

Citizen initiative the Dreumelse Waard: a vehicle of action in changing the practice of shallowing?

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06 11 2023

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MSc Thesis – International Development Studies

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Abstract

In 2019, four friends living in Dreumel discovered a vast amount of plastic and other waste along the shores of the “Over de Maas” project. The waste that was discovered resulted from the practice of shallowing, which involves the disposal of dredged material to reduce the depth of a deep lake. The four friends formed the citizen initiative called the “Dreumelse Waard”, intending to investigate and halt the practice of shallowing in their Municipality. This research aims to understand the role of a citizen initiative in changing policies regarding the issue of shallowing, taking the Dreumelse Waard as an example. This has been researched by focusing on analysing if the Dreumelse Waard has managed to contribute to changing the image of shallowing and to examine whether their efforts and strategy resulted in changing the practice of shallowing. This research contributes to the theoretical debate on how citizen initiatives can accomplish institutional change in the Netherlands. The context of the study of shallowing is heavily institutionalised and for citizens to contribute to change in an institutionalised context is still relatively under-researched in the Netherlands. The theory of Punctuated Equilibrium developed by Baumgartner and Jones (1991) was applied to study how the Dreumelse Waard aimed to reshape and change the practice of shallowing. This MSc thesis has adopted a case study using qualitative methods. Discourse analysis has been done to identify how the Dreumelse Waard has changed the image of shallowing. The results have shown how, using venue shopping, the members of the Dreumelse Waard were able to change the perception of shallowing. This led to policy changes, including stricter regulations and the formulation of a new policy addressing the issue of shallowing.

Acknowledgments

With profound gratitude upon the completion of this thesis, I dedicate this section to express my heartfelt appreciation to all those who have supported and contributed to this endeavor. Firstly, I wish to mention the challenges I encountered while composing this thesis amidst my rehabilitation journey, due to a ski accident, which demanded an extraordinary amount of resilience and commitment. I attended physiotherapy sessions throughout the week to rehabilitate. I am immensely thankful to my physiotherapist for creating a supportive space wherein I could share my thesis progress and the struggles I faced due to an extended period of immobility and inability to participate in physical activities. Her support significantly contributed to the successful completion of this work. I would also like to express my gratitude to my friends who visited me during the period of immobility. Their support and encouragement played a significant role in helping me through the thesis writing process. Special thanks go to my supervisors: Rutgerd Boelens, for offering this interesting topic and guiding me diligently throughout the research process, and Dave Huitema for providing me valuable insight regarding my theoretical framework and sharing his experiences surrounding the topic. In addition, I would like to thank Nicolas Jager, for stepping in and providing valuable comments and discussions about the draft results. I sincerely thank all the interviewees who took the time to participate in the interviews. Last, but certainly not least, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to my family, my parents, and others, for their attentive ears and unwavering support during the time I worked on this thesis.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Citizen initiative the “Dreumelse Waard”

In 2019, four friends living in Dreumel discovered a vast amount of plastic and other waste along the shores of the “Over de Maas” project. In the municipality of West Maas and Waal, two projects are situated, namely, the “Over de Maas” project and the UWDH (Uiterwaarden Wamel, Dreumel Heerewaarden) project, both of which entail shallowing. Shallowing involves the disposal of dredged material to reduce the depth of a lake or a pond (Seelen et al., 2019). Starting in 2019, the four friends formed the citizen initiative the Dreumelse Waard¹, and began to question and challenge the practice of shallowing. They conducted their research by tracing back to the found plastic. According to their research they concluded that the “Over de Maas” project is the source of the plastic, which pollutes the downstream of the Meuse, due to the shallowing happening². The Dreumelse Waard aims to investigate the practices around shallowing, bringing more transparency around the process of shallowing and aiming to halt the process. Moreover, they are worried about the nature and the environment in Maas en Waal and Heerewaarden and the health conditions of the inhabitants³. Despite being banned in the rest of Europe, contaminated soil and dredging have been disposed into at least 60 Dutch natural lakes over the past decade, leading to the presence of plastic and demolition material in the soil and dredged material (Logger, 2019).

The issue of shallowing in deep lakes is happening for a long period and has lacked political attention. The last developments surrounding shallowing and changes regarding the policy and regulations took place in 2009. However, the members of the Dreumelse Waard have succeeded in bringing the issue to the political agenda and thereby voicing their concerns to politicians at both the local and national levels. In collaboration with Zembla, a Dutch

¹ In this thesis the citizen initiative will be referred as the Dreumelse Waard.

² Burgercollectief Dreumel, (2018). Aanwijzingen voor Herkomst onbekend deel plastic soep Retrieved March 14, 2023, from <http://dreumel.burgercollectief.club/Onderzoek-herkomst-plastic-soep-Over-de-Maas.pdf>

³ Burgercollectief Dreumel, (2018). 6 Miljoen ton buitenlandse troep dumpen in Dreumel? Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <http://www.dreumel.burgercollectief.club/rivier Natuur.pdf>

investigating journalism program, several documentaries about the shallowing process⁴ in the Netherlands has been made, addressing the issue of pollution, and changing the image surrounding shallowing. As a result of their efforts, stricter standards have been introduced, leading to amended regulations concerning shallowing. Furthermore, a new policy has been developed. The story of the Dreumelse Waard shows that a citizen initiative can be successful in bringing the issue to the agenda, contextualised in a highly institutionalised environment, resulting in policy change. To understand how that happened I rely on the theory of Punctuated Equilibrium theory (PE theory). PE theory is a popular approach for analysing both policy stability and change (Kuhlmann and van der Heijden, 2018). I also rely on discourse theory to sharpen my view on the process of changing the image of shallowing. Discourse theory focuses on understanding how meanings to social and physical phenomena can bring new ideas into practice (Hardy et al., 2004).

1.2 Research aims

This research aims to understand the role of a citizen initiative in changing policies regarding the issue of shallowing, taking the Dreumelse Waard as an example. It seeks to understand the strategies or mechanisms used to bring the issue to the attention of the political agenda, the wider debate, or the end goal: aiming to change and reshape policies. Taking the Dreumelse Waard as a case study provides an opportunity to demonstrate how a citizen initiative has acted on the issue of shallowing in the Netherlands and to what extent they have contributed to changing the image of shallowing resulting in policy change. This thesis will give new insights when it comes to the agency of citizen initiatives addressing the process and policy surrounding shallowing in the Netherlands. Using the lens of PE theory and Discourse Theory, the following research questions are formulated.

⁴ Bosma, R (Regie & Samenstelling), de Lange, M (Onderzoek) *Gokken met Bagger*, Nederland: BNNVARA (September 26, 2019) https://www.npostart.nl/zembla/26-09-2019/BV_101393879. *De afvaldump door Rijkswaterstaat (1/2)* (February 26,2020) https://www.npostart.nl/zembla/06-02-2020/BV_101396322 *De afvaldump door Rijkswaterstaat (2/2)* (September 24,2020) https://www.npostart.nl/zembla/24-09-2020/BV_101401012

Research questions

RQ: How did the citizen initiative the Dreumelse Waard contribute to changing the image of shallowing and how did the effort result in a policy change?

In this thesis, I will make use of four research sub-questions that will give an extensive answer to this research question. The research sub-questions are based on the theoretical framework.

Sub-question 1

What is the dominant discourse used to implement shallowing?

To understand how the Dreumelse Waard contributes to changing the image of shallowing and how it has resulted in a policy change, it is necessary to understand and analyse the dominant image. This dominant image is maintained by policymakers at the Ministry and private sector and can be considered as the status quo.

Sub-question 2

What were the actions taken by the Dreumelse Waard to address the issue of shallowing?

This question will analyse how the Dreumelse Waard made use of the strategy of venue shopping to address the issue of shallowing in their municipality.

Sub-question 3

How did the Dreumelse Waard contribute to changing the discourse of shallowing?

This question will aim to analyse how the Dreumelse Waard, was able to change the image, including different attachments and characteristics of the issue.

Sub-question 4

Has the effort by the Dreumelse Waard resulted in policy change? If so where and why?

After identifying how the members contribute to changing the discourse of shallowing, this research question seeks to determine if the efforts made by the Dreumelse Waard in reframing the issue and venue shopping results in a change of venue and in turn results in policy change.

1.3 Societal relevance

Intervening in topics surrounding the quality of water is a timely issue in the Netherlands. In 2027, EU Member States must comply with the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). This directive aims to protect and restore European water bodies to achieve good chemical and ecological status, and to prevent deterioration⁵. However, some of the quality of the groundwater and surface water (rivers, streams, canals, and lakes) in the Netherlands, do not meet European standards, as they contain excessive amounts of chemicals (Nieuwenhuis, 2023). The practice of shallowing, a common occurrence in the Netherlands, will not effectively contribute to protecting our water when the disposed dredged material is contaminated and includes pollution. Significant shallowing projects are in progress or planned, including those in the municipality West Maas and Waal (Logger, 2019, Burgercollectief de Dreumelse Waard, 2018). According to Logger (2019), there has been a significant increase in the import of soil and dredged sediment since 2012. This surge can be attributed to various factors, including the time constraints for the disposal process in deep lakes, the number of deep lakes requiring dredging, and the availability of Dutch soil and dredged material that meets the necessary quality standards (Ibid). The substantial increase in the amount of contaminated dredged material being disposed of, along with the plans to initiate even more dredging projects, highlights the urgency of the issue. As such, this research holds significant societal relevance.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

I continue this thesis by explaining a definition of a citizen initiative and discussing the state of the art on citizen initiatives and policy change. The state of art together in combination with explaining the Punctuated Equilibrium theory and the theory on Discourse will comprise Chapter 2. Additionally in chapter 2 an analytical framework will be presented. Chapter 3 contains a description of the research methods, including an explanation of data collection and analysis procedures. This will be followed up by a section including positionality, which helps the reader understand my position and provides insight into the choice of the theoretical framework and the research bias. The results will be stated in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 4

⁵ https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/water/water-framework-directive_en#objectives

contains a contextual section that provides an overview of the two shallowing projects that the Dreumelse Waard aims to halt, including the institutional setting. Chapter 5 will focus on identifying the dominant discourse of shallowing, followed by Chapter 6 explaining the strategy of the Dreumelse Waard and how the citizen initiative contributed to changing the dominant discourse. In Chapter 7, it will present if the efforts of the Dreumelse Waard have resulted in change concerning the policy related to shallowing. In Chapter 8, I will discuss the results and the theoretical choices of this research. This will be followed by the limitations. To conclude the discussion, I will reflect on how my positionality has evolved throughout the research. In Chapter 9, I will give a concise answer to the central research question.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

2.1 State of the art on citizen initiatives and policy change

This section discusses the state of the art on citizen initiatives and policy change. Citizen initiatives, as described in the literature, are a form of self-organization where citizens come together to provide public goods or services to their community. In addition, citizen initiatives tackle wicked problems such as well-being or sustainability (Igalla et al., 2019). Bisschops & Beunen (2019) have researched the role of citizen initiatives in the field of urban planning. They conducted an analysis of the institutional efforts aimed at establishing a more institutionalized active role for citizens in urban planning. Their study demonstrates that a combination of various forms of institutional work plays a role in shaping the trajectory of citizens' initiatives and the resulting institutional changes. They demonstrate in their study that a particular citizen initiative successfully co-created institutional changes by introducing new elements to the existing framework. These included modifying rules concerning event legalization and establishing agreements between the municipality and the citizen initiative. In Bisschops et al., (2023), the process of institutionalization has been analysed concerning ideas related to promoting the role of citizen initiatives in planning. They have shown a discrepancy between the rhetoric and actual implementation of encouraging citizen initiative in planning. Tosun et al., (2022), researched European citizen initiatives and their potential to bring about policy change, focusing on the direct and indirect effects of citizen initiatives.

They argued that citizen initiatives can bring about policy change that, however being small initially, can be incremental and accumulate to transformative change. Their empirical findings in this study stressed to take the policy effect of European citizen initiatives seriously, including how their efforts resulted in transformative changes. Huitema and Meijerink (2010) studied the way in which transitions occur in water management while reviewing the role that groups or individuals plays in the process of implementing policy change.

Mintrom & Norman (2009) examine the notion of policy entrepreneurship and how it can be used to clarify the process of policy change. According to Brouwer (2015), policy entrepreneurs are highly talented individual change agents who, despite the general difficulty in changing policy, redirect the debate about policy issues. The study shows that recent

instances of policy entrepreneurship is key in explaining policy changes, serving as models for future research in this area (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Renner & Meijerink (2017) studied a case study in the Rhine-delta, where they explored a range of strategies that policy entrepreneurs utilise in cross border water management to gain attention for climate adaptation in the water policy debate. The study demonstrates that the presence and activities of policy entrepreneurs contribute to putting climate adaptation on the cross-border policy agenda (Ibid). The context surrounding the issue of shallowing is heavily institutionalised and for citizens to contribute to change in an institutionalised context is still relatively under-researched in the Netherlands. This thesis aims to comprehend how the strategies of the Dreumelse Waard result in policy change, thus contributing to the existing literature on citizen initiatives and policy change.

Numerous theories address the topic of policy change and provide testable assumptions. For example, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith is one of the most influential approaches to policy change. Essentially, it views policymaking as the results of the competition between coalitions of actors who advocate beliefs about certain policy options (Weible, 2023). According to the ACF framework, policymaking in modern societies is characterized by a high degree of complexity, both in terms of content and legal aspects. As a result, individuals involved in the process must specialize to have chance of exerting influence. This specialization occurs within policy subsystems is composed of individuals who consistently strive to influence policy within a policy subsystem (Sabatier, 2007). The Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), developed by Kingdon (1984) emphasized the possibility of policy change through the role of agenda setting and the interaction of problem, policy, and political streams (Weible, 2023). Kingdon views policy formation as the consequence of a flow of three distinct sets of processes or streams: problems, policies, and politics. When these elements align under favourable conditions, it creates what he terms “policy windows” (John, 2018). After outlining the most important theories that deal with policy change, this thesis will use the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, which will be explained in the subsequent section.

