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Framing mechanisms: the interpretive policy entrepreneur's toolbox

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ABSTRACT

Policy entrepreneurs were, originally, neither conceived to be active meaning-makers nor did they interact with other actors. They invested other resources such as time, energy, reputation and money in coupling problems, solutions and politics. Adding the interpretive dimension of interactional framing mechanisms turns them into interpretive policy entrepreneurs. This perspective improves our understanding of policy cases in which initial frame conflicts are resolved by extensive meaning-making work by one specific actor. We illustrate this interpretive policy entrepreneur concept with the innovative Sand Motor mega-sand nourishment scheme case, an artificial peninsula of 21 million m³ at the South Holland coast. Designed to achieve multiple aims, this coastal management scheme should serve coastal protection, nature development as well as recreational purposes. In the risk-averse, complex policy domain of Dutch coastal management, the provincial government of South Holland turned out to be an adept meaning-maker by linking other actors' problem definitions to their proposed solution. Fourteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews put the provincial government at the heart of several framing interactions that led to frame convergence and ultimately the resolution of the initial frame conflict. Our interpretive analysis of framing interactions concludes that interactional framing mechanisms can reveal interpretive policy entrepreneurs.

KEYWORDS

Interactional framing mechanisms;
policy entrepreneur;
interpretive policy entrepreneur; case study;
the Netherlands; coastal management

'... we are beginning to see how the context for policy entrepreneurship can be complicated when multiple perspectives exist concerning the direction that policy change should take from the status quo' (Mintrom and Norman 2009).

The genesis of the 'Sand Motor' is a story of a provincial governor and her civil servants. Together, they succeeded in bringing about reframing (Schön and Rein 1994, 38) among other important actors to realize an innovative, prestigious project. We argue that the provincial governor, flanked by her civil servants, acted as an *interpretive policy entrepreneur*. Kingdon (2014, 179), who coined the original term in his multiple streams theory (MST), defines policy entrepreneurs as 'advocates who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, money – to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidary benefits'. In the case we present, though,

the policy entrepreneur did not only spend the resources mentioned by Kingdon but was also successful in establishing *meaning* through framing mechanisms. Through these mechanisms, the provincial governor and her civil servants were able to link their regionally perceived issues with issues existing on other governmental scales and in other sectors (Van Lieshout et al. 2012, 2014). They convinced other actors that issues on different levels and in different sectors could be solved by using the same policy solution. The original policy entrepreneur definition does not capture this meaning-making activity. Kingdon's policy entrepreneur knows how to use resources to couple policies with problems and political will, but the concept fails to open the black box of how frames converge through the way the policy entrepreneur frames the issue at hand in specific settings.

Our aim is, therefore, to explore and strengthen the link between interpretive policy analysis and policy entrepreneurship conceptualizing the instrumental use of framing mechanisms as the toolbox of what we call the interpretive policy entrepreneur.¹ The original policy entrepreneur concept will benefit from adding the meaning-making resource to the policy entrepreneur's tool kit, as this reveals what happens once the policy entrepreneur couples existing political will with policy problems and policies. In addition, the interpretive policy entrepreneur concept translates Kingdon's three streams into interaction settings, enabling us to study actual actors doing interactive framing work. The theoretical elaboration of the policy entrepreneur concept presented here also projects it into the realm of interpretive policy analysis, by adding an actor perspective to the static frame concept and the processual framing concept. While this is a conceptual advantage of the interpretive policy entrepreneur, in everyday policy practice, the concept may increase the awareness of policy actors of the salience of meaning-making alongside the four other resources mentioned in the original policy entrepreneur definition.

We discerned this interpretive policy entrepreneur in a project called the 'Sand Motor' – a coastal protection scheme constructed along the Dutch coast in 2011 (see Figure 1).² This project exploits the sea currents and wind as a metaphorical 'motor' to transport sand from one location to others where it is needed. As such, it presupposed detailed knowledge about where sea currents erode the coast and where the sand is then deposited. While the use of huge amounts of sand to build artificial islands for leisure purposes is now understood, as the Arab Peninsula and parts of coastal China testify, the Sand Motor project was the first attempt at harnessing sand for large-scale coastal protection (Stive et al. 2013).³ However, realizing such an innovative coastal protection experiment in a functioning coastal management system characterized by a complex web of responsibilities and tasks is far from easy. Various aspects such as defining and monitoring safety criteria and the proposal of coastal protection projects are dispersed over a range of policymaking levels (see Stumpe 2011, 16). This policy situation, in which an innovative coastal management technology has to be managed in a complex policy domain, is further complicated by a public works agency (PWA) focused on tradition and routine coupled with a suspicious attitude toward unproven technologies (Disco 2002). In this case, we observe an argumentative struggle between innovation-minded and traditionalist coastal management actors who initially all have different interpretations of the problem definition and who differ in terms of the values they bring to the coastal management problematic making this project a case of 'frame conflicts' in decision-making over time (Schön and Rein 1994, 23). The actors in this case had to debate the suitability of the Sand Motor technology based on their values,

experience and normative perceptions, as there were no facts about the performance of the technology, yet. It was impossible for them ‘to resolve [...] their disputes by examining the facts of the situation’ (Schön and Rein 1994, 3). Hence, the Sand Motor case represents a ‘frame conflict’ between actors, such as the provincial government, who expect the Sand Motor to be a promising technology and actors, such as the public works agency, who feel there is no need for experimentation when lives are at stake and the technology in place works.

The central research question we discuss is: How did an interpretive policy entrepreneur make use of framing interaction mechanisms to implement an innovative coastal management technology such as the Sand Motor in a complex policy context characterized by competing frames? This paper looks into the framing dynamics initiated by interpretive policy entrepreneurs that occurred in the planning phase of the Sand Motor project. This article presents an Interpretive Policy Analysis and the terminology used reflects this approach. Interpretive Policy Analysis is an interpretive, hermeneutical approach to data analysis that involves an abductive way of reasoning (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). As opposed to inductive and deductive ways of reasoning, abduction is the systematic movement from data to what Geertz called ‘guesses at meanings’, and then back to the data until the interpretation of the meaning is satisfactorily plausible (Geertz 1973). Interpretive approaches set out to understand the meaning and the processes of meaning-making of social phenomena for actors. In applying an interpretive approach, we develop an ‘understanding of the key concepts and meanings-in-use among situational actors – those that are significant to them in their own lived experiences’ (Haverland and Yanow 2012, 404) which led to the adoption of an innovative coastal management technology in the case presented (Haverland and Yanow 2012, 404).

