Non-issue.nl - Election Issue Tracker 2001/2002

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DRAFT

{n.b. This document also serves as a design & programming brief, and new proposals are sought for a data module format (input system), an information design & a delivery stream (output system). The previous project name is 'attention cycler'.}

Non-issue.nl is an election issue tracker that monitors the resonance of individual party platform issues across leading print newspapers and across stable new media source sets, comprising NGOs and industry. The purpose of non-issue.nl is to identify and chart the changing media attention over time of party issues as well as party 'non-issues' according to the new and old media source sets. In the project, one measures the extent of the 'currency' of party platform issues in traditional and non-tradition issue-making entities, straightforwardly, through frequency of mentionings of the issue terms over time.

Issues are taken directly from party platforms, and their relative 'mass media' currency is derived from newspaper analysis. To ascertain the non-issues and their currency, the non-traditional issue-makers are queried for issues not taken up in the party platforms. The currency of these 'non-issues' is charted in the same way as the currency of the 'issues', by querying the newspapers, and counting frequencies of mentionings.

In all, one watches the changes in the currency of the party issues according to the conventional as well as to the non-conventional sources. One also monitors the currency of the non-issues in conventional media (the newspapers). Eventually, the information streams may be utilised to note the dynamics between (old and new) media and party issue formations ('issue policy'), and the media conditions under which any changes are made to party issue lists.

Where method is concerned, from the party platforms, we distil individual party issue lists. These are the terminological or key word 'election issues'.[1] These issues are run through the on-line archives of the print versions of the *NRC Handelsblad*, *de Volkskrant* and *de Telegraaf*.[2] The appearance of the issues *per party* platform as well as for *all parties* in total may be counted, and charted over time. (See appendix for example of the frequency of mentionings of one issue over time in *de Volkskrant*.) One may note the recurrence of issues per party per newspaper, per party across all newspapers, as well as for all parties per newspaper, and for all parties across all newspapers.

Similarly, we enquire into the resonance of the individual as well as total party issue lists in distinctive new media source baskets, the NGO and industry source collections. To do so, we rely on the techniques developed for the Web Issue Index, that is, we identify intuitively compelling sets of web sources (web issue-makers), distil their issues through co-issue analysis, query the source sets at regular intervals, and watch the rise and fall of their issues over time. In these baskets at particular times, we seek 'matches' between party issues and web NGO and industry issues. The leading basket issues that do not appear in

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[1] Currently, only the PvdA party platform is published at http://www.pvda.nl/hot/vkp2002/vkp_intro.htm.
[2] *De Telegraaf* archive is at http://wwwijzer.nl/NieuwsArchief/, *de Volkskrant* at http://zoek.volkskrant.nl/ and the *NRC Handelsblad* at http://archief.nrc.nl/. For each archive, note that searches are performed for the 'print' versions.

the party platforms are dubbed 'the non-issues'. Non-issues are fed into the print newspaper archives to chart their 'currency' in the mass media over time.

We have a series of potential outcomes, and we therefore will be able to classify issues according to this preliminary (flat) scheme.
Party Issues that resonate in the mass media.
Party Issues that do not resonate in the mass media.
Party Issues that resonate on the web.
Party Issues that do not resonate on the web.
Web issues that resonate in the mass media.
Web issues that do not resonate in the mass media.

This leads to more elaborate issue types.

For party issues:
1) Party Issues that resonate in the mass media and on the web. (Print Issue/Web Issue)
2) Party Issues that do not resonate in the mass media but do on the web. (Print Non-issue/Web Issue)
3) Party Issues that do not resonate on the web but do in mass media. (Print Issue/Web Non-issue)
4) Party Issues that do not resonate in the mass media nor on the Web. (Print Non-issue/Web Non-issue)

For Web-only issues, i.e., Non-issues according to the Party platforms, we have the following classification:
1) Web issues that resonate in the mass media. (Non-issue Issues)
2) Web issues that do not resonate in the mass media. (Non-issue non-issues).

One of the more intriguing outcomes concerns the web 'non-issue issues'. One may expect that political parties can make an issue out of the fact that it's a non-issue. Finally, where our 'non-issue non-issues' are concerned, Web entities can make an issue of the fact that it's a non-issue, both to the political parties as well as to the press!

Appendix
For example, in *de Volkskrant* we note the following appearance of the term *zalmnorm*:

1. Sober oogstjaar
 woensdag 19 september 2001 (Hoofdartikel, 451 woorden)
 ... prioriteit geeft, wezenlijk in gevaar komt. - Het uitgavenkader (de Zalmnorm), waarbij inkomsten en uitgaven gescheiden zijn, bewijst zijn waarde ook bij een vertraging van de ...

2. Dijkstal bij VVD favoriet als premier
 vrijdag 7 september 2001 (540 woorden)
 ... campagne voeren rond het succesvolle begrotingsbeleid van Paars, dat met de term Zalmnorm zelfs naar hem is genoemd. Zalm zelf heeft, zegt een ingewijde, vooral 'op zijn ...

3. PvdA wil 17 miljard investeren
maandag 3 september 2001 (280 woorden)
Het volgende kabinet moet zeventien miljard gulden extra investeren in zorg, onderwijs en werkgelegenheid. De Zalmnorm dient flexibeler te worden toegepast: bij een ...

4. Zelfbewuste PvdA kan ook wel zonder paars
maandag 3 september 2001 (achtergrond, 554 woorden)
... jarenlange tornen van fractievoorzitter Melkert aan de Zalmnorm zijn beslag gekregen in het PvdA- programma. Bij een begrotingsoverschot van 1 procent moet er ruimte zijn om alles wat ...

5. Melkert en de PvdA 2
vrijdag 31 augustus 2001 (Hoofdartikel, 436 woorden)
... scheiding tussen inkomsten en uitgaven, de hoeksteen van de Zalmnorm.

6. GroenLinks: meer geld voor milieu
dinsdag 3 juli 2001 (451 woorden)
... voortdurende discussies over weer nieuwe meevallers en de Zalmnorm. 'Anders blijft de gesel van Financiën intact', aldus Vendrik, die het extra geld vooral wil besteden aan ...