2.2 Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

To address the research questions, this master's thesis will use the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, developed by Baumgartner & Jones (1991). The theory aims to understand stability and change in public policymaking (True et al., 2019). According to the theory, powerful ideas can be changed or challenged because of extended shocks to the policy system (Rychert & Wilkins, 2018). These shocks consist of an accumulation of unaddressed grievances, or political processes leading to a shift from negative feedback to positive feedback, which reinforces the pressure for reform. This can result in a change in the policy-making process and the establishment of a new equilibrium, which spills over from the policy subsystems into the macro-political system. This, in turn, creates an opportunity for policy change (Ibid). The Punctuated Equilibrium Model is displayed in Figure 1.

Additionally, policymaking in normal circumstances takes place in venues that are comprised of closed circles of experts, referred to as policy subsystems (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991). These subsystems are characterized by a strong tendency to maintain the status quo and resist change, due to the influence of established interest and negative feedback mechanisms (True et al., 2019).

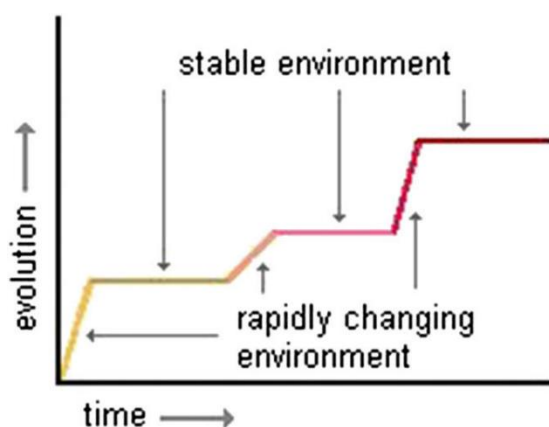


Figure 1. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory. Note: Extended periods of stability punctuated by brief episodes of change, often catalysed by significant focusing events (Michaud, 2019)

Negative and Positive feedback mechanisms

According to Baumgartner et al., (2014), a negative feedback mechanism maintains stability in a system and can be seen as a thermostat maintaining a constant temperature in a room.

According to Baumgartner and Jones (2002, p.9) “*The key element of any negative feedback system is simply that the system reacts to counterbalance, rather than reinforce, any changes coming in from the environment*”. A positive feedback mechanism includes a self-reinforcing process that amplifies a trend rather than offsetting it. When observing such a mechanism over time, leads to significant clusters of events, often accompanied by substantial and unpredicted changes. Additionally, when a policy monopoly begins to experience a decline in support for its established policy image, rival institutions that may not have been involved in the issue previously may assert their authority to become involved. As more hostile agencies become involved, the greater the image change, further deteriorating the image. This result in more actors becoming involved, resulting in a self-reinforcing process. This positive feedback mechanism explained some of the rapid shifts observed in public policies on power, pesticides, smoking, and various other issues (Ibid).

The mechanisms for policy change, according to the PE theory, includes a new definition of an issue (i.e., “reframing”), the involvement of new policy actors, and an increase in the saliency or public attention to a problem (Rychert & Wilkins, 2018 p.2133). According to Kuhlman & van der Heijden (2018) policymakers apply institutional venues combined with policy images to manipulate the dominate understanding of the issue with which they aim to change and to influence the institution that exerts jurisdiction over them. Venue shopping, studied by different scholars (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Pralle, 2003, Mortensen, 2007, Meijerink 2008, Ley, 2015), is at the heart of many political strategies and is confirmed to be an integral part of the policy process. According to Mortensen (2007, p. 375) “*The key available to those who want to change an existing subsystem is to expand the conflict to actors not formerly involved in the subsystem through a redefinition of the issue at hand*”. Due to the above-mentioned strengths of reframing policy images and venue shopping, this thesis will focus on these mechanisms to understand how the Dreumelse Waard aimed to contribute to reshaping or changing the policy surrounding shallowing.

2.3 Mechanisms for policy change

Venue Shopping

When shopping for a different venue, addressing a certain issue, advocacy groups can bypass the policy elite whose attention it is to maintain the status quo. By doing this, they can operate more equally with their opponents, or the opponents did not have the opportunity to mobilize themselves in that venue, and therefore the advocacy group takes advantage (Pralle, 2003). Policymakers need to employ a rational decision model or know in advance exactly how their ideas will be received in a particular institutional venue when applying venue shopping (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991). They may search for favourable venues through a trial-and-error process or an evolutionary search (Ibid). To concretely define venues, this thesis adopts the idea of a venue being a (decision) setting to air arguments with current policy and present ideas for alternative policy proposals (Pralle, 2003). Baumgartner and Jones (1991) explain that depending on the issue a venue can comprehend, the federal government, private markets, local authorities or even families.

Reframing

To move to a different venue Baumgartner and Jones (1993) emphasize the reframing of an issue, aiming to attract certain venues. A policy image comprehends “*how a policy is characterized, understood, and discussed and involves a mixture of empirical information and emotive appeals*” (Rychert & Wilkins, 2018, p.2133). Policy images can be classified into two categories: those that support the existing status quo, which are upheld by the dominant policy monopoly within subsystem politics, and those that are critical and supportive of proponents of change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). Proponents of the policy tend to focus on a specific set of images, while their opponents may refer to a different set (Baumgartner et al., 2014). Baumgartner and Jones (1991), explain that in public discourse, there is often a tendency to focus on one aspect of an issue to the neglect of other important facts as well. Additionally, according to Rychert & Wilkins (2018), issues can be brought to the forefront of the public agenda either through a surge of enthusiasm or within an environment of criticism, and this dynamic has significant policy implications. A positive tone in debates will facilitate the establishment of new institutions or laws, while negative attention will result in the dismantling of policy subsystems (Ibid).

Venue change

New attachments regarding the issue, i.e., a new image surrounding shallowing, and venue shopping may result in a new set of participants and may attract multiple venues (Brouwer, 2015; True et al., 2019). When debates on a given topic emerge in an arena where they have not previously been discussed, it signifies a venue change (Baumgartner et al., 2014; Pralle, 2003). According to Meijerink (2008), issues debated in other venues provide opportunities to alter the structure of the rules of the game, thereby providing opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to advance their cases (True et al., 2019). Involving new venues, results in the establishment of new programs and agencies to implement novel policy provisions, the emergence of policy outcomes that deviate from previous practices, and a shift in the legitimate institution venues for policy decision-making (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002).

2.4 Discourse Theory

To understand how the Dreumelse Waard has managed to reframe the image of shallowing, specifications are achieved by applying discourse theory. This thesis uses discourse theory based on the work of scholar Maarten Hajer (2006). According to Isaac (2020) Hajer's significant contribution to the advancement of discourse approaches in environmental policy studies, lies in his operationalization of the discourse concept and his insightful corrections to its original elaboration by Foucault. Hajer (2006) was interested in how the environmental crisis was constructed discursively, leading to a shift in people's mentality towards the environment. In his work on the politics of environmental policy discourse, he employs social constructivism in policy analysis and emphasizes that policy-making practices are inherently discursive and argumentative. Discourses play a crucial role in shaping how we define, interpret, and address environmental issues (Hajer, 2006). Discourse, as described by Hajer (2006), is a way of giving meaning to social and physical phenomena by using a set of ideas, concepts, or categories to discuss a certain issue. In this thesis, discourses are perceived the same as policy images, since a policy image involves the idea of how a policy is characterized and discussed. Meanings and hence social reality, arise out of interrelated bodies of texts, (called discourses) that bring new ideas into practice (Hardy et al., 2004). Applying this definition of discourse analysis to this research means that certain meanings are produced about shallowing used in certain practices, leading to action (Hajer, 2006).

To assess the influence of discourse, Hajer's discourse analysis presents a two-step procedure. First, it examines whether the discourse is widely used by many individuals to conceptualize the world, which is referred to as discourse structuration. Second, it examines

whether the discourse solidifies into institutions and organizational practices, known as discourse institutionalization. If these two conditions are met, it can be argued that a particular discourse is hegemonic or dominant (Hajer, 1995).

2.5 Analytical framework

Venue shopping strategy

Venue shopping strategy will be uncovered by analysing where the members of the Dreumelse Waard have aired their concerns and objection to the current policy surrounding shallowing. The analysis will indicate which venues have been exploited and indicate their perceptions and constraints about these venues. Thereby, both institutional venues and non-institutional institutions approached by the members will be considered.

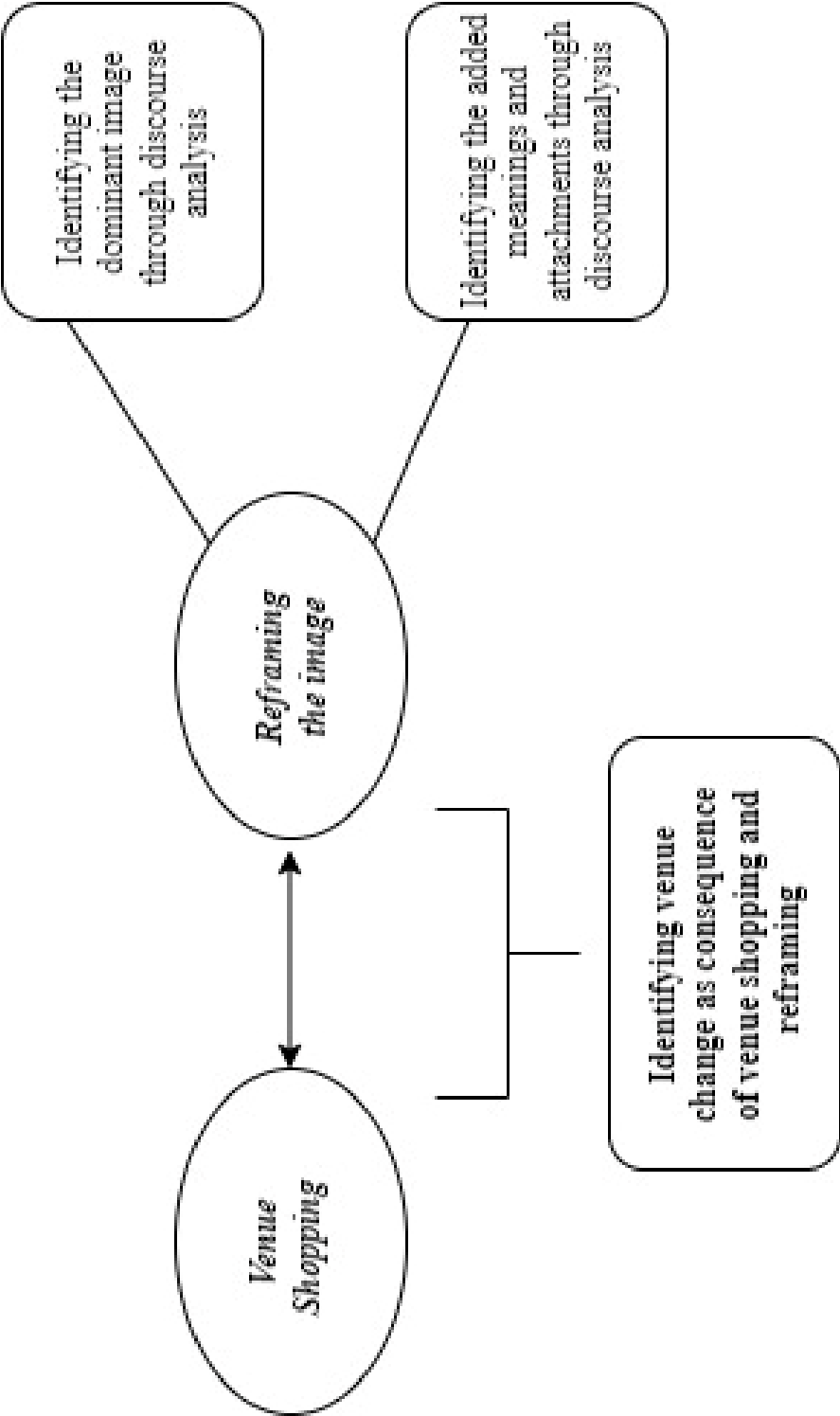
Reframing

The mechanisms of reframing or changing policy images will come forward in the following manner. Through qualitative discourse analysis, it is possible to identify the dominant image existing around shallowing and to identify the reframing process. As previously mentioned, discourses are perceived the same as policy images. To identify the dominant image, I will identify the various storylines employed existing around shallowing to show the meanings attached to shallowing. To identify, if the dominant image is hegemonic, the two-step procedures as explained by Hajer (1995) will be used, including discourse structuration and institutionalization. In addition, connotation will be shed on aspects of the power of the identified discourse. To operationalise the reframing process, I focus on the added meanings, concepts, and attachments towards shallowing, that differentiate from the identified image. In addition, connotation will be shed on the discursive power of the attachments achieved by the members of the Dreumelse Waard.

Venue Change

It will be analysed how the venue shopping strategy and the new attachment regarding shallowing have attracted multiple venues and how the issue is being debated in these venues. This includes the explanation of how reframing and venue shopping may reinforce themselves. Moreover, the consequence of the identified venue shift regarding the aim to halt the process of shallowing will be outlined. Figure 2 visualises the operationalisation and summarises the analytical approach. The arrow between venue shopping and reframing expresses the interactions of venue shopping and reframing.

Figure 2: Analytical framework



Chapter 3. Methodological design

In this chapter, the methodological design of this research will be discussed, after which the data collection methods will be presented and how this data will be analysed.

3.1 Worldview

This research is grounded in the social constructivist perspective. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the social constructivist perspective suggests that individuals actively engage in efforts to comprehend their surroundings and formulate interpretations of the objects and events in their lives. This perspective recognizes the existence of diverse and numerous perspectives on a particular phenomenon or object. The researcher aims to comprehend the complexity of reality by researching or discovering these varied and multiple perspectives of individuals (Ibid). Obtaining a “social constructivist” perspective goes hand in hand with conducting discourse analysis in this thesis. As stated by Hardy et al., (2004, p.20) “*Discourse analysis is founded on a strong social constructivist epistemology*”. Besides, according to a constructivist view of language and reality, the two cannot be separated. We cannot meaningfully speak about reality without language working as a lens that makes us see things in certain ways (Ibid).