In the next section, we develop the concept of interpretive policy entrepreneur. After this, we outline the case history. We discuss the findings related to framing mechanisms and how these fed into the conceptualization of the interpretive policy entrepreneur. Finally, the implications of the case are discussed and conclusions are drawn.

Theoretical framework: the interpretive policy entrepreneur

Original policy entrepreneur definition

As mentioned, a policy entrepreneur invests certain kinds of resources (time, energy, reputation, money) in a policy process. But these resources merely enable a policy entrepreneur to create the settings – e.g. policy arenas or venues – in which policies may be advocated. Policy entrepreneurs have to be present in some way at such settings to be able to promote or advocate at all. This is where those resources go: travelling to and being at meetings and negotiations, building expertise, writing advocacy documents, etc. Hence, these resources form the conditions for a policy entrepreneur to advocate policies. Kingdon’s definition is silent, however, as to the processes by which this advocating will come to pass. In MST terms, policy entrepreneurs only act in relation to the three streams – problems, policies and politics – as they ‘hook solutions to problems, proposals to political momentum, and political events to policy problems’ (Kingdon 2014, 182). This activity is also called coupling. The questions of specifically

how they do this as well as why they couple particular solutions to particular problems are left in the dark.

Conceptual issues

The policy entrepreneur concept misses a significant factor which is crucial once the advocacy settings are created. Policy entrepreneurs also need the expressive power to convince other policy actors of their advocated policy. In a way, the definition as is ignores what could be called the ‘advocative moment’, i.e. the interaction between policy actors – not between the policy entrepreneur and some evasive stream – in which meaning is exchanged to achieve reframing among policy actors to follow a certain policy course. In other words, they need to be able to give meaning to policy situations that resonates with other actors. Although the policy entrepreneur concept adds an agency dimension to the otherwise arguably structure-oriented streams, the definition proposed by Kingdon still lacks the depth to illuminate what constitutes the special powers of policy entrepreneurs as opposed to those policy actors who may not be characterized as such.

Interpretive dimension of the policy entrepreneur

The specific depth of character that separates policy entrepreneurs from other types of policy actors can be developed by consulting the four characteristics every policy entrepreneur has ‘at least to some degree’ (Mintrom and Norman 2009, 651). These features are (a) the ability to make sense of other actors’ perspectives, (b) the ability to express problems in other actors’ terms, (c) the ability to build epistemic communities (Haas 1992) and (d) a willingness to take risks.⁴ If we examine these basic characteristics of policy entrepreneurs, we can conclude that three of them are essentially interpretive activities.

The first of these activities is the ability to make sense of other actors’ perspectives. It is the most generic feature and a precondition to the latter three. In fact, it is at the heart of interpretation. This ability to interpret others – congruent with the concept of sense-making – depends on empathy (Gadamer 2010). It comprises an affinity for maneuvering in policy networks by ‘understanding the ideas, motives, and concerns of others in their local policy context’ (Mintrom and Norman 2009, 652), i.e. empathizing with others. For example, in interacting with other actors, policy entrepreneurs need to be able to make sense of others’ positions to appreciate them and outline their own strategy vis-à-vis these other positions. Understanding the constellation of ideas, motives and concerns in a policy arena is thus a precondition for further action aligned to other policy actors.

Once there is an understanding of other policy actors in a given interaction, this enables the policy entrepreneur to redefine problems, solutions or arguments in other actors’ terms.⁵ Policy entrepreneurs need to be able to frame their own definition of problems and solutions⁶ such that they are accepted by other actors and hopefully integrated into their frame. Problem definition as a core interpretive activity is not only found in the work of Van Hulst and Yanow (2014) and Rein and Donald (1996) but also ties into the framing mechanisms described below. Focusing on the advocative moment

and scrutinizing, the problem definition behavior of policy entrepreneurs in interaction with other actors also answers Mintrom and Norman (2009) call for more focus on interactions. From an interpretive perspective, the interactional framing mechanisms are the tools by which policy entrepreneurs attempt to bring across their view of a policy situation (Figure 3). These tools are not necessarily consciously used as such, but represent rhetoric and argumentative means of discussion. Although all actors engage in these framing mechanisms, policy entrepreneurs are actors who are particularly adept at using them successfully. This is in line with what has been called somewhat pejoratively ‘[manipulation] of problematic preferences and unclear technology’ (Zahariadis 2014, 35). The success of this ability depends on the accuracy of the sense-making of other actors’ opinions. If the initial sense-making was inadequate, the redefined problem and solution may lead to miscommunication or conflict. The policy entrepreneur may still have opportunities to adjust his sense-making and, in turn, the problem definition, but eventually this may result in the breakdown of the process – and the closing of a window of opportunity. However, the successful framing of elements of the policy setting in a way corresponding to other actors is, again, a precondition for building teams, or – in interpretive terms – epistemic communities.

Agreeing on elements of the policy setting increases chances of reframing. If policy entrepreneurs are skilled at reformulating elements of the policy situation in other actors’ terms, it is more likely that these open up to policy entrepreneurs’ position and join the ranks. This leads to a larger epistemic community advocating a certain policy, thereby increasing the success potential of the advocated policy. Finally, but not strictly an interpretive feature, policy entrepreneurs need to be willing to take risks, so that other actors become convinced that the risks are indeed manageable or even to be overcome. Although willing to take a risk shows determination and a certain level of certainty about the policy in question, adequate sense-making of others’ positions is still



Figure 1. The Sand Motor at the Dutch coast near The Hague, seen roughly from southwest. (source: [Rijkswaterstaat/JurriaanBrobbel](#)).

important. A sense of other policy actors' positions also delineates the spectrum of risks that are acceptable for others. Taking a risk that turns out too far removed from what is acceptable for others could lead to loss of reputation or even political demise of the policy entrepreneur. On the other hand, a well-gauged risk would take into account what is acceptable for other actors and increase the chance of reframing at their end.

