. A positive position of the coalition towards technology  
708 and infrastructure raised the likelihood of transitions for existing entities  
709 in the Ministry of Infrastructure. Yet, positive positions could also  
710 decrease the likelihood of transition. For the Ministry of Education and  
711 Culture, a positive culture position lowered the probability that an entity  
712 experienced a transition (by 50% across the range of this variable) and  
713 resulted in longer durations of existing units. Likewise, for entities in the  
714 Ministry of Defense and in the Ministry of Agriculture, a more positive  
715 position towards defense and agriculture increased organisational longevi-  
716 ty and decreased the likelihood of transition in the respective ministries.  
717 The different directions of the policy area findings are thus somewhat  
718 puzzling, as a positive position towards an issue may lead to either more  
719 administrative reorganisation or to a continuation of existing structures.

720 Annual unemployment rates as a control variable produce significant  
721 results for 6 out of 12 departments: a negative relationship exists between  
722 increased unemployment and the likelihood of transitions in the minis-  
723 tries of Interior, Finance, Education, Foreign Affairs, Defense and  
724 Infrastructure. This means that in times of higher unemployment, the  
725 hazard rate of these specific administrative organisations is lower.  
726 Although the results point in the same direction (a negative influence  
727 between unemployment and transition hazard), the subset of ministries  
728 significantly affected does not represent a group that shares many similar-  
729 ities. The finding does support the argument by Greasley and Hanretty  
730

731 (2016) that governments perhaps hesitate to reorganise the public sector  
732 when unemployment, in general, is already on the rise.

733 The models also controlled for age of administrative units as an inde-  
734 pendent variable (as a linear term or using more flexible splines), and  
735 found a positive result for 11 out of 12 ministries (all departments except  
736 Finance). The older the administrative unit, the higher the likelihood that  
737 it will soon experience a transition: no liability of newness within admin-  
738 istrative organisations.

739 In terms of model fit, we use heat map statistics to diagnose model  
740 misspecification problems (Esarey and Pierce 2012). In three of the mod-  
741 els (those for Finance, Education and Culture, and Agriculture), the pre-  
742 dicted probabilities deviate significantly from the empirical probabilities,  
743 indicating that some important factor explaining the dependent variable  
744 has been left out of the model. The complexity of structural change  
745 within ministries cannot be attributed to major political factors alone.  
746 The remaining nine models are well-specified according to this test.  
747

## 748 **Discussion and conclusion**

749 The main finding in this paper is that the internal structure of public organ-  
750 isations is affected by politics. We may infer that the politics of structural  
751 choice does not halt at the boundaries of public organisations, but continues  
752 inside public organisations themselves. The ordering of divisions and sub-  
753 divisions, as we learned from previous studies on bureaucratic structure,  
754 affects the way in which decisions are made in public organisations, what  
755 outcomes are likely to be produced, and how organisational agendas are set  
756 (Hammond 1986, 1993; Hong and Park 2019). We realise, however, that the  
757 transitions that we observe are the transitions that political executives were  
758 able to implement. The observed transitions are either implemented with  
759 support of the ministerial bureaucracies or in spite of their resistance.  
760 Bureaucratic agents have preferences for certain structures themselves and it  
761 is likely that the transitions we were able to observe come with (unknown)  
762 reform costs. Thus, if we would have had the data to model bureaucratic  
763 resistance, we should have expected a moderated effect of political bargain-  
764 ing on the internal structure of administrative agencies.  
765

766 We have examined in three different ways how politics affect the  
767 internal structure of organisations: the effects of party-political turnover  
768 of the executive leading a Ministerial department (H1), the effects of  
769 party-political policy positions per ministry on intra-organisational struc-  
770 ture (H2) and the effects of rightwing ideology of the coalition govern-  
771 ment on intra-organisational structure (H3). Our findings strongly  
772 support H3: it reflects the standard wisdom that since the start of the  
773

774 liberal reform era of the 1980s, rightwing governments were most pursuant  
 775 of administrative reorganisations. In 8 of 12 ministries under rightwing  
 776 governments, the probability of a transition increased. Even when there  
 777 was no political turnover, but simply a continuation of rightwing rule,  
 778 rightwing government meant a decrease in the number of units within  
 779 these eight ministries. The decrease was either caused through disbanding,  
 780 merging, or privatising units within the ministry. The downsizing occurred  
 781 in ministries with large spending portfolios, such as Health Care, Social  
 782 Affairs, Defense, Infrastructure, and Interior Affairs. Not all ministries that  
 783 experienced a decrease in units under rightwing governments are spending  
 784 departments though, rightwing rule also affected the Ministries of Foreign  
 785 Affairs, Economic Affairs and Finance.