3.2 Research design

According to Yin (2009), every type of empirical research has an implicit, if not explicit, research design. This thesis will conduct a case study design. Using a case study in this thesis will support explaining the actions and strategies employed by the Dreumelse Waard, and how this resulted in bringing the issue to the attention of the political agenda (Yin, 2009). Through this case study, the mechanism of the PE theory can be tested in a real-life case study. The case of the Dreumelse Waard shows citizen being active on this topic and allows us to understand the concerns citizens have when it comes to shallowing. What is unique about this case is that the members of the Dreumele Waard possess extensive knowledge of the process and have acquired a profound understanding of the practices related to the process of shallowing in their municipality.

3.3 Definition of research Boundaries and Unit of Analysis

In writing this thesis, certain research boundaries are taken into consideration. The thesis will only research the citizen initiative Dreumelse Waard and their actions and strategies to halt the shallowing process in the municipality of West Maas en Waal, including the project “Over de Maas” and the “Vonkerplas”. The unit of analysis includes the members of the Dreumelse Waard and the approached venues, situated in the institutional context of shallowing. As this research aims to understand the role of the Dreumelse Waard in changing policies regarding the issue of shallowing, this thesis adopts a narrow scope, only including the accompanied regulations and policies surrounding shallowing, i.e., the soil quality decree (*Besluit Bodemkwaliteit*, artikel 5, 2008). Furthermore, it will focus on the decision-making process concerning shallowing including institutional actors, i.e., the Municipality of West Maas en Waal, the Province of Gelderland, Rijkswaterstaat, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

3.4 Methods

Document analysis

In this research, document analysis has served four of the main purposes as described by Bowen (2009): providing context and (historical) background, suggesting questions for interviewing, confirming, and interpreting findings, and answering the main research question. The documents and reports produced on the topic by the Dreumelse Waard were retrieved from the website of the Dreumelse Waard. On their website, they also provided links to news articles addressing the topics. The academic literature and articles on shallowing, as well as articles for writing the theoretical chapter, were collected by using various electronic databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar, and the Wageningen UR digital library. Regarding the context, I started by using the news articles produced by the regional newspapers called "De Gelderlander," which resulted in finding other articles published by the Volkskrant, Parool, and De Groene Amsterdammer. To conclude I used the databases of news articles using the website of the Dreumelse Waard. Various reports and research on shallowing in the Netherlands have been analysed. These were discovered through suggestions made during various interviews that directed me to researchers who were investigating the issue of shallowing and had produced

reports on the topic. Document analysis was employed to gain insights into the communication between the Dreumelse Waard and the Ministry. I also examined parliamentary letters sent to the State Secretary and letters sent by various Members of Parliament to the Second Chamber of Parliament. These letters were located using the website of the Second Chamber and its search function to find the relevant parliamentary letters and responses related to the subject. These letters were also found on the Dreumelse Waard's website.

Interviews

The main research methods of this thesis were semi-structured interviews, I conducted 18 interviews with key stakeholders⁶, including 20 interviewees. 4 interviews with citizens who are active on this issue in their environment, 3 interviews with experts, 2 interviews with the journalists who have studied the issue of shallowing, 4 interviews with private companies, involved in the application of shallowing or have acted as a consultant supporting the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water, 5 interviews with officials from government institutions, i.e., Municipality of West Maas en Waal or the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. Moreover, I did some field observation by visiting both sites of the project including Project “Over de Maas” and the “Vonkerplas”. The sites of interviews were mostly online; however, I also had the chance to conduct them on-site, visiting the office of several interviewees. All interviews took 1 hour and were sometimes extended. All the interviews were held in Dutch. During the interview, I made use of semi-structured interviews including open-ended questions. As described in the ethics of this thesis proposal prior consent has been asked beforehand, providing information about the interview, and providing the possibility to be anonymous. To obtain more in-depth knowledge of the citizen initiative Dreumelse Waard an interview is conducted asking questions about the actions done by the members, their effective strategies, and the challenges. Using the snowball method, I have found other important actors being active on the topic for example in the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water management, the representative of the municipality of West Maas and Waal, actors in the media, and actors in the private sector. The starting point of this snowballing method involved the two experts, who also took part in the documentaries broadcasted by Zembla. By conducting an interview with two of the members of the Dreumelse Waard, I found out the important political actors on the local level. I have used a tailor-made topic list since the role of involvement regarding the issue of shallowing differs. This topic list enhanced the structure of my interviews making sure to

⁶ Complete list of interviewees is included in the appendix.

address all the questions. Moreover, the topic list allowed me to return to the preconceived questions whenever the interviewee deviated from the subject. During the interviews, special consideration was given to the potential sensitivity of the topic or certain questions. As a result, the topic list was developed gradually, with sensitive questions being asked at a later stage, while initially addressing the actor's background, tasks, and general questions about shallowing.

3.5 Data analysis

Document analysis

The data analysis is divided into three parts, according to the data collection methods. First, is the document analysis. The data gathered from document analysis has been focused on theoretical and methodological understandings of doing this research and to find information about the Dreumelse Waard and the process of shallowing in the municipality of West Maas and Waal. Furthermore, the data gathered from this document analysis has provided background information to develop the interview questions. The data of the document analysis has been used to understand the institutional setting and has been supportive of conducting discourse analysis. The data of the document analysis has been stored using Mendeley, where several folders have been created (theoretical, methodological, interview, sub-questions).

Interview analysis

Before analysing the interviews, all interviews were transcribed in a time frame of 5 days after the interview was conducted. All interviews have been transcribed in Dutch, which in a later stage has been translated into English. The interviews have been coded for several sub sections. Codes has been used named: background of the interviewee, contextual background of shallowing, institutional setting, venue shopping, and discourse analysis. The last code was used to conduct inductive coding to trace discourses.

Discourse Analysis

Last, is the data analysis for the discourse analysis. Tracing discourse analysis, I used the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti. To identify the dominant discourse and the discourse used by the Dreumelse Waard interviews are conducted and fragments of the 3 documentaries by Zembla are used. Furthermore, documents have been used such as communication about shallowing by the private sector or Rijkswaterstaat. The interviews have been coded inductively, paying attention to the traits, characteristics, qualities, and features attributed when discussing the issue of shallowing. Furthermore, an analysis has been

conducted to determine the arguments that are used when expressing new meanings and argumentation (Hajer, 2006). Subsequently, for each interviewee, the following codes have been developed to identify the dominant discourse: biodiversity, nature, ecological value, recreational value, solution, nature development. Consequently, the interviewees who used these characteristics and features have been coded, where actors not using these terms have been coded as actors that differentiate from the dominant discourse. To identify the discourse developed by the members of the Dreumelse Waard, attention is given to (new) characteristics and qualities that differentiate it from the dominant discourse. These may include issues like pollution, contaminated dredged materials, plastics, as well as considerations of integrity and power.

3.6 Notes on Positionality

In conducting research, it is essential to acknowledge my position as a researcher. Therefore, it is important to inform the readers that I consider research as a dynamic process. Consequently, my positionality may evolve throughout this research, as emphasized by Mwamari (2019, p.1), *“where the positionality of any person involved in research, whether an assistant or outsider, is not fixed but develops as researchers and collaborators interact with each other and the studied context”*. In this thesis, I aim to describe my experiences, stance, and motivations as transparently as possible. This approach allows readers to contextualize the findings and facilitates discussion. Diphoorn (2012), highlights the importance of addressing how one's personality traits, background, and perspectives influence the entire research process. In line with this, I intend to provide a description that includes reflection, addressing my background and personality traits. As a young female student raised in the Netherlands, I have an academic background in International Development and European Politics. During my studies in International Development, I developed an interest in resistance movements, claims of ownership, and collective action initiated by citizens. These interests may influence my expectations and ideas regarding this case study, thereby preventing the possibility of bias. As a student conducting the interviews, I anticipate gaining information that I might not have obtained if I were a journalist or working for a specific company. I expect that the interviewees will perceive me as someone seeking to learn more about shallowing and their specific role in the practice, rather than an expert who can provide critique during the interviews. This perception may work to my advantage, allowing me to conduct interviews with the involved actors.

As a Dutch native raised in the Netherlands, I have observed a profound belief among Dutch citizens in the government's competence to oversee and coordinate infrastructure and the living environment. I witnessed construction work, whether on roads or waterways, and I never questioned the reasons behind it or raised any doubts. Growing up in the province of Drenthe, I lived in an area where the Hondsrug, a 70 km long sand ridge, is located, with an average height of 20 meters above sea level (NAP). Consequently, I did not have concerns about flooding from the large rivers in the Netherlands or experienced constructions along the main waterways. These factors may have influenced my perspective on the role of government agencies in managing our waterways. Regarding the trust in the Dutch government's ability to manage water or the institutionalization of water management, I believe this trust is deeply ingrained in our culture. I have personally experienced the executive agencies of the Dutch government as trustworthy. However, when I began my undergraduate studies at Wageningen University, I developed a more critical perspective that led me to question the Dutch government's policies, particularly on issues like climate change. This critical view motivated me to participate in demonstrations and become a climate activist. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the lingering tendency of trust I had while growing up in the Netherlands and how it influenced my perception of the government. Moreover, I anticipate that this inclination towards trust, which still exists within me, may cause some discomfort when interviewing members of the Ministry or the Department of Waterways and Public Works and asking critical questions. In addition to this inclination, it may have also influenced my conceptual choices, as Baumgartner and Jones (1991) highlighted the role of institutionalized venues in driving change. Initially, I aimed to combine my research and conceptual choices to provide new strategies or information that could support the members of the citizen collective. As a researcher, I do not strive or intend to adopt an objective stance. As Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2015) describe, it is not possible to develop an objective science because social scientists cannot position themselves outside the subject of study, where both the subject and the researcher are free from values and meanings. Experiencing the viewpoint of the Dreumelse Waard has influenced my perspective on shallowing practices and the actors involved. Therefore, throughout the research process, I have positioned myself as having certain opinions and ideologies. This is important to acknowledge since my interpretation plays a role in conducting discourse analysis.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

When conducting research, it is crucial to be aware of any ethical dilemmas that may arise during the research process (Reid et al., 2019). During interviews, the research aims and goals will be clearly outlined. In addition, consent will be obtained to take notes or record the interviews, and participants will be informed about how the data will be managed and used in the research. Participants will be assured of confidentiality, and their preferences regarding how they would like to be referenced in the thesis will be respected, such as being fully anonymous, describing their role without a name, or using their full name and role. Once the data is obtained from the interviews, it should be analysed and reported, but reflection should also be considered. This includes considering the potential impact of the data in its context, especially whether it could affect the lives or actions of the participants (Reid et al., 2019). Since this research involves interviewing stakeholders or actors with whom the Dreumelse Waard also has relationships or interactions, it is important to assess whether using the interview data could harm those relationships. To prevent this, information and quotes used from the interviews will be shared with the participants, allowing them to approve the use of specific aspects of the information in certain contexts for the research. Overall, transparent communication with the participants is essential in this research, including the option of sharing the thesis results with them. For the data management plan, the interview transcriptions and audio recordings will be stored in a secure environment, ensuring the safety and confidentiality of the data, and preventing unauthorized access.

Chapter 4 - Contextual Chapter

Before presenting the findings of this thesis, I will provide a comprehensive background about the case study and provide information about the two shallowing projects the Dreumelse Waard has addressed. According to Igalla et al., (2019), the characteristics of the citizen initiative and strategies employed are important as they have consequences for the outcomes of citizen initiatives. This understanding is necessary to understand their role in the effort to contribute to the reframing of shallowing and their venue shopping strategy. A brief overview is presented of the institutional setting surrounding shallowing.

4.1 Background of shallowing

In 2006, the project “Space for the River” (Ruimte voor de Rivier)⁷ was initiated in the Netherlands. Due to this, a significant amount of dredged material became available. Therefore, there was a necessity to find a solution for the material. Deep lakes were perceived as a solution for the sludge, which was a driving force behind the whole process of dredged material disposal. The idea of disposing of dredged material appeared in the private sector. This increased the implementation of shallowing in deep lakes (personal communication, Harmsen, J, March 8, 2023). Joop Harmsen, who formerly advised the government on the topic, explained that Rijkswaterstaat had permitted the expansion of the managed area for dredged material, enabling the utilization of dredged material throughout the entire course of the Rhine River. This includes dredged material originating from outside the Netherlands. This is due to the regulations of free movement of goods and services in Europe⁸ which prohibit the rejection of such material from foreign countries (Ibid). As Joop Harmsen, explained: *“The expansion is a step too far for me, as it also contradicts the fundamental principle of environmental policy. That is the standstill principle, which states that the situation on-site should not deteriorate.”* (personal communication, Harmsen, J, March 8, 2023). According to van Dinther (2018), it is evident that the private sector, involved in dredging, is importing dredged material from outside the

⁷ <https://www.helpdeskwater.nl/onderwerpen/waterveiligheid/programma-projecten/ruimte-rivier/>

⁸ The principle of the free movement of goods is a fundamental pillar of the internal market of the European Union (EU). It entails the establishment of an area without internal border, where there is no unjustified restriction to trade between EU Member States (European Parliament, 2023).

Netherlands on a large scale, to shallow deep lakes in the Netherlands. Moreover, it has become a common practice in the last ten years (ibid).

In 2008, The Soil Quality Decree (*Besluit Bodem Kwaliteit*, artikel 5, 2008) came into force, to regulate the use of reusable soil and dredged material. By reusing soil or dredged sediments, such as in the construction of a noise barrier or the reconfiguration of a deep lake, there is a reduced need for primary raw materials. According to de Lange et al., (2019), the Soil Quality Decree, facilitates the use of dredged sediment or soil for the land reclamation of sand extraction sites, making it easier to repurpose these areas. As a result, the number of initiatives for the reconfiguration of deep lakes has significantly increased (Ibid). In 2009, regulation was necessary since various substances were disappearing into these deep lakes with a lack of regulation (Implementatieteam Besluit Bodemkwaliteit, 2010). In addition, in early 2009, concerns arose regarding the potential consequences of reconfiguring deep lakes on groundwater and surface water quality. Therefore, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management has developed guidelines called “Guidelines for shallowing of deep lakes”⁹ (*Handreiking verondiepen diepe plassen*). These guidelines have been developed to initiate an approach to carefully manage the redevelopment of the deep lakes and the use of soil and dredge material in the Netherlands. These guidelines are intended to be applicable for new initiatives of shallowing, where the guidelines ensure that stakeholders can make informed decisions, mitigate potential risks, and optimize the reconfiguration of the shallowing projects’ outcomes.