Reflecting on these four characteristics shows the interpretive element in the activities of a policy entrepreneur. It starts at the root of making sense of other actors, understanding how and why they attribute a certain particular elements of the policy setting. Interpretive policy entrepreneurs engage in framing interaction to bring about reframing to increase the coalition rallying around their advocated policy. An 'interpretive policy entrepreneur', then, is an actor who is successful at making meaning and attributing this to a certain situation or policy alternative (see [Figure 2](#)). Defining 'reframing' as a process that 'resolves the controversies that arise in policy practice' (Schön and Rein 1994, 38), interpretive policy entrepreneurs bring about reframing among other actors through framing mechanisms, thereby creating an epistemic community, which may be understood as a group of people attributing similar meaning to a policy or policy situation.

Framing

The framing literature is divided into two streams – a cognitive and an interactional type. *Cognitive* framing entails the individual understanding of a (policy) situation by assigning meaning to elements and binding them together in a coherent story (Scholten and Van Nispen 2008; Stone 2002; Van Hulst and Yanow 2014; Hawkins and Holden 2013). The *interactional* framing literature engages with the interactive effects of frames. Part of that literature focuses on the instrumental use of framing for 'the rhetorical functions of persuasion, justification and symbolic display' (Schön and Rein 1994, 32, cf.; Entman 1993; Gallo-Cruz 2012). However, the interactional framing literature, we use here, revolves around the function of actors making meaning together in interaction with each other (Dewulf and Bouwen 2012; Dodge 2015). Specifically, we follow Dewulf and Bouwen (2012, 169), who define framing as 'the dynamic enactment and alignment of meaning in ongoing interactions'. In this understanding, framing is finding a consensus among actors over the meaning of a (policy) situation instead of doing so individually. We understand the interactional framing mechanisms Dewulf and Bouwen (2012) propose as processes initiated by an actor for meaning-making, and may also be used consciously in an instrumental way.

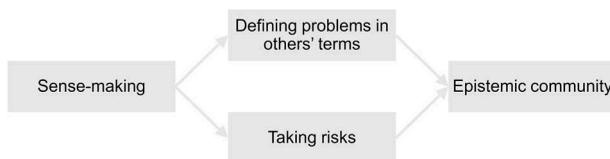


Figure 2. Flow chart of Interpretive Policy Entrepreneur characteristics.

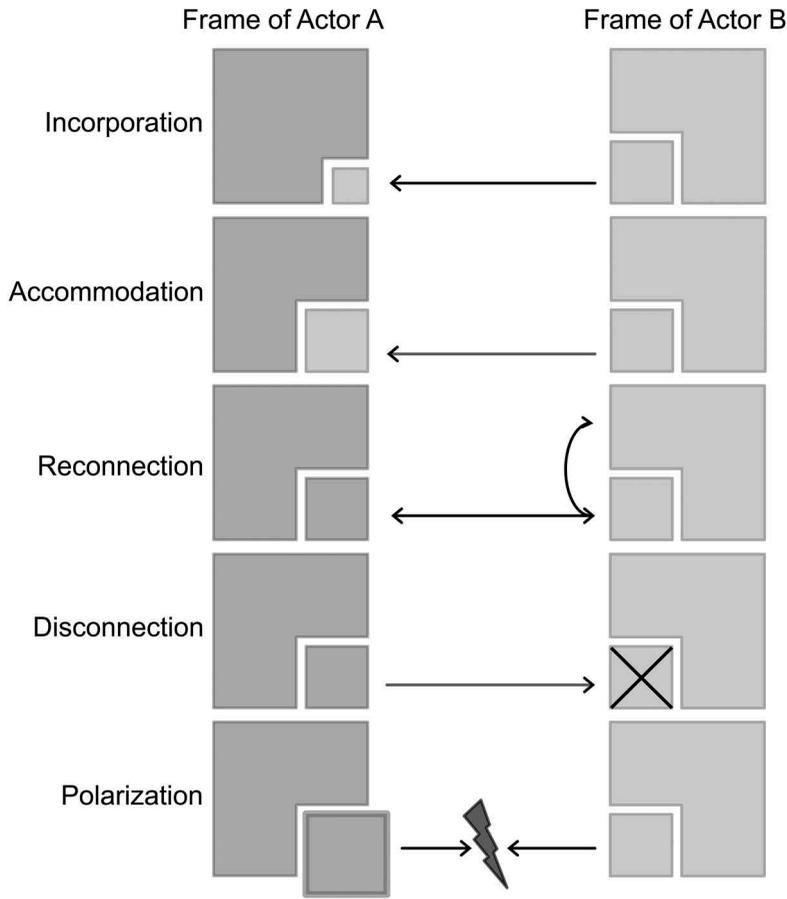


Figure 3. Framing interaction mechanisms (adapted from Dewulf and Bouwen 2012).

Interactional framing as signpost for interpretive policy entrepreneurs

We argue that, for an interpretive policy entrepreneur, successfully making meaning is reflected in the successful initiation of frame-convergent framing moves (Abolafia 2004). Frame-convergent framing moves bring about reframing among other actors, thereby increasing the epistemic community of the interpretive policy entrepreneur. Dewulf and Bouwen's (2012) five interactional framing mechanisms⁷ are such framing moves occurring when frames confront one another in policy processes (Figure 3). However, only three of these mechanisms – incorporation, accommodation and reconnection – have frame-convergent effects or lead, in the terms of Schön and Rein (1994), to reframing. Incorporation is seen as taking place in situations where actor A includes a watered-down element of actor B's frame, maybe because actor A only partly agrees with that element. In accommodation, there is no watering down, and actor A substitutes an element of his/her frame with a more-or-less exact copy of the corresponding element of actor B's frame. In some situations, actors may connect a conflicting element with other elements in their own frame to overcome a conflict – reconnection. These processes increase the epistemic community for the policy solution. Conversely, the remaining two mechanisms of

Table 1. Policy entrepreneur features: Mintrom and Norman (2009) terminology and our interpretive ‘translation’.