786 Second, our findings support hypothesis one, that political change, meas-  
 787 ured as a turnover between successive ministers representing different polit-  
 788 ical parties with different ideological positions, too has an effect on the  
 789 internal structure of public organisations. Though our results are robust  
 790 they are less conclusive than in the case of political ideology. We have an  
 791 almost equal share of ministries for which turnover has a positive, negative  
 792 and no effect. Only four out of the seven ministries for which we found a  
 793 significant effect of turnover experience increased probabilities of transition  
 794 as a consequence of turnover: the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Social  
 795 Affairs, Environment and Housing, and Defense. Whereas the findings on  
 796 the former four ministries are in the expected direction, turnover signifi-  
 797 cantly decreases the probability of transition at three other ministries:  
 798 Economic Affairs, Education and Culture and Infrastructure. This mixed  
 799 finding is puzzling, especially since ministries, by design and location,  
 800 are not protected against the effects of turnover. Ministries and their sub-  
 801 divisions are not insulated and their units can be terminated by executive  
 802 decree. To understand why turnover decreases the odds of transition  
 803 requires further analysis, thereby focusing on the specific (sub)divisions  
 804 within the relevant ministries: why did some change and others not?  
 805

806 Finally, particular policy positions of the coalition (H2) matter too for  
 807 the internal structure of ministries, but here the findings are multi-  
 808 faceted. We find groups of ministries for which a positive position  
 809 towards the (expansion of) the policy either increases or decreases the  
 810 odds of transitions; and there is a group of ministries for which the policy  
 811 position has no significant effect. In combination with the left–right ideo-  
 812 logical position of the government and the change of domain-specific pol-  
 813 icy positions, we can make certain interesting inferences. We find that  
 814 Environment and Housing and Infrastructure are ministries where the  
 815 probabilities for transitions have increased under governments that are  
 816 rightwing and have positive policy positions as regards environment and

817 housing and infrastructure, respectively. By the same token, the odds for  
818 transition at Defense increase under rightwing governments but decrease  
819 under governments with a positive position vis-à-vis defense. In other  
820 words, sometimes the effect of liberal ideology dominates, sometimes  
821 instead it is the effect of the policy preferences with respect to a specific  
822 domain that dominates.

823 Overall, we can infer that political variables have a strong impact on  
824 the internal structure and organisation of ministries. The results for the  
825 effect of the policy positions are robust for six out of eight Ministries.  
826 Except for the left–right position of the government, we find no clear pat-  
827 tern for how precisely politics affect the structural design of public organ-  
828 isations. Ministries experience significant effect of executive turnover,  
829 sometimes increasing the hazards of intra-organisational transitions and  
830 sometimes increasing stability. There are also ministries where we find no  
831 effect. Ergo, minister can substantially re-arrange their organisations in  
832 line with their policy preferences but do not necessarily do so. This, we  
833 believe, brings us to the caveats of our current study – and the points  
834 that we need to delve into deeper in future projects.

835 First, although they are from the same organisational genus, ministries  
836 present a disparate group of public organisations due to their portfolios.  
837 Each ministry operates in a different environment and the variation  
838 between ministries’ environment is substantial. Ministries for example dif-  
839 fer in terms of the nature and number of stakeholders, complexity of  
840 technology, internationalisation, and political salience of the issue.

841 Second, ministries are holding companies (Hood and Dunsire 1981) as  
842 each contains divisions that may address very different kinds of policy  
843 issues. The structure and organisation of ministries is the outcome of par-  
844 tisan bargaining between potential coalition partners. The final outcomes  
845 of the bargaining process are more reflective of compromises instead of a  
846 rational allocation of policy areas. This means that ministries may har-  
847 bour wide-ranging policy areas with substantially different political logics.

848 Third, we only looked at *party*-political variables and have not taken  
849 into account that *bureaucratic* politics may also to a large extent account  
850 for the intra-organisation design and distribution of (sub)divisions.  
851 Bureaucratic interests, budget allocations, and the role of bureau chiefs  
852 therein is very important and can go quite against party-political prefer-  
853 ences (see Boin *et al.* 2017; Van Witteloostuijn *et al.* 2018). Turf and bur-  
854 eau-shaping politics have not been accounted for in our models.


855 Given the key importance of organisational structure for the realisation  
856 of political ambitions outlined in the introduction, we argue that looking  
857 into intra-organisational transitions will yield rich insights. We have  
858 detected meaningful patterns that could be related further to critical  
859

860 junctures in the organisation's policy environment, to outcomes of coal-  
 861 tion bargaining and to the power of bureau chiefs. International compari-  
 862 son is furthermore imperative to see if these patterns hold across different  
 863 types of political and administrative systems (Kuipers *et al.* 2018). This  
 864 study indicates that the study of the central government apparatus needs  
 865 to include what lies beneath.

## 867 Notes

- 869 1. Excluded were the Ministry of Generic Affairs because structural transitions  
 870 within this ministry could not be related to political preferences, and the  
 871 Ministry of Culture which existed only as a separate entity between 1980-1982.
- 872 2. Additional details about the construction of this dataset can be found in the  
 873 codebook, available on request from the authors.
- 874 3. The pooling of all transitions may thus lead to an overestimate of the overall  
 875 degree of administrative change. While this affects the descriptive overview,  
 876 its effect on the multivariate analyses is more limited because the  
 877 overestimation should be consistent across ministries.
- 878 4. <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>
- 879 5. 'Per###' refers to Comparative Manifestos Project variable codes.
- 880 6. From 2010, environment and housing are absorbed by infrastructure.
- 881 7. From 2010, agriculture is absorbed by economic affairs.

## 882 Disclosure statement

883  No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## 885 Funding

886  This work was supported by Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek.

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