4. 2 Shallowing project “Over de Maas”

The members of the Dreumelse Waard have addressed two different projects that involve shallowing, namely the project "Over de Maas" and a pond called the “Vonkerplas”. Figure 5 displays the respective locations of these initiatives. The "Over de Maas" project entails both sand extraction and the disposal of sludge, and has been designated as a Large-Scale Soil Application, managed by Nederzand B.V.¹⁰. Within this project, the process of shallowing has been initiated, whereby soil and dredged material from areas outside the lake

⁹ Implementatieteam Besluit Bodemkwaliteit. (2010). *Handreiking verondiepen diepe plassen*) Retrieved from <https://www.bodemplus.nl/onderwerpen/wet-regelgeving/bbk/grond-bagger/diepe-plassen/>

¹⁰ Nederzand Projectmanagement BV develops and manages sand extraction projects for the national minerals market, producing industrial sand and gravel using floating installations and transporting them via ships. <https://www.nederzand.nl/>

are applied to create slopes and small islands, among other features. Starting from the end of 2014, in addition to utilizing non-marketable material from its project area, external material from outside the project area has been used for disposal purposes. Support and approval for this practice have been obtained through a process of consultation and coordination with the municipality of West Maas en Waal, residents, and Rijkswaterstaat, which has served as the competent authority, since the end of 2013 (Over de Maas BV, 2020).

Figure 3: Stakeholders involved in the “Over de Maas” project.

Phase	Initiator	Authorised Supervisor / providing permit	Supervisor	Law and regulations
Dredging	Nederzand B.V.	Rijkswaterstaat	Rijkswaterstaat	Dredging law (Ontgrondings wet) provided by the Province of Gelderland
		Province of Gelderland	Province	
Shallowing	Nederzand B.V., DekkerB.V.	Water managers (Rijkswaterstaat or the Waterboard)	Rijkswaterstaat Water board	Soil quality regulation (Besluit Bodem Kwaliteit)

4.3 Vonkerplas

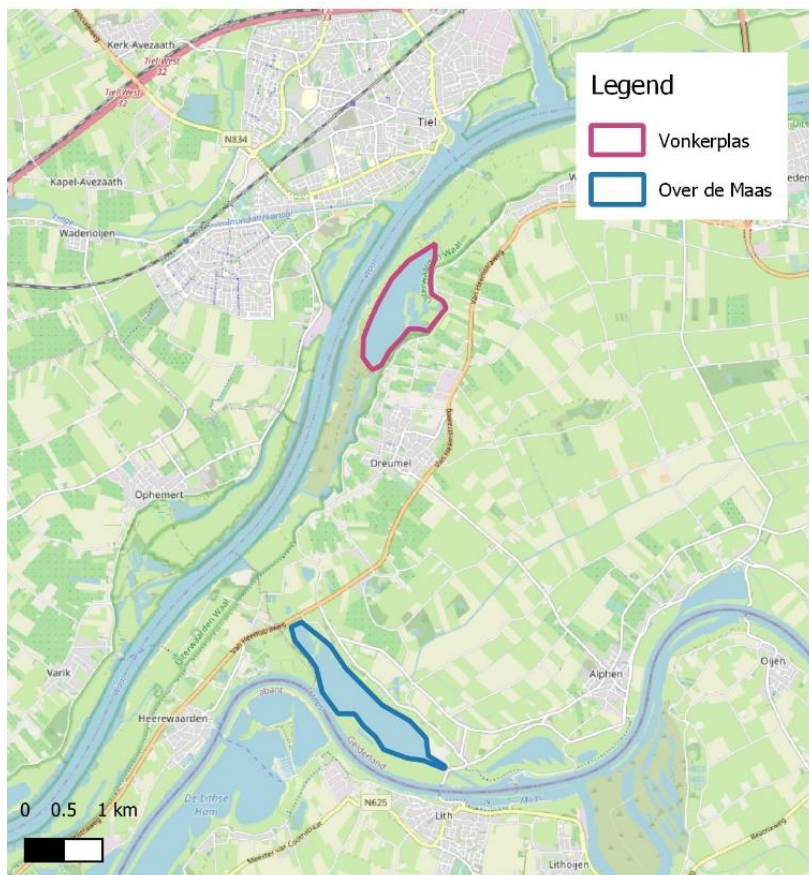
The Vonkerplas, situated in the Waal River floodplains in Dreumel, is part of the Uiterwaarden Dreumel-Wamel-Heerewaarden project (UWDH). Initiated by Rijkswaterstaat, in collaboration with the Province of Gelderland and Staatsbosbeheer, the UWDH project aims to enhance the biodiversity of the Waal River area between Beneden-Leeuwen and Rossum (Samenwerken aan riviernatuur, 2023). Within this context, the Vonkerplas will undergo shallowing. The municipality was willing to facilitate the project; however, explicitly took a neutral position as they were not in favour of the project but also not against it (personal communication, Stokman. A, March 24, 2023).

Figure 4: Overview of Stakeholders Vonkerplas

Phase	Initiator	Authorised Supervisor/ Providing permit	Supervisor	Law and Regulations
Dredging	Sand and Gravel producers	Rijkswaterstaat	Rijkswaterstaat	Dredging law (Ontgrondingswet)
		Province of Gelderland	Province of Gelderland	

Shallowing	Staatsbosbeheer	Water managers	Rijkwaterstaat	Soil Quality regulation (Besluit Bodem Kwaliteit)
			Water board (waterschap): Rivierenland	

Figure 5: The locations of both Vonkerplas and Over de Maas



4.4 The expertise possessed by the Dreumelse Waard

The members of the Dreumelse Waard hold a comprehensive understanding of the regulations and policies related to the shallowing process. They are well-versed in the roles of the various stakeholders involved and how these stakeholders participate in the shallowing process. The members of the Dreumelse Waard have identified the sources of the soil streams used for the “Over de Maas” project, including the amount (Burgercollectief Dreumelse Waard, 2018). Moreover, when tracing the plastic found the members identified that specific pieces of plastic were part of Belgian construction nets. When they sailed downstream, they found

remnants of this plastic up to 30 km away. Upon conducting this research, they addressed and informed Dr. Joop Harmsen, to validate their research methods. In an interview with Joop Harmsen, he emphasized how the Dreumelse Waard has always a self attitude, asking for information about the process of research and discussing this. He explained that the Dreumelse Waard often requested his expertise. Besides he explained that: *“The citizen collective has played a role in making the problem visible; plastic and granulite have also been made visible”*. *“They are realistic”* *“It is a club that’s critical, even towards itself”* (personal communication, Harmsen. J, March 8, 2023).

4.5 Institutional Setting

The decision-making authority when it comes to shallowing is confined to several institutions. According to Logger (2019), the complexity of the many actors involved, and sharing responsibilities, make it difficult to follow the process and understand who is responsible for the actions taken. This leads to trust issues and concerns for the citizen (Ibid). The dominant governmental actor when it comes to sand extraction and the implementation of shallowing is the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, who deals with the law and regulation regarding shallowing and has a role in the development of policy (personal communication, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, May 4, 2023). In changing the laws and regulations regarding shallowing, the Second Chamber of Parliament can be seen as the venue providing the possibility to bring the topic to the political agenda of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management.

When the implementation of a shallowing project is initiated, the project initiator must align with the relevant spatial plans of both the province and municipality before the necessary permits can be obtained. The project initiator applies for these permits at the different competent authorities, such as the province, municipality, water board, and Rijkswaterstaat. Rijkswaterstaat is responsible to oversee and enforce compliance with the Soil Quality Decree and the Water Act concerning the materials used for shallowing. Rijkswaterstaat is responsible for supervising the shallowing of deep pond or lakes in the national waters, while the water board oversees the shallowing of deep lakes in regional waters (Verondiepen van diepe plassen, 2023). When it comes to the role of the municipality, according to current legislation, the municipality is not able to propose shallowing initiatives unless there is a change in land use designation. The jurisdiction of the municipality is limited to spatial planning and land use in the area, and it does not have authority over environmental or chemical aspects, including the

disposal of soil. The primary focus of the municipality is on spatial planning, and they maintain their controlling role over land use change (personal communication, Mol, A, March 20, 2023). However, the council of the municipality provides an opportunity to bring the topic to debate on a local level, moreover, the municipality can alarm on the issue having a connection to other political actors on for example the national level. Moreover, being debated on the sub-national level, the local political parties can bring the topic to the agenda of the national political parties. Next to government actors, private parties have a large role when it comes to the implementation of shallowing. During the interview with GrondbankGMG, it was mentioned that they always had a say in shaping the regulation through the way in which they have carried out the implementation of shallowing. They are considered to have expertise in issues such as the execution, preparation for participation, case research and justification of shallowing (personal communication, Nusselein, T, April 6, 2023). Moreover, the private parties are responsible for the execution of these projects and are the initiators that promote the implementation of shallowing project (ibid).



Figure 6. Portrayed traces of found plastic (Burgercollectief Dreumel, 2018)

Chapter 5 – Dominant discourse

In this chapter, it will become clear which storylines dominate within the institutional structures, regarding the issue of shallowing, including the discursive power, structuration, and institutionalisation of these storylines. To elucidate the dominant discourse, the subsequent subsections present the various storylines employed in the implementation of shallowing and will show the meanings attached to shallowing. These storylines emerged from the discourse analysis conducted on interviews with administrators from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, as well as private sector entities involved in the application of dredged material in the shallowing process.

5.1 The storyline of “Adding value to Nature”

The main storyline that emerged during the interview centers around the perception of the lack of biodiversity and ecological value in deep lakes. There is a prevailing notion that deep lakes have minimal plant growth, provide limited support for fish populations, and are essentially lifeless bodies of water. Westendorp (2023), the director of B-Ware¹¹, a research institute specialised in chemical and ecological processes, emphasized the strong consensus among citizens and nature conservationists regarding the ecological insignificance of deep lakes. This perception continues to be echoed by experts in the field of ecology, and it has persisted over time. Additionally, water quality experts also view deep lakes as incongruous elements in the water landscape, further reinforcing this perception. Consequently, the suggestion arises to disposing of dredged material in these lakes (personal communication, Westendorp, March 12, 2023). Subsequent sections will focus on the storylines that discuss the necessity of shallowing the lakes in terms of addressing the lack of biodiversity and ecological value. Shallowing is discussed concerning enhancing recreational and ecological values in deep lakes. To commence, a quote will be used explained by Rijkswaterstaat.

*“The Netherlands has at least 500 deep puddles, mostly created by extracting sand, clay, or gravel. To give these puddles a new function, for example, for recreation or nature, the puddles can be made less deep”.*¹²

¹¹ <https://www.b-ware.eu/>

¹² <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl/water/wetten-regels-en-vergunningen/natuur-en-milieuwetten/verondiepen-van-diepe-plassen>

From the quotation above, Rijkswaterstaat employs the concept of "nature development" to emphasize the contribution of functionality when shallowing is implemented. Concepts are used like "new function" to denote the addition of value to nature. During the interview with the director of Dekker Futerra, in the context of creating social value regarding shallowing, the issue of biodiversity was brought up. The director made the following statement regarding shallowing:

"What we often do is remove agricultural land in the floodplains and restore its ecology in its place". (personal communication, Jongsma, W. May 10, 2023)

Thereby he adds features to shallowing as something that increases and restores the ecology. When asking, what is being done inhouse, or being outsourced regarding shallowing, he referred to third parties who can serve in the creation of the ecology in an area.

"It needs to be useful and functional, including from an ecological perspective. As the initiators, we should engage an ecological consultancy to assess and describe the objectives that can be achieved in the area and determine the ecological goals we aim to pursue".

(personal communication, Jongsma, W. May 10, 2023).

During the interview with the administrators from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, who are actively involved in the issue of shallowing, the need for shallowing was explored. Initially, the discussion focussed around addressing concerns about water quality. Furthermore, the administrators elucidated a categorization system that relies on the ecological status of a lake as a decisive factor in determining whether a deep lake should undergo shallowing.

"We encounter lakes that are in such poor condition and smell, it was told, to make sure to improve either the water quality or the biological quality". (personal communication,

Ministry of Infrastructure and Waterways, May 4, 2023).

"And you can think of three categories, for example. There's a category for excellent deep lakes, a category for less excellent lakes, and for the last category well, if you still want to dispose of material then choose that particular lake, as it has the added value of improving the ecology." (personal communication, Ministry of Infrastructure and Waterways, May 4,

2023).

During a discussion with Thomas Nusselein, who works as a project manager for GrondBankGMG, I inquired about the assessment of ecology before and after the application of soil and dredged materials. In response, he highlighted several aspects, such as the increase in species diversity and the creation of new habitats. Furthermore, he used the term "adding value," suggesting that the presence of biodiversity was relatively limited before the application of dredged materials. Subsequently, the focus shifted to the features of adding value to the deep lakes, particularly concerning recreational purposes.

“An island, what added value does it have? It should have more value than the situation before you started. You need to consider which specific types are desirable and currently do not have habitat there. It could also be to improve the landscape or recreational purposes; you would want a specific design”. (personal communication, Nusselein, T, April 6, 2023).

5.2 Storyline of “Solution for Sludge”

Another storyline was motivated by the fact that deep lakes can provide a solution to the dredge material which comes free because of the sludge which is released when the main waterway in the Netherlands needs to be dredged.

"In the Netherlands, construction takes place and dredging occurs, resulting in the release of soil and sediment that needs to be addressed. There needs to be protection or a solution for handling this, which is why policies have been developed." (personal communication, Nusselein, T. April 6, 2023).

Discussing the issue with Seelen, who has conducted a Ph.D. study on the issue of shallowing, she mentioned that she visited a symposium¹³ called “soil-wide” (bodembreed), a symposium for various stakeholders discussing the topic of shallowing where the private sector expressed the following:

They did mention, "Yes, yes, we do need to do something with that sediment. If we don't fill those gaps in the landscape, as they call them, what else can we do with it?" (personal communication, Seelen, L. May 11, 2023).