Mintram and Norman (2009)	Our interpretive ‘translation’
Displaying social acuity	Sense-making of other actors’ perspectives
Defining problems	Expressing problems in other actors’ terms
Building teams	Constructing epistemic communities
Leading by example	Taking risks

polarization and disconnection intensify the intractability of policy controversies and impede the resolution of framing conflicts, in other words are frame-divergent framing moves. Where actor A totally rejects a corresponding element of actor B, this is referred to as disconnection. Finally, if actor A focuses on their own frame and emphasizes their own conviction regarding an element, we speak of polarization.

Method: analysis of framing interactions

As a research setting, a coastal management project along the Dutch North Sea coast, just south of The Hague was chosen. The construction of this novel coastal management technology – the Sand Motor – was finalized in 2011 and the project is currently in the evaluation phase. The fact that the project and discussions are already finalized creates complication for the research, which is discussed in the data generation and data analysis section.

Data generation

Qualitative analysis enables context-sensitive, in-depth understanding of meaning-making in policy cases. Hence, data generation in our approach rests on in-depth interviewing. This data generation method had the disadvantage that we had to rely on the memories of policy-relevant actors since we were unable to make real-time participatory observations. But it was the only way to acquire primary qualitative data in this retrospective case.

We interviewed 14 participants in the policy process from the provincial government South Holland, the municipality of ‘s-Gravenzande, the public works agency and the national Innovation Platform. Interviewees’ occupations ranged from provincial governor through project managers, policy advisors to coastal management experts (Table 2). The first interviewees were initially identified from prior knowledge of the project based on their participation in the policy process. This knowledge

Table 2. Interviewee organization and occupation.

Organization	Occupation
Province South Holland	Program manager
	President steering group
	2 project group members
	Project manager
	Coastal management expert
Public works agency	Provincial governor
	Vice president
	2 permit officers
	Project manager implementation
	Policy advisor
Municipality Innovation platform	Policy advisor
	Scholar

came from reports about the case and casual conversations with involved actors (Bureau Landwijzer et al. 2012; Dulfer et al. 2014; Baltissen 2015; Stive et al. 2013; Van Slobbe et al. 2013). Consecutive interviewees were selected based on them being mentioned as important to the policy process by previous interviewees and were contacted to request an interview (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 88). The final number of interviews follows from the basic aim of the interviews, which is mapping for exposure. Mapping for exposure means getting as many different, ‘research-relevant’ understandings about the case in question as is possible (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012, 85). That is, judging the research relevance of additional understandings depends on the interpreter. At a certain point during the fieldwork, additional understandings only add nuances to understandings already identified rather than adding opposing/contrasting understandings. From this point on, it depends on the research’s feasibility, whether more understandings are sought.

The interviewee selection strategy delivered a mapping for exposure that leans toward policy makers. Starting from the premise that interviewees spoke of other actors, if they were important to the policy process and contributed to it, the selection of interviewees reflects a network of actors who work together a lot, but leave out others, such as civil society organizations and NGOs. Probably, the selection of interviewees would have been different and the case story might have differed, if we would have started from an actor outside the formal policy process. The choice of initial interviewee may, thus, determine the rest of interviewing process and shape the results of the analysis.

We approached the project from a perspective of *decisive moments*, defined as moments in the policy process, which interviewees perceived as important. Participants were asked to delve deeper into what happened to their own and others’ framing moves in and around the moments they perceived as decisive. If necessary, we adapted the interview guide based on the initial analysis after interviews. Audio recordings were made of all interviews, as all interviewees allowed so. Recordings were transcribed verbatim without fillers to form coherent sentences. All transcripts were collected and analyzed in the NVivo 10 software package (QSR International Pty Ltd 2012). Transcripts were analyzed as soon as possible after the interview to incorporate new aspects such as new ‘decisive moments’ in the interview guide before the next interview. A spreadsheet was kept as a log containing interview and transcript characteristics. Transcripts, interview log and memos form an audit trail for the analysis (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 382). Hence, during the fieldwork period, transcripts, initial analysis and memos created an initial understanding of what was at play in the project.

Data analysis

The first analytical step was to reconstruct the project timeline based on the interview transcripts, policy documents (Dwarshuis-Van De Beek et al. 2008; Minister Van Verkeer En Waterstaat et al. 2010) and documentation pertaining to the project (Bureau Landwijzer et al. 2012; Dulfer et al. 2014; Baltissen 2015; Stive et al. 2013; Van Slobbe et al. 2013). Knowledge about decisive moments enabled us to reconstruct the moments during the project when interviewees perceived changes in their own or in others’ framing. We linked the project timeline to self-reported interaction settings. As

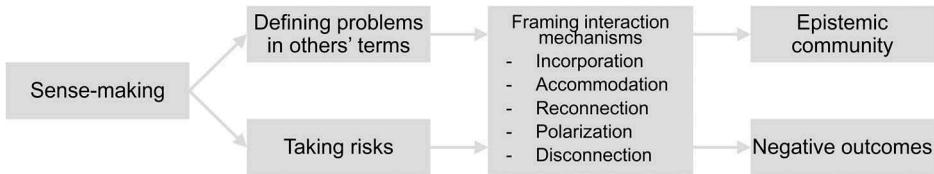


Figure 4. Framing interactions as tools revealing interpretive policy entrepreneurship processes.

we were unable to observe interaction settings ourselves in the process and acquire interactional data from these, using self-reported interaction settings is a way to use interview data to reconstruct the interaction settings for the analysis with interactional framing mechanisms. Those self-reported interaction settings analyzed with the five interactional framing mechanisms to distinguish between actors involved in the interaction, initiator and type of framing mechanism involved. Dewulf and Bouwen (2012) interactional framing mechanisms enable us to observe the policy entrepreneurial characteristics enacted in interactions between actors (Figure 4), by relating events and outcomes of the policy process to actors' meaning-making efforts. Once we know the nature of framing interactions in a case, we can relate them to events and the direction the case took after those events and whether there were crucial, meaning-making actors in these events. Actors are said to be crucial for the policy process in their meaning-making, i.e. interpretive policy entrepreneurs, when they initiate meaningful frame-convergent framing moves that enrich the epistemic community for the advocated policy. Thus, uncovering the framing interactions in a policy case is the main step in a systematic analysis of interpretive policy entrepreneurs.

