

How the Second Delta Committee Set the Agenda for Climate Change Adaptation:

A Dutch Case Study on Framing Strategies for Policy Change

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Theme: The framing of adaptation problems and goals

Parallel session 23 march, 09:00-10:45





BP Oil crisis



9/11



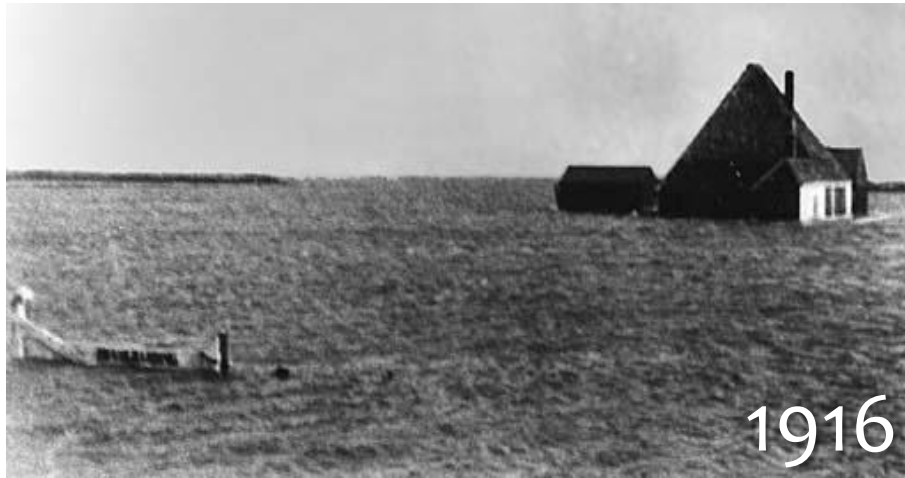
Fukushima



DELTA COMMISSIE

2007/2008

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Main question

- * *‘Which framing strategies did the second Delta Committee employ to set the agenda for changing national water policy in the Netherlands?’*



Methodological Approach

Discourse analysis

- * Report of the Second Delta Committee;
- * Video that supports the report;
- * Press Release;
- * News paper articles (from September 2008).

Operationalisation

Framing:

- * “[i]s to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman 1993, p. 52)

Four Framing Strategies:

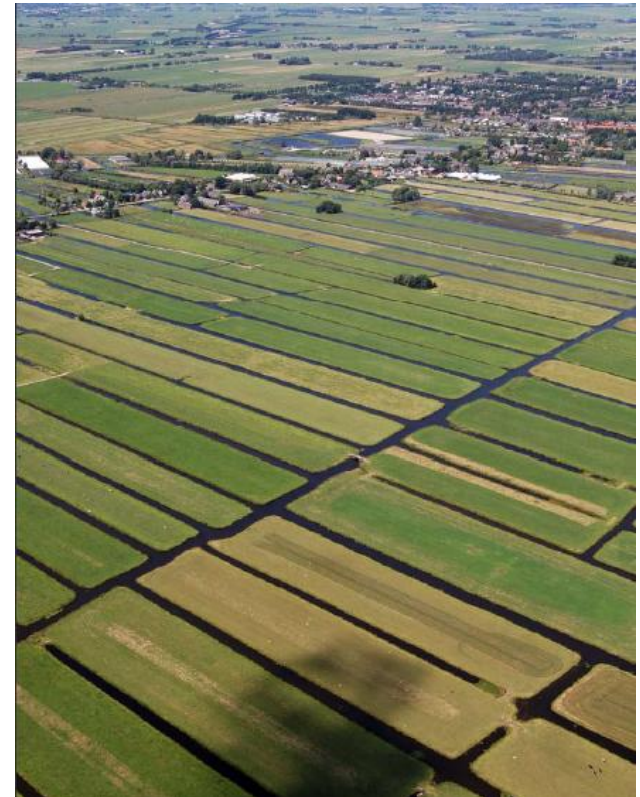
- * The use of narratives and storylines
- * The use of rhetoric
- * The use of symbols and artifacts
- * The exploitation of crises and focusing events

1. Adherence to the climate adaptation narrative

- * *The Netherlands delta is safe, but preserving this safety over the long term involves action now. (..) Climate change is now forcing itself upon us: a new reality that cannot be ignored.” ([Deltacommissie, 2008b](#)).*
- * *“The best long-term strategy to keep the Netherlands safe and a pleasant place to live is to develop along with the changing climate.” (Veerman, 2008, p.5).*

2. Using the story of our delta identity

- * “One **cannot conceive of the Netherlands without water**. Through the centuries, and still today, the inhabitants of our delta have made great efforts to struggle out of the grasp of the rivers and the sea and it is this that sets our country apart.” ([Veerman, 2008, p. 5](#))
- * The sea and the rivers have **shaped our identity and the country itself**: its nature and landscape, its prosperity and economy, and the way it is governed (water boards; the polder model).” ([Veerman, 2008, p. 5](#))



3. Creating a sense of urgency and collectiveness

- * “For us, the second Delta Committee, the threat is **not acute**, **but** our mandate is nevertheless **urgent**. There is absolutely no reason for panic, but we must be concerned for the future.” ([Veerman, 2008, p. 5](#))
- * “Flood risk management is **a pressing issue** right now in a large number of places and will only become **more urgent** as the sea level continues to rise, river discharges fluctuate more and more and as interests that **need protection** increase in value.” ([Veerman, 2008, p. 23](#))

4. Creating a crisis narrative

- * Historical crises



- * Recent crises



- * Anticipate Future disasters

- * (*..*) *The people of the Netherlands are not apprehensive of a natural catastrophe; the risks of climate change are only gradually becoming manifest and **there is a general feeling that effects will only be felt in the distant future.*** (Veerman, 2008, p. 77)

Warm bath of acceptance

The Prime Minister at that time said:

- * *"The government takes the challenge",*

After which he announced to come with a Delta Act and Delta Fund he said:

- * *"If we wisely take the challenge, the Netherlands will come out stronger in this **fight against water** (...). [The report] forces us to face facts about what must be done in the Netherlands to maintain water safety"*

The committee's success


- * They succeeded in..
 1. Creating awareness and setting the agenda for climate change adaptation and the issue of safety in the Dutch water management.
 2. Having the media, the public and politics, to a large extent, accept their frame and framing of the problems, causes, moral judgments and suggested remedies.
 3. Having their recommendations translated in policy programs to a certain extent already (i.e. The Delta Programme).

“How to..”

- * Find a recent crisis, or frame the risk of future crises based on earlier crises, and try to exploit it;
- * Exaggerate, magnify or enlarge the problem and negative consequences if no policy measures are taken;
- * Present your priorities as if they are common sense and true;
- * Support the frame with images, symbols and artifacts;
- * Exploit fully the persuasive power of rhetoric and try to set a strong storyline or narrative to which nobody can really oppose (nobody is against water security and a safe delta for instance);



Thank you..

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- * Is framing manipulation?
 - * Would this have worked nowadays?
 - * How significant might other strategies have been?