¹³ Symposium bodembreed: the soil and subsurface network event. <https://bodembreedsymposium.nl/>

DekkerFuterra, involved in the implementation of shallowing in the project “Over de Maas” addresses the societal issues at play, referring to the necessity of expanding river safety measures and the reasoning behind shallowing.

"There are societal issues at play, and it's not just about biodiversity and recreation. It also includes expanding river safety measures, as well as enhancing floodplains to facilitate the smooth flow of river water." (personal communication, Jongsma, W. May 10, 2023).

When addressing the financial motive behind the application of dredged material to shallow lakes, it was mentioned that it is financed due to projects who need to get rid of the dredged material.

"In these types of projects, the funding comes from those who are responsible for the release of the soil. They must handle it" (personal communication, Nusselein, T, April 6, 2023).

When asked about the historical background of GrondBankGMG, it appeared that GrondBankGMG was established to find a solution for the released material stocked in depots, which comes forward in the following passage.

"The Grondbank was established about 25 years ago, initially in Nijmegen, to provide solutions for soil changes. There were issues with soil being stored in depots without knowledge of its origin or quality. That's why we were founded and expanded on a national level. We facilitate a network of projects where this type of soil and sediment can be directed."

"Essentially, we need to find a place to dispose of the dredged sediment, and often it ends up in deep pits, surrounded by the river area." (personal communication, Nusselein, T, April 6, 2023).

The main storyline of this discourse is that deep lakes provide a solution for the disposal of dredged material.

5.3 Discursive Power

Combining both storylines, the overall discourse is presenting a win-win situation, namely: enhancing biodiversity and solving the dredged material issue, resulting in a narrative attractive to adhere to. This is in line with what Hajer (1995, p.65) argues: the impact of a new policy discourse is not solely determined by the cognitive strength of its storylines but also by its level of attractiveness. According to Hajer (1995), the discursive power of storylines does

not derive from the individual strategic choice or since certain elements in the storyline fit together. The power of storylines is essentially based on the idea Hajer calls “discursive affinities”, meaning a storyline can be referred to as “it sounds right”. When a storyline “sounds right”, various actors may not understand the details of the storyline but adhere to the story as it 'sounds right' (Hajer, 1995).

5.4 Discourse structuration

Previously mentioned in this thesis, discourse structuration, encompasses that a discourse is widely used by individuals to conceptualize the world. In the context of shallowing, the storyline of a deep lake lacking ecological value was consistently identified during interviews with various actors such as the municipality, administrators from the ministry, local citizens, and the private sector. These actors all drew upon the narrative of adding value to nature, emphasizing the perceived limited ecological significance of deep lakes. For instance, Westendorp, the director of B-ware, mentioned that this perspective still circulates among ecologists and nature conservation organizations (personal communication, Westendorp, J, March 22, 2023). Based on the conditions outlined by Hajer (1995), structuration occurs when it comes to the discourse of “adding value to nature”.

5.5 Discourse institutionalization

It was revealed that the discourse of “adding value to nature” has a long-standing history within the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. Based on the conditions outlined by Hajer (1995), the discourse of “adding value to nature” institutionalisation takes place within the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water management. The belief that deep lakes have no ecological value has been ingrained in their professional worldview for a significant period. As one respondent working within the Ministry stated, *“The assumption was thus: deep puddles hold no life”*. When discussing the origins of this idea, it was acknowledged that it likely seeped into policy development concerning shallowing and became entrenched over time. As stated by the administrators: *“It must have somehow sneaked into the policy development regarding shallowing, and then it was just permanently adopted. Even older colleagues used to say, “Well, you know for years that deep lakes have no life,” so I also don't know where the idea truly originated from, but it has stuck around”* (personal communication, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, May 4, 2023).

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the various storylines that emerged from the discourse analysis are presented. The main storyline that emerged involved the perceived lack of biodiversity and ecological value in deep lakes. Consequently, shallowing is being perceived as a practice that enhances nature within and around deep lakes. Another emerging storyline is driven by the notion that deep lakes can offer a solution for the disposal of dredged material. By combining the two storylines, the overall discourse entails a win-win scenario, simultaneously enhancing biodiversity and providing a solution to dispose of dredged material, fulfilling the idea of discursive affinity. As the two conditions of structuration and institutionalisation are met, it can be argued that the storyline of “adding value to nature” is hegemonic.

Chapter 6 – Venue Shopping and Reframing

“It was clear to us that the nature goals that were formulated could not be achieved through shallowing” (personal communication, Dreumelse Waard, February 24, 2023).

This quotation illustrates the incentive behind the actions taken by Dreumelse Waard, showcasing their resistance to the issue at hand and their pursuit of halting the practice of shallowing in their municipality. This chapter presents the results of the actions carried out by the members of Dreumelse Waard, including their venue shopping strategy, as their attempt to reframe the dominant storyline.

6.1 Venue Shopping Strategy

The subsequent section shows how the members of the Dreumelse Waard have approached both institutional venues as non-institutional venues, including the local and national levels. According to Timmermans and Scholten (2006), policy entrepreneurs have bounded rationality and settle for a venue rather than shop continuously around as they call it *“the malls of the political system”* (Timmermans and Scholten, 2006, p. 1105). The analysis challenges this contention since the Members of the Dreumelse Waard explored several venues and did not settle for one specific venue.

Local level

The members of the Dreumelse Waard first explored the venues at the local level, including the administrators of the municipality. Organising the information evening, the members aired their concerns on the local level, including local political actors. The Dreumelse Waard has close contact with the citizen initiative Redichemse Waard in Culemborg. The Redichemse Waard, is a citizen collective initiated in 2016, addressing the issue of shallowing in the municipality of Culemborg. In Culemborg it was planned to dispose of material that was related to soil released during the construction of the new Paris Metro line, and a deal was made with the owner of the deep lake, to use this lake for the disposal of the material released (personal communication, Claessens.S, March 31, 2023). Both citizen initiatives are providing support to each other and keeping each other updated when the issue appears on the political agenda. This collaboration has facilitated the Dreumelse Waard's access to Council Members of the Province of Gelderland. Comparing the two collectives, the Redichemse Waard collaborates with several other groups in the local area, benefiting the support of the fishing association, the cultural-historical club, the nature, and birdwatching organization, and a legal protection group for the Redichemse Waard, as well as the sailing club (Ibid). However, in the case of the Dreumelse

Waard, the collaboration did not take place with other local organisations. This is because Staatsbosbeheer prohibits recreational activities on the Vonkerplas. Therefore, the Dreumelse Waard has no collaboration with other local associations or groups to support each other.

The members approached political actors on the national level. They directly communicate their concerns by sending emails to the members of the Second Chamber of Parliament, accompanied by their report on the identified pollution found (personal communication, Dreumelse Waard, February 24, 2023).

Venue - the Media

Proactively, the members reached out to Zembla, a renowned Dutch investigative journalism television program. This venue holds significance, as posited by Baumgartner et al., (2011), media attention is generally considered to increase the likelihood of policy change by placing an issue on the macro-political agenda. Initially, the Dreumelse Waard did not receive a response from Zembla. However, after a year, Zembla took the initiative to investigate the matter and planned to collaborate with Follow the Money¹⁴ and Spit¹⁵, to make the financial flows related to the disposal of soil in the project transparent (personal communication, Dreumelse Waard, February 24, 2023). The importance of addressing this venue becomes important as the companies, specialised in the disposal of dredged material, are using this venue to promote shallowing and to dispel feelings of unrest throughout the process of the implementation of a shallowing project. To illustrate: the broadcasting channel (omroep) Gelderland¹⁶ and the regional newspaper Gelderlander¹⁷ are being invited to visit the shallowing project in the Province of Gelderland to dispel feelings of unrest even before those can arise among the citizens (personal communication, Bosma, R. May 12, 2023).

¹⁴ Follow the Money is a platform for independent investigative journalism.

¹⁵ Spit is a cooperative of experienced freelance investigative journalists. Spit collaborates with citizen collectives, local journalists, and all types of media.

¹⁶ Omroep Gelderland is a regional public broadcaster for the Dutch province of Gelderland. Omroep Gelderland has its radio station, Radio Gelderland, and TV channel, TV Gelderland, broadcasting primarily for the province itself. <https://www.gld.nl/>

¹⁷ De Gelderlander is a Dutch newspaper that primarily covers news and event in the province of Gelderland in the Netherlands <https://www.gelderlander.nl/>

NGO's

The members also brought the issue of pollution to the attention of the Plastic Soup Foundation¹⁸, an NGO that aims to reduce plastic pollution in marine and river environments. According to the members of the Dreumelse Waard this also had a significant impact. *“Then we brought it to the attention of the Plastic Soup Foundation, which had a significant impact as they have a direct connection to the national government”*. (personal communication, Dreumelse Waard, February 27, 2023).

Legal Venue

Discussing the legal venue, the members showed negative perceptions and constraints about the rate of success when addressing the legal venue, which may have led to giving up on this venue. When discussing the possibility of taking this matter to court, they mentioned that no one has the resources to litigate against companies like these, meaning companies who are involved in the application of dredged material. Therefore, this venue was not used to halt the practices of shallowing or to air their concerns. To illustrate the following statements were mentioned *“Nobody possesses the resources to litigate against such corporations”* (personal communication, Dreumelse Waard, February 27, 2023).

6.2 Image reframing - The construction of an image of pollution

In the subsequent section it becomes evident how the Dreumelse Waard has actively challenged the existing discourse of shallowing and how they have contributed to changing the dominant discourse of shallowing. It will show how the Dreumelse Waard contributed to adding new concepts and has attributed new meanings to shallowing.

Attachment of pollution – Local level

The Dreumelse Waard added the feature of pollution having an impact on the local living environment when addressing the local political actors and the local citizens. During their presentation, they visualised the impact of shallowing, showing footage of the plastic and construction waste that will end up in the Vonkerplas when shallowing is implemented. Astrid

¹⁸ The plastic Soup foundation is an NGO based in the Netherlands and aims to raise awareness of plastic pollution in the ocean and tackle it at its source. <https://www.plasticsoupfoundation.org/>

Stokman, a project manager involved in the UWDH project and who was present during the presentation, explained the local impact of pollution because of shallowing. Conducting an interview with Stokman she stated: “*It was brilliant, at the entire village witnessed the volume of the Vonkerplas and the equivalent number of plastics which can end up the Vonkerplas. At that moment, everyone was in a state of commotion*” (personal communication, A. Stokman, March 24, 2023).

Discourse Structuration

As a result of the presentation during the information evening, “de Gelderlander” published several articles¹⁹ on the issue of shallowing. The articles referred to the issue of the Vonkerplas and expressed concerns about the disposal of material from Belgium and Germany including construction and demolition waste. News articles that adhere to the discourse of pollution may lead to citizens to adopting the narrative of pollution when discussing the issue of shallowing, thereby contributing to the conditions of structuration.

Attachment of pollution – National level

In the first documentary called *Gambling with Sludge* (Gokken met Bagger) broadcasted on September 23, 2019, in the Netherlands, the Dreumelse Waard brought the issue of pollution to national attention. To illustrate, the documentary starts with the citizen initiative explaining the pollution they noticed as a cause of the shallowing by the project “Over de Maas”. There is mainly a focus on the amount of pollution because of showing footage of the found material. The broadcasting of the documentary marked the beginning of capturing widespread public attention. In the following quotes, attention is shed on the pollution issue:

¹⁹ Janze, C (2018, 10 May), Ook vervuilde grond in Dreumelse Waard, *de Gelderlander*.

<https://www.gelderlander.nl/culemborg/ook-vervuilde-grond-in-dreumelse-waard~a3198cc5/>

Moolenaar, S (2018, 18 October). ‘De plas is zo groot als Dreumel. En dat willen ze volstorten met troep’. *de Gelderlander*. <https://www.gelderlander.nl/west-maas-en-waal/de-plas-is-zo-groot-als-dreumel-en-dat-willen-ze-volstorten-met-troep~aaa70462/>

Gilhuis, B (2018), Buitenlandse slib én drijfvuil bij Over de Maas: ‘Grootste milieuramp afgelopen jaren’, *de Gelderlander* <https://www.gelderlander.nl/west-maas-en-waal/buitenlands-slib-en-drijfvuil-bij-over-de-maas-grootste-milieuramp-afgelopen-jaren~ace400e0/>

Teunenbroek, I (2018, 23 January), Buurt vrees opvulling Vonkerplas met vervuilde grond, *de Gelderlander*. <https://www.gelderlander.nl/maas-en-waal/buurt-vreest-opvulling-vonkerplas-met-vervuilde-grond~afb9f91f/>

“The whole area was full here, everything was filled with Styrofoam, edges full. The fact that it is possible in the Netherlands for something to be dumped like that. And that no authority intervenes.”

“There are 5600²⁰ cargoes, and we have distilled from that what is dumped into Over de Maas. And that is mainly construction and demolition waste. Then you see that it is 14 million tons, which falls under the category of waste applied to lakes. Construction and demolition waste and sludge are also included. For us, that doesn't make sense if you want to restore nature”.

The broadcast documentary by Zembla has made it possible to use both text and image, adding new attachments to the issue. Through the accumulation of text and images taken together, discourses appear to represent a coherent narrative (Koot, & Veenenbos, 2023). Both words and visuals can be carefully chosen and arranged to influence the perception of the cause of the problem (Aarts et al., 2014). The Zembla documentaries have effectively made the impact of pollution visible through showing images of pollution, further reinforcing the perception of pollution that the members already established at the local level.