Results: discovering an 'interpretive policy entrepreneur'

In the Sand Motor case, we noticed an actor who functioned as a driving force in the decision-making process. This actor's activity was not limited to the delivery of 'data' or 'facts' but also extended to the level of meaning-making. That actor – the province of Zuid-Holland – succeeded in associating its project idea to frame elements of other actors to rally them around that very idea. We describe the context of these actions, followed by an analysis of which framing interaction mechanisms have been at play in the case. This section ends with an analysis of the Zuid-Holland province as an interpretive policy entrepreneur.

Case description

During a previous coastal reinforcement project, the provincial governor of province Zuid-Holland was captivated by the advantages promised by extensive land reclamation with associated benefits of flood safety, spatial quality and a positive economic impact. These promised benefits translated into a drive at the province⁸ to realize this project. In consequence, the province and its governor needed remarkably little time to realize the project, especially seeing that it was an experiment (Provincial project manager,

Table 3. Events of official procedures in project Sand Motor.

Date	Event
3 March 2008	Agreement of ambition
18 December 2008	Notification of intent for environmental impact assessment
1 February 2010	Final report environmental impact assessment
15 June 2010	Maintenance agreement
01 March 2011	Beginning of construction works by dredging companies
18 March 2011	Letter of discontinuation to steering group by provincial alderwoman

personal communication, 21 October 2015). While the provincial director of the coastal policy program estimated the beginning of the project in 2006/2007, the officially documented kickoff with the signing of an ambition agreement only occurred in March 2008 (Table 3).

The next step for the province was to construct a business case around this idea of a mega-nourishment scheme. Unfortunately for the province, the costs outweighed the benefits in the business case, because it was striving for not easily monetarizable, social benefits – recreational and nature improvements to the area – which were not taken into account in the appraisal technique (Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October 2015). Consequently, the business case was discarded, and the province needed to find another way to realize the provincial governor’s ambition.

An alternative pathway opened up when the province was able to pitch the project to the Dutch Innovation Platform.⁹ Though not immediately leading to realization of the project, this extended the project’s outreach to the national government level. The innovativeness of the project convinced the members of the Innovation Platform who began to endorse it publicly. One of the results was the public announcement by the prime minister to construct a tulip-shaped island off the Dutch coast, similar to the prestigious palm-shaped islands constructed at the Arab Peninsula (Boeters, Benno 2008). Hence, although other involved actors perceive earlier roots, the Dutch commission for environmental impact assessments (EIAs) attributed the project Sand Motor to the Innovation Platform itself (Commissie voor de milieueffectrapportage 2014).

Little conflict characterized the ensuing planning phase (Policy advisor of municipality Westland, personal communication, 14 July 2015; Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October, 2015). In fact, some even called it a ‘problem-free’ project, referring to the absence of urgency or necessity to improve the coastal safety at the proposed location (Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October 2015). However, the choice of location of the mega-nourishment exemplifies the fact that there were indeed conflicting interests. The province wanted the Sand Motor to be visible and not submerged in front of the coast. After all, an expensive prestige project, which is invisible and impossible to open ceremonially, is worth little for a politician. Because of this, the province was prepared to pay additional costs for a project design that maximized benefits in the recreational, natural and economic sector. On the other hand, the PWA was, initially, more concerned with coastal protection solutions.¹⁰ Compared to their non-submerged, land-attached¹¹ counterparts, submerged nourishment designs usually cost less, but score low on those benefits, which the province strived for. But as a submerged design fit the PWA’s standard policy and its disinterest in non-safety benefits, it favored the less expensive submerged option.

Nonetheless, in the end, the ministry hierarchically ordered the persistently skeptical PWA to construct the project.

Various municipalities near the proposed location had more practical concerns such as nuisance through sand or tourists and also swimmer safety. The province dealt with these concerns pragmatically by staying in close contact with worried actors and drafting a maintenance agreement including the feared nuisance aspects and measures to counter them (Policy advisor of municipality Westland, personal communication, 14 July 2015).

For two reasons the conflict potential between these differing interests in this phase was not realized. First, few actors had interests at the proposed location itself (Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October 2015). In the Netherlands, the coast is national property, so municipalities have little formal influence in the coastal management process. This ownership structure also meant that expropriation was unnecessary. Second, from the start, the project was approached and communicated as an 'experiment' and 'pilot', which had two advantages. First, national funds reserved for infrastructural innovation experiments facilitated the financing of the project. Second, an experimental coastal management project could not contribute to coastal protection, due to unknown safety performance, so that the coast would not be unsafe, if the experiment failed. As a result, the urgency of the project was lower than with a regular coastal reinforcement project, reducing resistance among other more critical actors (Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October 2015).

As the project moved on and the EIA phase dawned, a change occurred in the timescale perception of the province. When the end of the legislative period of the governor drew near, the urgency of finalizing the project increased for the province. After all, the governor wanted to open the new beach strip herself and add the project to her list of achievements. As a consequence, the project organization had to step up its efforts. Hence, all the procedures including that of the EIA had to be rushed (Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October 2015). Fourteen months between the Notification of Intent and the final EIA report – a short amount of time for this kind of project – reflect this procedural pace (Table 3). Further, until the EIA report was published, there was no clear-cut design for the Sand Motor. At last, the EIA report proposed three different designs for the Sand Motor, favoring one of these for its presumed environmental advantage. In this period, nature organizations began voicing loud critique. Although they acknowledged that nature would be developed with the project, they argued that all nature benefits would be nullified, because of fragmentation of the designated nature areas with cycling paths and other recreational infrastructure. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), an authoritative actor in the environmental field, rose to defend the Sand Motor. It was the WWF's view that the created ecosystem would be robust enough to withstand these fragmenting interventions. This was an important move in rallying actors around the Sand Motor (Member of the project group, personal communication, 23 September 2015).

Negotiations about the division of costs during the financing phase did not occur in the steering group nor in the project group. Not even the municipal policy advisor, a member of the steering group, knew how the cost allocation negotiations went. It turned out that the program director of the province had negotiated the distribution of the costs with the PWA. The PWA would pay €58 million from a crisis and recovery

fund initiated during the financial crisis to boost innovative projects. Decision-making had to speed up to be eligible for the next funding deadline, again putting time pressure on the process. For the provincial program director to convince his provincial council to spend €12 million on the Sand Motor was much more difficult than negotiating funding with the PWA (Provincial program director coast, personal communication, 11 May 2015). In the end, opposing parties in the provincial council of Zuid-Holland managed to come together on the funding issue and the Sand Motor project could proceed (Provincial project manager, personal communication, 21 October 2015).

Policy framing mechanisms ...

The best example of the provincial government's difficulty to realize its project was that the urgency and necessity of the proposed coastal protection policy was challenged by other actors. This is directly related to the suggested 'problem-free-ness' of the project. On the one hand, commenting on a project as problem-free suggests the low-conflict character of the policy process. On the other hand, it also insinuates a critique on the necessity of the project, as if to ask: 'Why is this project done, if there is not a "real" policy problem?' Some actors thought that the coastal management policy in place – the annual routine nourishment scheme – was appropriate and did not need reviewing. Because these actors felt the absence of a problem there was no reason for them to participate in the project. In this situation, problem definitions differed across policy levels. For the province, the project could solve a regional infrastructure problem and prepare for future coastal management challenges. On the national level, in particular for the Innovation Platform, the provincial problem was not perceived as such. Rather, the national level was concerned with a lack of innovation in The Netherlands as a whole. The PWA accepted the policy as a suitable option, but did not see the urgency to implement it at the proposed location, as there was no safety issue there at that time. This critique exposes the originally undertheorized meaning-making aspect of the MST. It reveals a frame conflict between actors who perceive an infrastructural problem and other actors who disagree with that problem definition. To convince those other actors of the relevance of the Sand Motor project, the province had to bring other actors to reframe to solve this frame conflict.

Frame-convergent framing mechanisms

Incorporation. Over time, provincial government interviewees observed a frame incorporation at the PWA. In interactions with the PWA, the provincial government promoted its idea of a Sand Motor and tried to convince the PWA that it had the potential to be a useful addition to the set of coastal protection instruments. The polarization from the provincial government that went hand in hand with the incorporation by the PWA, will be discussed below. As more and more preliminary studies were produced, the evidence for the Sand Motor's potential accumulated. At a certain point before the PWA accepted the idea, it was reluctance to experiment with such an unproven technology which remained. This interaction is an example of incorporation and not one of accommodation. The PWA did not fully accept the Sand Motor as proposed by the provincial government of South Holland. Rather, it accepted the relevance of experimenting with the concept, but wanted it to occur at a spot outside

Table 4. Overview of framing events in project Sand Motor.

Moment	Actor A	How?	What?	Actor B	Addition to epistemic community
From the start	Province	Accommodated	Naming the project a 'pilot'	Innovation Platform	Innovation Platform, national government
Continuously	Province	Polarized	Project location	PWA	-
Gradually	PWA	Incorporated	Project relevance	Province	PWA
During EIA	Province	Reconnected	Additional measures to reduce expected nuisance	Municipalities	Municipalities Westland & The Hague organizations
After EIA report	WWF	Reconnected	Reassurance of no ecological disadvantages	Other nature	
Nature NGOs					

of the province of South Holland. Hence, the frames of the provincial government and the PWA converged but did not end up overlapping totally.

Accommodation. The province's persuasiveness is visible through a number of framing mechanisms that we uncovered in the case (Table 4). By the end, most actors in the Sand Motor project were in favor of multifunctional coastal management. These actors reframed from problem orientation to focusing on opportunities and grand innovation. The general openness of actors toward the new coastal technology resulted in lower frame conflict potential. Another advantage of the approach chosen by the province was that it was set up as a 'pilot'. As a pilot, the novel technology could be tested for its performance on the intended targets. This testing character reduced the frame conflict potential in the decision-making process. This is an example of the accommodation mechanism. It shows that by replacing the idea of a 'full-fledged coastal protection project' for the 'pilot approach' in its frame, from the outset the province was able to soften resistance to the uncharted territory that the new coastal management technology represented. Namely, frame conflict potential would have been much higher, if the project had been a regular coastal reinforcement project. In regular coastal reinforcement projects, the PWA would have protested, if such an unproven technology had been suggested. Choosing to approach the project as a pilot, thus, reduced the conflict potential in the project and is partly responsible for the pervasive perception that the project was executed smoothly. Besides an accommodation of frame elements at the province, this development shows the instinct of the province in dealing with the frames present at the national level and the PWA. By accommodating the pilot aspect, the province defined their problem in terms of the innovative power it could possess. Convincing the national level of the innovativeness of the project added a powerful actor to the epistemic community, which the province was constructing.

Reconnection. Another type of framing mechanism occurred in the interaction between the province and the local municipalities. The latter warned for potential local nuisance in the aftermath of the project. Here, we see the municipalities' frame element of 'fear for nuisance' challenging the province's frame element of 'an unproblematic construction'. However, the provincial project organization had little difficulty in dealing with the municipal politicians' fears for nuisance by setting up a maintenance agreement (Policy advisor of municipality Westland, personal communication, 14 July 2015). This maintenance agreement specified the responsibilities for local nuisance problems emerging after construction in the maintenance phase and which additional measures had to be implemented to deal with these. As a result, the maintenance agreement formed the

missing link between the province's and the municipalities' frames by which the province succeeded to reconcile their respective frames by frame reconnection. This is again a framing move increasing the number of actors in the epistemic community. While the province is on the same wavelength with the municipalities regarding the indirect benefits of the project, the province has to deal with the problematic side effects of the project on the local scale. Only after acknowledging these side effects and amending the project to prevent them, did the municipalities become full members of the epistemic community.