6.3 Image Reframing – the attachment of power

Zembla has continued research and followed up with two more documentaries using the help and research of the Dreumelse Waard. In the second and third documentaries made by Zembla called: *Waste Disposal of Rijkswaterstaat (parts I and II)*, it appeared due to research done by Zembla, that the construction industry has influenced Rijkswaterstaat's decision to classify granulite as soil and thereby allowing its disposal in the project “Over de Maas”. Due to the research of the Dreumelse Waard, the journalist of Zembla could identify the soil streams. It became apparent that Rijkswaterstaat has granted a permit to Bontrup to deposit 100,000 tons of granulite in the project “Over de Maas”. In the documentary, experts emphasize that the dredged material, namely granulite, is harmful to the environment, due to the use of polyacrylamide²¹, which is used as a stabilizer and binder for the dredged material. However, Rijkswaterstaat has argued that granulite is soil and poses no problems in that matter. As

²⁰ The members of the Dreumelse Waard are referring to the number of cargoes being applied as disposal into the Project “Over de Maas”.

²¹ Polyacrylamide had been added to the granulite to facilitate settling when it reached the water surface. It acts as a stabilizer for the material, which affects its structure. Moreover, the biodegradability of polyacrylamide is a challenge when it is disposed into the water. (personal communication, Harmsen, J. March 8, 2023).

confirmed during the interviews with the members of the Dreumelse Waard, they emphasized the interests of the construction companies regarding the case of the disposal of granulite. To illustrate: *"But the interest is too high, so those companies have a lot of power over Rijkswaterstaat, and therefore also over the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. Especially when including the issue of Granulite"*. (personal communication, Dreumelse Waard, February 24, 2023).

6.4 Image reframing- the attachment of integrity

The documentaries result in the attachment of a new aspect such as the *"integrity"* of Rijkswaterstaat. To illustrate, in both documentaries called the *"Waste Disposal of Rijkswaterstaat"* (parts I and II) former environmental prosecutor Gustaaf Biezeveld states in the documentary that Bontrup's deliberate disposal of waste violates the Soil Protection Act. He qualifies the issue as a criminal offense with a maximum prison sentence of six years. Moreover, emphasis is shed, that Rijkswaterstaat's top management should not have overruled their officials to allow the disposal of granulite. Forensic investigator Ton Diepeveen emphasizes in the documentary that the intervention by Director-General Blom *"approaches official misconduct"*. He suggested that the National Criminal Investigation Department should investigate the matter.

In addition, in the documentary, it becomes apparent that Rijkswaterstaat has made a miscalculation of the risks of granulite, due to research by the Zembla journalist. According to Zembla, Rijkswaterstaat calculated the worst-case scenario for acrylamide that would end up in the lake, measured in milligrams per liter. This included that 0.0078 milligrams of acrylamide per Liter would be present in the water during the disposal of granulite. This amount is below the threshold of 2.04 mg per Liter. It was reported by Zembla that the actual value is a thousand times higher, at 7.78mg per liter, information which is confirmed by the environmental agency of the municipality of West Maas en Waal (Zembla, 2020). Rijkswaterstaat acknowledged that there was a miscalculation on paper but maintained that this miscalculation does not alter the conclusion that acrylamide does not occur in practice in the granulite being disposed of in the *"Over de Maas"* (Ibid).

Discourse Structuration

The conditions of structuration are supported when including the aspect of Integrity. After the 2nd and third documentary, the media attention increased, including national news media, such

as Volkskrant, NOS, and Parool. All news articles heavily drew on the pollution storyline, including the discussion of granulite and the miscalculations made by Rijkswaterstaat²².

6.5 Discursive power

The discursive power of the attachment of pollution and integrity results in the fact “*that they can play an important role in the creation of a social and moral order*” (Hajer, 1995, p.64). Hajer (1995) explains that storylines serve as mechanisms for positioning actors and attributing specific notions of “blame”, “responsibility”, and “responsible behaviour”. Through storylines actors can be positioned as victims of pollution, as problem solvers, or as perpetrators. The attachment of pollution on both the local and national level and the attachment of integrity can empower the actors to draw on these storylines. To illustrate, the members of the Dreumelse Waard can attribute the idea of ‘blame’. Consequently, this can result in enhancing the possibility to shift to new venues. To conclude, the discursive power of these storylines lies in the fact that they give the actors a reason for protest or argumentative ammunition to argue their case (Hajer, 1995).

6.6 Conclusion

The members of the Dreumelse Waard have explored and voiced their concerns at various venues. The discourse analysis uncovers that Dreumelse Waard is employing claims that effectively reframe the image of shallowing by placing emphasis on the aspects of pollution and its consequences on the local area. They have managed to shift the discourse away from adding value to nature, with the help of the media, bringing the attachment of pollution to the wider public. The creation of an image of pollution resulted in new attachment of meanings,

²² Kreling, T (2020, 24 September). Is het granuliet in de rivier nou wel of niet giftig? Voor antwoorden moet ook de wethouder tv kijken. *De Volkskrant*. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/is-het-granuliet-in-de-rivier-nou-wel-of-niet-giftig-voor-antwoorden-moet-ook-de-wethouder-tv-kijken~baef8966/>

Kreling, T. (2020, 2 September). Rijkswaterstaat maakte grote rekenfout bij omstreden stort granuliet in natuurplas. *De Volkskrant*. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/rijkswaterstaat-maakte-grote-rekenfout-bij-omstreden-stort-granuliet-in-natuurplas~b99d5386/>

Kreling, T. (2020, 26 Oktober). Hoe kon Rijkswaterstaat dumpen van granuliet in natuurplas goedkeuren? ‘Bij twijfel moet je nee zeggen’. *De Volkskrant*. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/hoe-kon-rijkswaterstaat-dumpen-van-granuliet-in-natuurplas-goedkeuren-bij-twijfel-moet-je-nee-zeggen~b8c05e51/>

Nos. (2020, 2 September). Rijkswaterstaat maakte rekenfout bij omstreden granuliet project. *Nos*. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2346460-rijkswaterstaat-maakte-rekenfout-bij-omstreden-granuliet-project>

Roele, J. Soetenhorst, B. (2022, 29 Januari). Rechtszaken, waarschuwingen en ultimatum: wie durft de grote speler achter steenstof granuliet nog te bevragen? *Het Parool*. <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/rechtszaken-waarschuwingen-en-ultimatums-wie-durft-de-grote-speler-achter-steenstof-granuliet-nog-te-bevragen~b2b5e184/>

such as the interest of the company Bontrup and the integrity at stake in Rijkswaterstaat. The discursive power of the attachment of pollution and integrity results in the fact they play an important role in the creation of a social and moral order. This enhances the power of members of the Dreumelse Waard or other actors who draw on this storyline, as they can attribute the idea of “blame” providing the members of the Dreumelse Waard with argumentative ammunition to argue their case.

Chapter 7 - Venue change

The following chapter aims to delve into how the issue spread out to other venues because of the efforts of venue shopping and reframing, including the dynamics between those two. In this part of the thesis, the operationalization of venue change will come forward by discussing how, when and where the issue is debated in different venues. Moreover, this chapter will explain if the venue change has consequences for the policy surrounding shallowing.

March-June 2018 - Second Chamber of Parliament

The presentation in Dreumel and the pollution report developed by the members of the Dreumelse Waard, led to questions²³ from Socialist Party MPs Henk van Gerven and Cem Laçin to the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. In turn these questions resulted in a debate. On March 27, 2018, Member Laçin (SP) requested a debate²⁴ on the import and disposal of contaminated soil in deep lakes. During this debate on June 14th various members of the parliament drew on the storyline of pollution. Many members of the parliament advocated for stricter regulations. Consequently, of this debate, the state secretary Stientje van Veldhovem (D66), acknowledged and agreed on the fact that a significant amount of foreign to the soil (bodenvreemd) material was allowed in various cargoes, which needs to be aligned to prevent pollution. Therefore, stricter standards have been introduced, regarding the presence of plastic. On November 30th, 2018, the amended regulation came into force, which involves that foreign to the soil (bodenvreemd) material is only allowed to be present sporadically in the dredged material.

July 2018- The Municipality of West Maas en Waal

Bringing the issue to the attention of the municipality, the Dreumelse Waard requested the Municipality of West Maas en Waal to investigate the practice of shallowing and the municipality considered this proposal favourable. Collaboratively with the members, deliberations took place on what and how to investigate, formulating the research questions. Subsequently, the decision was made by the Municipality West Maas en Waal to proceed with an administrative examination. The municipality of West Maas en Waal instructed bureau

²³ Kamerstukken II 2018/19, 615. P. 1-3.

²⁴ Kamerstukken II 2018/19, 94. P.1-12

RPS²⁵ to scrutinize the records of the soil movements to the “Over de Maas” project. The outcome of this investigation revealed that it was a black box, emphasizing the unclarity of the administrative flow of the origin of the disposed material. As a result, discussions have been held with Rijkswaterstaat and the State Secretary on this matter (personal communication, Mol, A. February 20, 2023). However, the agreements established with the project “Over de Maas” remain unchanged, and therefore the research did not result in halting the shallowing happening.

September 2019- The Municipality of West Maal en Waal

As a result of the media attention due to the first Zembla documentary, publicity on the topic of shallowing began to accelerate. Therefore, the issue has been prioritized on the agenda of the Municipality Council while also raising awareness among the members of the council of the municipality. Consequently, the alderman of West Maas en Waal was confronted by the municipality council relying on the discourse of pollution and asking critical questions why she could not provide an answer. This led to an investigation within the municipality, during which the Alderman began to pose questions and seek explanations from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and Rijkswaterstaat, thereby shifting the issue to these institutions. Until that point, according to the Alderman of the municipality, the Minister and the State Secretary were not aware of everything that was happening regarding the application of project “Over de Maas”. As the alderman stated, *“it had a tremendous impact, attracting a lot of publicity”* (personal communication, Mol, A. February 20, 2023).

February 2020 - Roundtable discussion

As a result of the second documentary on February 6, 2020, a roundtable discussion²⁶ has been initiated by members of the Second Chamber of Parliament and the Committee on Infrastructure and Water Management. During this roundtable the intention was to discuss both the impact of granulite and the regulation and the respective processes concerning the specific issue of the “Over de Maas” project. The roundtable discussion constituted the opportunity for the members to advance their case and reinforce the discourse of pollution since the Dreumelse

²⁵ RPS is an independent advisory and engineering firm specializing in environmental and safety issues. <https://www.rps.nl/>

²⁶ A roundtable discussion involves a conversation between a committee and external stakeholders. <https://www.overheid.nl/help/officiële-bekendmakingen/begrippenlijst#R>

Waard has been invited for the opening statement during the Roundtable discussion on March 9th, 2020. During the roundtable discussion, the pollution discourse became dominant.

February 2020 - Second Chamber of Parliament

As the result of the second documentary, the Second Chamber of Parliament requested, on February 12th, more information on several issues, writing a letter²⁷ to the State Secretary. This included a factual timeline concerning the certification and permitting for granulite in the project “Over de Maas”, the role of the ministry in this matter, the reported notifications, and information about the decision-making process regarding the classification of granulite as "soil". Consequently, the Secretary of State commissioned Arcadis²⁸ to conduct a review study on the environmental-hygienic effects of granulite in “Over de Maas”²⁹. The research approach was developed in consultation with the municipality of West Maas en Waal and has been approved by the province of Gelderland. Arcadis conducted a review study³⁰ and concluded that the application of granulite in Over de Maas has no negative effects on human health and the environment in the final state or during the execution. Despite these investigations, the focus on research continues as the National Institute for Public Health, and the Environment (Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu (RIVM³¹) and Deltares³² have done follow-up investigations to determine whether there exists a lack of scientific knowledge regarding the behaviour of polyacrylamide.

September 2020 – Province of Gelderland

On September 23, 2020, the Provincial Council discussed the deepening and dredging of lakes in the province of Gelderland. During this debate, attention was drawn to the ongoing concerns and uncertainties regarding the use of granulite disposed in the “Over de Maas” project in the Municipality of West Maas en Waal. The Provincial Executive (College van

²⁷ Kamerstuk II 2020/21. 30015, nr. 62

²⁸ Arcadis a consultancy, specialising in sustainable design, engineering, and providing consultancy solutions for natural and build assets. <https://www.arcadis.com/>

²⁹ Kamerstuk I 2020/21. 30015, nr. 80

³⁰ Arcadis (2021). Review-onderzoek granuliet over de Maas. <https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-7754a1f6-4111-4594-826d-d8a19c0c38ae/pdf>

³¹ RIVM, is the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment. <https://www.rivm.nl/en>

³² Deltares is an independent knowledge institute, that works in the field of water and subsurface. <https://www.deltares.nl/en>

Gedeputeerde Staten) has manifested a letter³³ with the request to provide clarification on the matter directed to the State Secretary of Infrastructure and Water Management, including the discussion about the ongoing concerns and uncertainties regarding the use of granulite in the project “Over de Maas”. In addition, in the letter the Provincial Executive has requested a consultation with the State Secretary to discuss short-term and long-term solutions aimed at preventing the disposal of potentially hazardous substances from entering the water. According to the alderman of West Maas en Waal, the deputy of the Province of Gelderland had a significant change in perspective on the matter and aligned closely with the municipality of West Maas en Waal, advocating against deposition in deep lakes. It was emphasized that the province of Gelderland realized that they did not want such activities, referring to project “Over de Maas”, to take place in their region and that the process had gone too far in terms of disposing of material from areas outside the Netherlands. The current deputy, Peter Drenth, shared a strong sentiment similar to the municipality. Both the Province of Gelderland and the Municipality collaborated closely in various discussions on the new policy (Herrijking diepe plassen) regarding shallowing (personal communication, Mol, A, March 20, 2023).

October – December 2020 – Second Chamber of Parliament

The attachment of integrity resulted in a debate requested by MP Laçin (SP), addressing the issue of the significant calculation errors made by Rijkswaterstaat regarding the presence of polyacrylamide during the disposal of granulite in the “Over Maas” project. The debate³⁴ about this topic was held on the 27th of October 2020 and the second term of the debate³⁵ took place December 2nd, 2020. While in the previous debate members of the parliament heavily drew on the storyline of pollution, this debate was overruled by discussing the topic of the disposal of specific granulite, and whether granulite should be classified as soil or construction material. Moreover, during the debate, members of Parliament also drew on the integrity discourse, where several members called for an objective integrity investigation to determine whether there were any integrity issues within Rijkswaterstaat. Furthermore, discussions took place

³³GS-brief bij Statenbrief, (2020, 6, 10) Granuliet in Over de Maas. Retrieved from <https://gelderland.stateninformatie.nl/document/9251283/1/Brief%20aan%20stas%20over%20stoppen%20werkzaamheden%20en%20overleg%20Granuliet>

³⁴ *Kamerstukken II 2020/21 16. P-13,*

³⁵ *Kamerstukken II 2020/21.16. P 1-34,*

regarding the various interests of the private sector, including the dependency on the business sector to implement shallowing and the improvement of the overall system regarding the implementation of shallowing. Consequently, the State Secretary of Infrastructure and Water Management requested to investigate the decision process surrounding the reaffirmation of granulite's classification as soil, and to derive insights concerning the chain within which the statutory framework of the Soil Quality Decree (*Besluit Bodem Kwaliteit*, artikel 5, 2008) is implemented³⁶.

June 2022 – Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management

As a result of implementing the amended regulation by State Secretary Sientje van Veldhoven (D66) of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, the topic has been addressed within the Ministry. Consequently, this resulted in the development of a new policy regarding the issue of shallowing. According to the public administrators working at the Ministry, following from the investigations by the Dreumelse Waard in combination with the documentaries made by Zembla, a new policy came into development, called “Building trust” in June 2022 (*Bouwen aan vertrouwen*)³⁷ (personal communication, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management). For this new policy an investigation was conducted into whether the Environmental and Planning Act³⁸ (*Omgevingswet*) can offer a viable solution to the issues concerning deep water lakes, which has been executed by Antea Group³⁹. In this report, an administrative dialogue has been initiated to develop building blocks for the future of policies regarding shallowing, in conjunction with issues related to circularity, nature development, flood protection, and sand and gravel extraction for construction projects. Discussing the development of the policy with a representative of Antea, it has been decided that the Dreumelse Waard will not be part of the stakeholders involved in the dialogue, despite their recognition of their expertise on the topic (personal communication, Warris, H, April 14, 2023).

³⁶ *Kamerstuk I 2020/21*. 30015, nr. 80

³⁷ Warris, H. Roovers, G (2022) *Bouwen aan Vertrouwen*. (AnteaGroup). Retrieved from <https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-217b9b67e61e4fdad9baf86e9d5183c49d8d6174/pdf>

³⁸ The objective of the Environmental and Planning Act is to enhance the involvement of citizens, along with other stakeholders such as societal organizations, government bodies, and businesses during the early stages of decision-making processes. Additionally, the planning system should be better equipped to encourage and support societal initiatives (Bisschops et al., 2023)

³⁹ Antea Group is an international engineering and consultancy firm; specialized in full-service solution in the field of environment, infrastructure, urban planning and water. <https://anteagroup.nl/>

May 2023 – Second Chamber of Parliament

In May 2023 RIVM⁴⁰ and Deltares⁴¹ published a report⁴² indicating that there is insufficient knowledge about the release of the carcinogenic substance acrylamide after the disposal of granulite in deep lakes. Moreover, it is unclear whether there are risks for plants and animals living in these deep lakes, as well as for people who come into direct or indirect contact with the water from these pools (Faber et al., 2023). In turn, this research resulted in a surge of attention, and the issue has shifted and returned to the Second Chamber. In May 2023, member of Parliament Van Esch (Party for the Animal, (Partij van de dieren), asked for a response⁴³ to the recent study by RIVM and Deltares. The State Secretary answered⁴⁴ that monitoring will be conducted to detect the presence of acrylamide in deep lakes. Moreover, a plan of action will be developed in short term in consultation with the relevant parties. Simultaneously, the State Secretary ensured a close collaboration with the Alderman and public administrators of the Municipality to continue the discussion on the issue.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the issue is debated in different venues. Due to the efforts by the Dreumelse Waard using the strategy of venue shopping and reframing, the following changes have been achieved due to a venue change. The Municipality started to investigate the practice including the participation of the members of the Dreumelse Waard. This resulted in several discussions being held with Rijkswaterstaat and the State Secretary on the outcomes of this research. As a result of the broadcasted documentaries, the council of the municipality became aware of the issue, prioritising the issue on the agenda. The issue has shifted to the Second Chamber of Parliament, where several members of parliament drew on the storyline of pollution and integrity. As a result, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management has committed to evaluating the regulations, therefore stricter standards have been introduced, regarding the presence of plastic in the dredged material. On November 30, 2018, the amended regulation came into force.

⁴² Faber et al., (2023). Degradation of polyacrylamide and possible formation of acrylamide in deep ponds and lakes: a review of the literature (Nr. 2023-0126). <https://www.rivm.nl/bibliotheek/rapporten/2023-0126.pdf>

⁴³ Kamerstukken II 2022/23 2632. p. 1-4

⁴⁴ Kamerstukken II 2023/24 Z07951.

This led to the State Secretary of Infrastructure and Water Management requesting an investigation into the decision-making process involving the chain of actors and the reconfirmation of granulite's classification as soil. According to the public administrators working at the Ministry, because of the evidence and attention brought forward by the Dreumelse Waard in combination with the documentaries made by Zembla, a new policy came into development, called "Building trust". Consequently, an administrative dialogue has been initiated. Despite, the members of the Dreumelse Waard have been left out of this dialogue. Debating the issue within the Ministry resulted in a request to conduct research on the effects of granulite. Recently, the new study on the impact of granulite conducted by RIVM and Deltares regained the attention of the members of the Second Chamber of Parliament.

Chapter 8 - Discussion

8.1 Discussion of the results

Before addressing the limitations of this research, I will reflect on the results and the theoretical choices of this thesis. The results of this research will be synthesized, to make sense of them by placing them both in the theoretical framework and analytical framework.

The data has shown and supported the strengths of reframing and venue shopping. As stated in the theoretical framework of this thesis, both mechanism of reframing a policy image and venue shopping are useful strategies to achieve policy change. The data has shown that indeed venue shopping has resulted in addressing the issue at various institutions. With the use of the media, the members of the Dreumelse Waard were able to accomplish to reframe the issue. Fieldwork evidence shows that venue shopping and the use of discourse resulted in a bandwagon effect where several venues became involved, adhering to the various discourses created by the members of the Dreumelse Waard. Therefore, it supports the self-reinforcing process, whereby events can lead to a spiral or subsequent events that deteriorated the dominant image. To illustrate: the broadcast documentaries resulted in awareness among the council of the municipality. This, in turn, resulted in shifting the issue to the Ministry and Rijkswaterstaat, resulting in amended regulations. When the second and third documentaries were broadcast, several debates followed, resulting in several questions asked by members of the Second Chamber of Parliament, which, in turn, resulted in new investigations.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, there is often a tendency to focus on one aspect of an issue to the neglect of other important facts. By analysing how the various venues drew on the discourse of pollution and integrity, the data has also shown this tendency to focus, within the discourse of pollution, mainly on the issue of using granulite. However, during the interviews, it became clear that the scope of the issue is much wider. To illustrate, the issue of noise pollution was addressed during one interview. However, this did not come up throughout the research including the debates held in various venues.

Throughout this research Hajer's discourse theory proved to be a suitable theory to identify the dominant image concerning shallowing, including the attachments of new concepts and attachments realized by the Dreumelse Waard. Moreover, this research has shown how discourse theory can constitute an addition to strengthening the PE theory. Moreover, using Hajer's discourse theory has provided an analysis of the influences of both discourses and has

shown the dominant working of the discourse “adding value to nature”. Applying discourse theory has also resulted to shed light on addressing the discursive power of storylines, including ‘discursive affinities’, and how this discursive power can be used by the members of the Dreumelse Waard. Additionally, applying discourse theory, it became evident how the Ministry, Rijkswaterstaat, and the private sector, hold a powerful dominant discourse, consequently affecting the living environment through the concepts of "nature development" and “solution for sludge”. On the other hand, the use of discourse theory also shows the discursive power held by the members of the Dreumelse Waard, relying on the idea of ‘blame’. This provides the members with a strategy to disempower the actors such as the Ministry and Rijkswaterstaat.

By analysing venue change, the data has demonstrated which venues did or did not became involved throughout the process of venue change. For example, despite their role regarding shallowing, the issue of shallowing has not been prioritized on the agenda of the Union of Water Boards. Understanding the range of venues which became involved, provides further recommendations on outlining the most receptive venues for policy change regarding the issue of shallowing. To conclude, there are several key reasons why this research contributes to society and to the literature. First, addressing the issue of shallowing in this research contributes to society as it sheds light on how the discourse of "adding to nature" is incorporated into policy making, potentially leading to the contamination of our rivers when implementing the practice of shallowing. This is important, since the implementation of shallowing is increasing in the Netherlands, while our rivers should be protected from any form of contamination. Secondly, this thesis contributes to the literature on how citizens initiatives aim to change policy in an institutionalised context, facing several governmental institutions. As such, this research explored new areas of interest that offer new possibilities for research. Thirdly, this research has provided an understanding of how both these theories can be combined within an analytical framework, with a focus on how they can mutually enrich each other. Last, it provided in-depth understanding into the strategies contributing changing policing, supporting policy entrepreneurs in a Dutch context.

8.2 Limitations

The findings of this thesis must be measured against its limitations. Therefore, the following section provides an overview of the limitations of this thesis.

Limitations regarding Discourse Theory

In the *Politics of Environmental Discourses*, Hajer (1995), explains that in his work language is seen as an integral part of reality and as a specific communicative practice which influences the perception of interest and preference. I agree with Hajer (1995), who explains that discursive interaction (i.e.) language in use can create new meanings and new identities and therefore fulfills a key role in processes of political change. I believe that there exists a reality outside discourse. To illustrate, during my interviews with both the administrators working for the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management I noticed they are using the storyline of deep lakes perceiving no ecological value. However, I believe that this is influenced by their position being an administrator which enforces them to support this idea and therefore using specific concepts. In addition, due to the sensitivity of the topic I realised that the administrators aimed to provide answers that are ‘politically correct’. When they are placed in a different context, i.e., speaking not in their position, I believe their languages or meaning attached to a certain issue can alter. In addition, repeating conversations on this specific issue, would alter the meaning of a certain concept. Due to repetition of conversations, meaning evolves and therefore the used language evolves. As Hajer (2005) explains, discourse analysis insists that the meaning of a policy principle never solidifies but is constantly the object of political contestation. As I believe certain concepts evolve, I have my doubts about the fact that language is an integral part of reality. Moreover, Hajer (1995) states that interests are intersubjectively constituted through discourse. I agree with Huitema (2002), who explains that this would mean that these interests do not exist beyond discourse, but they do. He states that interests partly derive from fundamental human needs and are therefore ‘real’, even outside a discourse (Ibid).

Limitations regarding PE theory

Using the PE theory, resulted in a focus on institutional venues. Lundgren et al., (2018) argue that previous scholarship using PE theory has focused on the national level, identifying punctuations in the agendas of national and local governments. Using PE theory as a lens underestimated the agency of the members of the Dreumelse Waard. Further research might extend the scope and consider including the analysis of informal institutional change. During

my research, it became apparent that the Dreumelse Waard catalysed a shared belief among the residents in West Maas en Waal, regarding the negative impacts of shallowing implementation. According to North (1990), shock events resulting in significant institutional changes often encompass both formal and informal change. Formal change involves change characterised by the formulation and implementation of (new) formal institutions. While informal changes involve shared beliefs and collective expectations (Ibid). Shared beliefs among the residents could play a crucial role in influencing the acceptance of a shallowing project in the local environment. Exploring potential findings related to informal changes could have enriched the understanding of how a citizen's initiative can effectively halt a particular practice in their living environment.

Limitations of the Results

According to Baumgartner and Jones (1991), venues vary in their capacity to embrace a new policy concept; the role of a policy entrepreneur frequently involves pinpointing the most receptive alternative venues for the policy. The research did not consider including which venues were most susceptible to changing the policy regarding the issue of shallowing. This is an aspect that could be touched upon doing further research and could strengthen the strategy of citizen initiatives aiming for change.

One limitation of conducting this research was the sensitivity of the issue. For instance, when requesting interviews with representatives from Rijkswaterstaat and Staatsbosbeheer involved in the UWDH project, they indicated that the topic had become politically sensitive, preventing their participation in an interview. During some interviews, it was evident that respondents aimed to provide politically correct answers. Additionally, certain questions remained unanswered due to their sensitive nature. While these issues revealed the sensitivity surrounding the issue, it resulted in a smaller pool of interviewees. Therefore, the diversity of interviewees from various backgrounds could be expanded throughout the research to enhance the accuracy of the identified discourse.

In conclusion, a practical limitation arose during the research process. Two interviews were not effectively recorded, leading to certain sections that could not be coded or required the inclusion of supplementary notes taken during the interviews.

Limitation regarding the scope of this research

This research did not consider providing recommendations on how to enable policy change for citizen initiatives or policy entrepreneurs situated in a different policy domain.

According to (Matijssen et al., 2018) when using individual cases regarding citizen initiatives, empirical evidence is rather scattered and often strongly focused on particularities. This also applies to this research since it is strongly focused on the case of the Dreumelse Waard and therefore lacking external validity. Researching, specifically the Dreumelse Waard, shows how they made use of mechanism such as venue shopping and reframing. However, these findings are difficult to use for citizen initiatives dealing with a topic situated in a different policy domain. Moreover, using a case study fails to support the empirical findings of mechanisms such as using venue shopping or reframing, situated in a different context.

Additionally, this thesis did not consider the aspect of coalition formation in the context of policy change. Coalition formation is recognized as one of the most effective strategies for influencing policy outcomes (Hojnacki, 1997; Klüver, 2013; Mahoney and Baumgartner, 2015). *"Working within a coalition is a common tactic employed by groups to influence policy"* (Heany and Lorenz, 2013, p. 252). The Dreumelse Waard maintains a close relationship with the Redichemse Waard, involving mutual support and information sharing. However, this research did not focus on this relationship or highlight how these two citizen initiatives could build further on coalition formation to reinforce each other.