A reframing, which did not occur among the inner circle policy actors – ministry, province, PWA, municipalities and water boards – happened at the environmental and nature organizations. These were initially critical about the actual nature development that was planned. They feared that recreational elements such as cycling paths designed to traversing the designated nature area would fragment the habitat too much. It can be ascribed to the WWF's persuasiveness that these organizations were won over. Here, the WWF brought about a frame reconnection between them and the other nature organizations, by affirming that the impact on nature would not be as grave as was predicted by the other nature organizations. This argument functioned as a strong categorization of the policy substance. By means of this frame reconnection, the WWF helped the inner circle policy actors to reduce the resistance against the project in civil society.

Frame-divergent framing mechanisms

Polarization. It was much more difficult for the province to convince the PWA of the Sand Motor. The reframing that eventually occurred at the PWA was triggered by one framing mechanism. The province polarized its frame with respect to the PWA's frame, by insisting that the Sand Motor as a once-in-20-years nourishment was worth pursuing and that the location should be in the province. The PWA initially maintained that they already had a functioning nourishment program in place and that there was no need to change the way they worked. Frame disconnection was not found in the case.

Non-interpretive interactions

Nevertheless, the other factor leading to the PWA joining the project was not associated with framing between province and PWA, but was hierarchical. As the PWA is an agency of the ministry of infrastructure and environment, it takes orders from said ministry; this is a typical principal-agent situation. As previously mentioned, the ministry was very much in favor of the innovative character and eventually ordered the PWA to cooperate with the province. This aspect was especially visible in the financing phase when the PWA agreed to contribute a large share of the predicted costs. Having been overruled by its principal, the PWA's heart was not in this agreement, because it had to contribute a part of its scarce funds to a project that it did not support in the proposed design (Vice president PWA, personal communication, 30 October 2015; project employee PWA, personal communication, 30 October, 2015). Once the top-down decision was made to execute the project according to the design proposed by the province, the PWA began cooperating and carrying out the project as an obedient agent (Vice president PWA, personal communication, 30 October 2015). Again, this top-down decision could not have been made, were it not for the national-level support of the

project. The mechanism of frame polarization meant that the province stayed in charge of the framing power. The looming exacerbation of the frame conflict between the province and the PWA was prevented by the ministerial intervention ordering the PWA to carry out the project. Hence, the ministry was an important partner for the province to have and shows the necessity of forming an epistemic community.

... reveal interpretive policy entrepreneuring

When looking at these framing activities, it becomes clear that the provincial governor and her civil servants took up the challenge that the initial frame constellation represented. Three of these five major reframings involving framing mechanisms that we found in the case are attributed to the province (Table 4). As the initiator of the project, the province was an active meaning-maker in the case, trying to build an epistemic community with the other actors. The observed reframings illuminate the development of meaning-making in this case study. They point toward a gradual opening up of most actors to the idea of nature development and Building with Nature throughout the case. However, it was due to the provincial governor's boldness and verve that this push and pull was decided in favor of the province. Early on, before the actual pilot project began, the provincial governor had been able to propose an innovative coastal project. Although she did not succeed and the weak spot was resolved with another technology, other actors at the time incorporated the idea of an innovative experiment in coastal management at the Zuid-Holland coast into their frames: the seed had been sown. During the project, the province could show persuasively that the policy content could indeed be labeled 'innovative' and that it was embedded in a broader story. Besides being about the infrastructural and protection potential for the province, this broader story emphasized the reputational effects of the pilot project for the Netherlands. The story was about the greater good. For these actors, the project meant an opportunity to realize multiple benefits, among which innovation was key. In telling this story, the province accommodated the objectives of other actors, including the ministry and the Innovation Platform into its own frame. As we have seen, the latter was just one of the venues at which the provincial alderwoman displayed her sensitivity for other actors' perspectives.

To leave a legacy, for a politician often involves leading the way into unknown terrain. Coupling the Building with Nature concept with the infrastructural problems she discerned in her province, brought this opportunity for the provincial governor. She already revealed her willingness to try something new during the weak spots project. However, at that time, she did not succeed in convincing other actors to incorporate or accommodate a novel coastal management technology into their frame. In compensation, she negotiated that the province could experiment with the new technology later on. What we see here, is the, albeit not yet fruitful, willingness of the provincial governor to lead by example.

In two instances, the framing agency of the provincial governor and her civil servants was not enough to convince other actors. In these instances, institutional entry points were necessary. First, the project organization needed the institutional venue of the annual parliamentary infrastructural project pitches to set the national agenda. Second,

although presumably influenced by the province's framing efforts toward the ministry, the ministry had to order the PWA officially to stop protesting and execute the project. This is an example of the ministry exerting institutional power over the PWA. Without these two institutional events, it would have been much more difficult for the province and its governor to meet its ambition. Here, our assumption is confirmed that not only framing and argumentation shape the outcome of the project. Sometimes, framing and arguing do not lead to frame coalitions including all relevant actors and other means have to be used.

Seen by many interviewees as the mastermind behind the pilot project, the provincial governor was the one who wanted to make it happen and to bequeath the Sand Motor to the next generations. Notwithstanding her failure to convince actors earlier on in the weak spots coastal management project, her way of defining problems and rallying actors in an epistemic community certainly gave a glimpse of her generic ability to sense and act upon other actors' perspectives. Her prominent position in the case, though not the inventor or designer, legitimates labeling her as an interpretive policy entrepreneur. The interpretation of other actors' frames and responding to them by framing mechanisms were her main forging tool. Hence, we argue that the provincial governor can be characterized as such an interpretive policy entrepreneur who succeeded in building an epistemic community around the innovative coastal defense technology of the Sand Motor.

Discussion and conclusions

In this article, we explore meaning-making and policy entrepreneurship in a coastal policy project. The 'Sand Motor' coastal management project presents an opportunity to understand the development of meaning and meaning interactions where the policy substance is innovative. We illustrate how the provincial governor can be seen as an interpretive policy entrepreneur. This is based on the accounts we obtained from participants in the policy process, triggering our deeper engagement with the provincial governor and her civil servants' meaning-making activities. Our analysis indicates the importance of framing mechanisms and the presence of an interpretive policy entrepreneur for successful implementation of an innovative coastal protection technology.

Although Kingdon intended to add an agency dimension to his three streams by including the policy entrepreneur, his coupling mechanism remained a black box. In opening this black box, interactional framing mechanisms enabled us to trace Kingdon's policy entrepreneur in practice. Instead of studying the interaction of a policy entrepreneur with some stream, interactional framing mechanisms guide the focus of study to the meaning-making interactions between potential interpretive policy entrepreneurs and other actors. As such, the five processes of framing interaction have been introduced as a heuristic tool to uncover whether it is possible to rightfully speak of the presence of an interpretive policy entrepreneur. From the overview of framing interactions in [Table 4](#), we are able to reason back to the characteristics of interpretive policy entrepreneurs, given that successful meaning-making is one way to uncover these latent characteristics. If there is an actor who is successful in meaning-making

interactions with others, that actor must make good sense of the meaning other actors attribute to the policy situation, because for the interactions to be successful.

In addition, by introducing the interpretive dimension of policy entrepreneuring, we were able to structure the four characteristics of policy entrepreneurs hierarchically (Figure 4). It shows that at the base of policy change lies understanding others' positions in the policy arena. Seen in this way, sense-making is a necessary condition for successful policy entrepreneuring through framing. Thus, illustrating the interpretive side of policy entrepreneurs contributes to the conceptual development and elaboration of MST and expands its applicability into the interpretive, meaning-oriented realm.

Besides speaking to the policy change literature in mainstream public administration, the conceptual construction of the interpretive policy entrepreneur also contributes to the interpretive policy analysis field. Looking back, the constitution of the frame concept by Goffman reflects the 'what?' of an individual's perception of the world (Goffman 1974). Recently, interpretive framing research has emphasized the processual component of the more active 'framing' – 'how?' are frames made and changed individually as well as in interaction. Finally, the interpretive policy entrepreneur takes this a step further and adds a third to these two conceptual developments, reflecting on 'who?' is doing the framing based on their own frame and in reaction to others' frames. In this way, the interpretive policy entrepreneur extends the dynamics in interpretive framing research. In addition, by integrating a well-known policy change concept, the interpretive policy entrepreneur concept bears the potential to increase the visibility of the interpretive policy analysis field in mainstream public administration and policy sciences.

The findings we present do not only cross the borders between subfields of the policy sciences and public administration but are also relevant beyond the practice of the coastal policy domain. In line with Gadamer's idea of interpretation as a generic everyday-life process, the analysis can also be used in other policy domains (Gadamer 2010). The interpretive policy entrepreneur processes we have described here are not limited to the coastal policy domain and will also reveal interpretive policy entrepreneurs in other policy domains. Hence, we argue that the provincial governor's story, and its theoretical implications, as presented here are useful for practitioners in all policy domains. Practitioners may learn from the way in which the interpretive policy entrepreneur used framing mechanisms to deal with the various problem definitions and preferred policy solutions among other actors on all policy levels and organizations. For policy practitioners aspiring to become an interpretive policy entrepreneur, framing interaction mechanisms are a means of process management which, if employed sensibly, may increase the possibility of policy change in a desirable direction.

The theoretical and practical implications of the interpretive policy entrepreneur concept lead us to two aspects that deserve attention in future research. First, the relationship between taking risks and meaning-making are not as strong as those between defining problems in terms of others and sense-making. Although we have explained taking risks as an expression of understanding other policy actors' positions, exactly how the relationship between understanding and estimating the acceptable level of risk to be taken needs more exploration. Finally, in our hierarchical conceptualization of interpretive policy characteristics, an epistemic community is the final stage of

policy entrepreneuring. This need not be the final stage at all, though. As such, it is still unclear as to what happens in case of failing policy entrepreneuring. We suggest several alternative outcomes, but rooting these conceptual ideas in empirical cases represents another alley of future research.

Notes

1. To date, Hoes and Regeer (2015) and Winkel and Leipold (2015) appear to be the only attempts to explore potential connections between interpretive policy analysis and the MST.
2. Various documentaries have been made on the Sand Motor. For visual and technical information, see: http://www.npo.nl/de-kennis-van-nu/02-11-2014/VPWON_1229351; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtY4_QXcVsM.
3. In the Sand Motor project, approximately 21 million m³ of sand was used to create a hook with a lagoon at its base. This added an area equal to approximately 115 football pitches to the Dutch coast.
4. See Table 1 for Mintrom and Norman (2009) terminology and our respective interpretive translations.
5. In this sense, interpretive policy entrepreneurs are closely related to boundary workers in that they reformulate boundaries of frames to change the policy situation in their favor (Williams 2002, 110).
6. From an interpretive perspective, problems and their solutions are teleologically linked (Kurt 2004). Frames limit the scope of solutions, and which solution within that scope will be preferred. Each policy actor will perceive a different range out of the entire stream of problems or solutions.
7. The interactional framing approach proposed by Dewulf and Bouwen (2012) is process oriented in nature and is not so much interested in the framing content as the way in which actors deal with challenging frame elements in general. For a more content-oriented framing approach, see Van Hulst and Yanow (2014), by means of which it is possible to analyze the rhetorical moves of the actors.
8. Whenever we mention the 'Province' without specifying individuals, we mean the provincial government as a policymaking actor, i.e. the provincial governor and her civil servants.
9. The then prime minister (Balkenende) founded this Innovation Platform in 2003 to boost the innovation capacity of the Netherlands.
10. 'Cost-effective and functional' ('Sober en doelmatig') was the slogan of the PWA. This slogan describes their task metaphorically: guarantee flood safety at low costs.
11. That is, not island-type nourishment designs.

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