8.3 Notes and reflection on positionality

Besides discussing the results and the limitations of this thesis it is important to address how my positionality as a researcher has evolved throughout this research journey. Describing any changes is important, as it provides an understanding of the choices regarding my theoretical framework and how this research has shaped me as a researcher. I can confidently state that my positionality has undergone significant development throughout the research process. Initially, I embarked on this research to maintain an objective stance. However, it did not take long to realise that complete objectivity was an unrealistic goal. This realisation came during the interview with the two members of the Dreumelse Waard. My intention for this thesis was initially focused on supporting strategies that would be beneficial for the Dreumelse Waard. However, through the interviews, I understood that their impact and reshaping of the debate were more significant than I had initially anticipated. Consequently, I shifted my stance to showcase how they have contributed to making change possible through their actions and strategies and active involvement in their municipality. Throughout the research process, the

reasons for taking a subjective stance are further supported by my belief that the members of the Dreumelse Waard have assumed an immense amount of political work that should ideally be carried out by government officials. After interviewing two members of the Dreumelse Waard, I sought to understand the history and policy of shallowing. Joop Harmsen, involved in formulating the policy for using deep lakes to dispose of dredged material, provided insights. The interviews highlighted the political sensitivity of the granulite discussion. Discovering how the topic of shallowing has become politically sensitive, resulted in that I wanted to exclude the discussion of granulite from my research. My conversation with Astrid Stokman about the UWDH project confirmed my idea of how the issue is politically sensitive. I learned that governments often dismiss citizens' objections and recommend acknowledging citizen knowledge. While Astrid didn't specify which actor should admit, she referred me to the current project managers at Rijkswaterstaat and Staatsbosbeheer. However, they declined due to the sensitivity of the shallowing issue.

This sensitivity affected my question choices during interviews with the private sector, i.e., leaving out questions about the use of granulite as disposal material. My initial trust in the Dutch government's environmental management diminished, leading me to reevaluate my framework choice. Looking back, I would have chosen a framework emphasizing citizen agency and unwritten norms, given citizens' active role in their living environment. My upbringing in a river-absent area shaped my expectations and interviewing discomfort. Recognizing this earlier would have altered my stance and highlighted citizen agency. My tendency of trust also hindered sensitive questioning about the pollution found in the project "Over de Maas".

At the outset, I initially did not anticipate that my positionality as a young woman would have any consequences on my research process. However, upon reflection, I conducted interviews with a total of 20 individuals, of which only 3 were women. I found it relatively easier to ask sensitive questions regarding the topic when interviewing the 3 female participants. Consequently, I was asking more sensitive questions when interviewing women interviewees.

To conclude this section, I touch upon positionality and applying discourse theory. As a novice researcher in the field of discourse analysis, I encountered challenges when attempting to apply discourse analysis based on Hajers' (1995) idea. While conducting inductive discourse analysis, I became concerned about the empirical robustness of the findings. Analysing the interviews, I realized using the abstract concept of discourse makes it difficult to find concrete results. During the data analysis phase, several questions emerged regarding how to effectively

trace a specific discourse and how my positionality as a researcher might influence this process. Since classification and interpretation are at the core of discourse analysis (Hajer and Uitmark, 2008), I believe that someone with a different positionality or background might have traced different discourses. Additionally, Huitema (2002), explains that discourse affinity, depends partly by one's upbringing, education, and profession, as well as by the potential outcomes or implications for the individual. I agree with this, as I believe that the various interviewees were not aware of discursive affinity. The context and setting of the individuals I interviewed have influenced the language they used. Besides, some interviewees have considered the potential outcomes of the answers they provided.

8.4 Ideas for further research

This section presents ideas to strengthen the theoretical framework, and to strengthen further research in understanding how a citizen initiative can realise policy change.

First, PE theory must include useful elements to provide insights how to reframe or change the existing image surrounding a certain policy. In this thesis, specifications are made by using discourse theory. Applying the PE theory to a real-life case study, reveals it shortcoming in providing tools for analysing mechanisms such as reframing. The theoretical framework should include insights that enhance the empirical findings on how to change the policy image.

Secondly, building further on how to analyse the mechanism of reframing, discourse analysis has proven to be a useful tool for identifying how the members of the Dreumelse Waard contribute to changing the image of shallowing. However, given my subjective perspective throughout this research, my interpretation may have significantly influenced the analysis of the findings. To enhance and deepen the understanding of the prevailing image of shallowing, additional research should be undertaken to validate and reinforce the findings of this study. For instance, a quantitative approach to discourse analysis could be employed

Thirdly, to better comprehend how citizens can bring about policy change, it is important to consider both formal and informal change. It has become evident that the members of the Dreumelse Waard can be regarded as agents of change who catalysed a shared belief among the residents living in West Maas and Waal. Making use of PE theory has guided the focus towards institutional change. Consequently, for future research greater emphasis should

be placed on informal changes, including unwritten rules and norms that play a supportive role in facilitating the realisation of policy change.

Fourth, throughout this research process, the close relationship with the Redichemse Waard became apparent. To influence policy outcomes, coalition formation is an effective strategy to influence policy outcomes. Further research, on how to halt or reshape the practice of shallowing, could build on to this, including aspects such as the exchange of resources and information and stress the importance of the collaboration between citizen initiatives aiming to reshape or halt the practice of shallowing.

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, I will answer the central research question: *How did the citizen initiative the Dreumelse Waard contribute to changing the image of shallowing and how did the effort result in a policy change?* The goal of the research is to understand the role of a citizen initiative in changing policies regarding the issue of shallowing, taking the Dreumelse Waard as a case study. In this respect, the framework of Baumgartner and Jones (1991) was used in combination with discourse analysis to study how the members of the Dreumelse Waard contributed to changing the image of shallowing.

First, the dominant image included various storylines that dominate within the institutional structures. The result of this study shows the existence of various storylines, put forward by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the private sector involved, resulting in a storyline appealing to embrace, due to the win-win scenario. The main storyline that emerged involved the perceived lack of biodiversity and ecological value in deep lakes. Consequently, shallowing is being perceived, within the Ministry and the private sector involved in shallowing, as a practice that enhances nature within and around deep lakes. Another emerging storyline is driven by the notion that deep lakes can offer a solution for the disposal of dredged material, positioning shallowing as a solution to get rid of dredged material. The influence of the discourse is being shown using the concept of discourse structuration and discourse institutionalization. The idea of deep lakes lacking ecological value has seeped into policy development regarding shallowing and became entrenched over time. In addition, the perceived limited ecological significance of deep lakes has been identified during various interviews and still circulates among ecologists and nature conservation organizations. Identifying the dominant image, the research has shown the hegemonic nature of the storyline of the perceived lack of biodiversity and ecological value in deep lakes.

Second, the study shows how using venue shopping the members of the citizen's initiative were able to change the image of shallowing. The members of the Dreumelse Waard have explored several venues to air their concerns. The findings indicate that in collaboration with Zembla, the Dreumelse Waard has effectively reframed the image of shallowing by placing emphasis on the aspects of pollution and its consequences on the local area. They have managed to shift the discourse away from adding value to nature, with the help of the media, bringing the attachment of pollution to the wider public. The creation of an image of pollution resulted

in new attachment of meanings, resulting in the issue becoming politically sensitive. The creation of an image of pollution resulted in new attachment of meanings, such as the interest of the private sector and the integrity at stake at Rijkswaterstaat.

As a result of the effort, policy change did occur. The findings show that the issue has been debated within various venues, resulting in venue change and opportunities for the Dreumelse Waard to strengthen its case. Consequently, of this venue change, several (policy) changes occurred regarding shallowing. Discussing the issue in several venues, resulted in reinforcing the image of pollution and integrity. Because of an increase in institutional attention, the issue spread out the several venues and the following changes have been achieved. On November 30, 2018, the amended regulation came into force, resulting in stricter standards regarding the presence of plastic in the dredged material. The State Secretary of Infrastructure and Water Management has requested to investigate the decision process surrounding the chain of actors involved and the reaffirmation of granulite's classification as soil. Moreover, a new policy came into development, through a report called "Building Trust". Because of this report, an administrative dialogue has been initiated, providing a solution to the issue surrounding shallowing. To conclude, research has been requested and conducted on the effects of granulite when being disposed of because of shallowing. However, members of the Dreumelse Waard have expressed ongoing concerns regarding the outcomes. They have been excluded from the administrative dialogue and according to the members the amended regulation and the new policy have a permissive nature, and the initiation of shallowing projects continues.

This research has shown how a citizen initiative can bring the issue to the attention of the public and put it on the national political agenda, by using the mechanism of venue shopping and reframing. Therefore, it contributes to the theoretical debate on how citizen initiatives can accomplish institutional policy change in the Netherlands. In addition, this research has shown the contribution of PE theory in practice through a case study, thereby emphasizing how discourse theory can further strengthen this framework.

Further research building on this issue using the mechanism of reframing, PE theory should include useful elements to provide insights into how to reframe or change the existing image surrounding a certain policy. More research should be conducted to verify and strengthen the findings of this research, including a quantitative method of discourse analysis. Contributing to understanding how citizens in the Netherlands can reshape the policy regarding shallowing, attention should be paid to how citizen initiatives dealing with the same issue could support

each other and exchange knowledge. Findings can be supported by including informal change, putting the research focus on the informal rules and norms that are supporting in enabling halting or reshaping the issue of shallowing.

To finalize, this research has shaped me as a researcher and my position has undergone significant development throughout this research process. Studying the agency of a citizen's initiative regarding the issue of shallowing has shown me how citizens are connected and attached to their living environment, resulting in the realisation that changes in policy can be achieved by a non-institutional actor in the Netherlands. Consequently, studying a citizen's initiative that is dedicating a lot of effort to an issue can be considered a stable venue of change initiating change, or providing knowledge. While Members of Parliament, an alderman, or administrators working on a specific issue within an institutional venue may change the topic they are working on, a citizen initiative often will continue to dedicate energy and creativity to a certain issue due to their strong attachment to their living environment.

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10. Annex

10.1 Interview Questions

Interview Staatsbosbeheer

Algemene informatie en achtergrond

- Wat is u huidige positie bij Staatsbosbeheer.
- Hoelang werkt u al bij Staatsbosbeheer en wat is u achtergrond.
- Wat zijn de taken die vallen onder Staatsbosbeheer als organisatie?
- Op welke manier vervullen jullie die taken, welke rol nemen jullie daarin?

Algemene vragen verondiepen

- Op welke manier is Staatsbosbeheer betrokken bij het verondiepen van plassen in Nederland?
- Wat verstaat u onder verondiepen?
- Waarom is het verondiepen volgens u nodig?
- Waarop baseert u uw kennis rondom verondiepen?
- Vragen rondom de praktijken achter het verondiepen, met wie werken ze samen en op welke manier, hoe wordt het gefinancierd etc.
- Op wat voor manier worden de burgers hierbij betrokken?

Vragen rondom het verondiepen in de Gemeente West Maas en Waal

- Op welke manier was Staatsbosbeheer betrokken bij het verondiepen in de Vonkerplas en bij het project Over de Maas.
- Vragen rondom algemene praktijken, samenwerking andere partijen, door wie wordt het geïnitieerd.
- Reactie op de zorgen rondom verondiepen in de gemeente, refereren naar het Burgercollectief
- Op welke manier had dit een impact of het proces van verondiepen en het Standpunt rondom verondiepen van Staatsbosbeheer, is de strategie rondom verondiepen veranderd.
- Vragen gerelateerd aan de toekomst perspectief rondom verondiepen in de gemeente, maar ook in Nederland.

Interview (English version)

General information

- What is your current position at Staatsbosbeheer?
- For how long have you worked for Staatsbosbeheer, and what is your background?
- What is the role of Staatsbosbeheer when it comes to the protection of nature in the Netherlands?
- In what way does Staatsbosbeheer develop the restoration of construction of new nature in the Netherlands?

General questions about shallowing in the NL.

- In what way is Staatsbosbeheer involved in the process of shallowing in the Netherlands?
- What according to you involves Shallowing?
- On what information is this based on? (Identifying where the knowledge/expertise comes from)
- Asking questions to understand the practicalities behind the process of shallowing, With whom does Staatsbosbeheer work together realising and why is it necessary to undertake to shallow?
- Asking how they provide information about the process to the citizens.

Questions about shallowing in the Municipality West Maas and Waal

- In what way is Staatsbosbeheer involved in the process of shallowing concerning the Vonkerplas and Project Over de Maas
- Asking questions about practicalities, financial means, results, and other involved stakeholders
- Asking about their reaction towards the concerns expressed in the Municipality, referring to the Dreumelse Waard
- How did this impact the process of Shallowing and their stance taken about the shallowing process in the Municipality, do they have a different strategy when it comes to shallowing?
- Asking questions related to the future perspective of shallowing in the municipality, but also in the Netherlands.

10.2 List of interviews

List of interviews			
Date	Organisation	Interviewee	Place of Interview
24-2-2023	BCW	Frans & Gert Jan	Online, Teams
8-3-2023	None	Joop Harmsen	Online, Teams
20-3-2023	Gemeente West Maas en Waal	Ans Mol – Wethouder West Maas en Waal	Online, Teams
22-3-2023	B-Ware	Pieter-Jan Westendorp	Online, Teams
24-3-2023	Land ID	Astrid Stokman	LandID (Arnhem)
31-3-2023	Redichemse Waard	Stefan Claessens	Online, Teams
6-4-2023	GrondbankGMG	Thomas Nusselein	GrondbankGMG (Tiel)
7-4-2023	None	Jero World	Phone Call
13-4-2023	HSV Snoekje	Ad van Kraaij	Dreumel
14-4-2023	Antea Group	Harm Warris	Online, Teams
1-5-2023	ATKB	Phillip Raaijmakers, Eric Verkaik	Wageningen, ATKB
4-5-2023	Ministerie Infrastructuur en Water	Pieter-Jan Bus, & Silko	Online, Teams
9-5-2023	Redicheme Waard	Martine Gooszen	Online, Teams
10-5-2023	Dekker Futerra	Willem Jongsma	Online, Teams
11-5-2023	None	Laura Seelen	Online, Teams
12-5-2023	Zembla	Roelof Bosma	Online, Teams
19-5-2023	Follow the Money	Mirya Sys	Online, Teams
22-5-2023	Unie van Waterschappen	Ernest de Groot	Online, Teams

