



POLICY CHANGE IN DUTCH SOCIAL HOUSING

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Foreword and acknowledgements

This thesis was written as part of the Master of Science programme in Public Administration, specialization in European and International Governance, at Leiden University, Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs.

When I first started thinking of a topic for my thesis social housing immediately came to mind. For the past four and a half years I have been part of the board of a tenant's association and therefore have been in contact with several housing associations. However, until now I have never connected my work with my studies in Public Administration, but when I found out that the sector in the Netherlands is pretty unique and also has a European flavour due to the Commission's involvement in recent years, my interest was awakened. In the end this European influence turned out to have dwindled over time, but the sector and the changes in it still are fascinating. In the end I learned a lot, not only about social housing, but also about the process of policy change. A topic which is not only interesting academically, but which will also hopefully help me in my future career as a policy maker at the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom affairs.

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If you want to make enemies, try to change something
- Woodrow Wilson

Abstract

Social housing in the Netherlands is a very unique sector with a long history. It is also the largest European social housing sector by far. In the last couple of years a lot has been going on in this sector and policies have changed. This unique sector is therefore a good policy sector to test different theories on policy change, which has never been done before. To research which main theory on policy change can be best used to explain policy change in the Dutch social housing sector these main theories are first described and critically assessed. The main theories that are used are the most recent versions of the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, Advocacy Coalition Framework and Multiple Streams Approach. By using a combination of interviews and a document analysis two cases in the Dutch field of social housing have been analysed using these three theories in their entirety. The first case was the so-called state support case in which the European Commission, partially following questions from the Dutch government themselves and partially due to pressure from investor groups, stated that the Dutch housing associations were receiving illegitimate state aid that had a market disrupting effect. Subsequently, the Dutch government for the first time defined the group that should get access to social housing by setting up income limits and an obligation for housing associations to give at least 90% of their properties to this group. However, these limits were later temporarily adjusted in favour of the lower middle income groups that would otherwise have trouble finding housing. The other case was Wonen 4.0 (Living 4.0), a policy proposal to reform the complete housing market in an integral way that was made by an unique coalition of parties representing interests from both the buying as well as the renting side of the housing market. However, the plan, despite its broad support, seemed a bridge too far for all political parties and was therefore not adopted. In the end a combination of the three theories is needed to properly explain the process of policy change in Dutch social housing as every theory adds aspects that were relevant in both cases but which the others do not mention. Also, the notion of policy soundness was added to the theory due to it being observed as a requirement for policy change, but it not being part of any other the existing theories. The comprehensive framework that follows from the combination of theories explains why policy change did happen in the state support case and also why it did not in the Wonen 4.0 case. However, this comprehensive model needs further testing both in the field of social housing and also in other policy fields to determine its definitive value.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Housing is one of the basic human rights. Incorporated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and considered by Maslow (1943: 372) to be one of the physical requirements for human survival, its importance is great. Within the field of housing, social housing is especially important in its function to provide housing to those not able to get it without help. Social housing policy is therefore a field that can be very impactful on people's lives and which deserves proper attention from governments, scientists and other societal groups. Understanding the process in which these policies are made can potentially have an influence on the success of future social housing policy.

This thesis will focus on a specific process; policy change in social housing in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a peculiar case when it comes to social housing. In the Netherlands the social housing sector had a share of 31% of the total housing market in 2012, the highest of all EU countries by far (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014: 222). The main actors in this sector are housing associations, independent non-profit organisations which in the Netherlands are part of a long tradition, and have proven their worth in previous (economic) crises. However, from 2007 to 2010 the image of housing associations decreased rapidly due to many scandals, despite their rising share in the construction of new housing stock (47% in 2010, to 60% in 2011) (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014: 228). Policy for social housing is therefore very impactful for the Dutch society. A big change in the social housing system came in 1995 when all government loans to housing associations were cancelled in exchange for an abolishment of the subsidy obligations (Elsinga et al., 2008: 25). With this change the housing associations became completely financially independent. This system remained in place in the years that followed.

However, this all changed in 2005 when the European Commission started asking questions about this Dutch system in the context of state support (Czischke, 2015: 95). Commercial rental organisations claimed that this created an uneven level playing field in the rental market, which goes against one of the core principles of the European single market. The Commission deemed that social housing associations in the Netherlands were indeed in open competition with private housing actors, which the Commission, due to the state support, saw as harmful to the competition and to the companies in the private housing sector (Elsinga & Lind, 2013). The Dutch government and the Commission therefore came to an agreement in 2009 which states that as of 1 January 2011 housing associations can only receive state aid when their target group has a maximum income of €34,085 annually and they have to rent at least 90% of the housing available to this target group (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014: 230). This was a remarkable decision as social housing was never defined before in the Netherlands. This major change in Dutch social housing policy set in motion a trend of more reforms for social housing policy despite Dutch housing associations being autonomous organisations.

Nonetheless, at the same time change in Dutch social housing policy was still obstructed. With 'Wonen 4.0' (Living 4.0) an integral plan for change in the whole Dutch housing market was suggested. For social housing the change of the whole housing market is important since people who do not qualify for social housing have trouble with both renting on the private market and with buying a house (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014). Wonen 4.0 was unique in that it was a reform plan created by all the actors in the housing market: housing associations, tenants organisations, home owners and real estate agencies (Aedes, 2012). The collaboration was one never seen before and its goals were even supported by research on the expected effects (Boelhouwer & Lamain, 2012). However, in the end politics only took some aspects from the plan and disregarded many of its suggested changes, despite its support in the policy field itself.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The sudden change in the field of Dutch social housing policy raises the question what enabled this change after a relative long period of policy stasis.

Also, the involvement of the European Commission in the field of social housing is remarkable because formally, the Commission is not responsible for housing policy (Kadi & Musterd, 2014: 248). With the involvement of new actors, the appearance of sudden change but also obstructed change Dutch social housing policy makes an interesting policy field to find out what the enabling factors for these changes were. To find this answer, theories on policy change can be used. However, in the field of policy change multiple theories with partially contradictory causal mechanisms exist. For this research this therefore leads to the following research question:

Which of the main theories on policy change can be best used to explain policy change in social housing in the Netherlands?

1.1.1 SUB-QUESTIONS

To properly answer the research question, the research is divided into the following sub-questions:

1. What criteria, according the existing theories, contribute towards change policy?
2. What role did the explanatory criteria play in each of the two cases?
3. What can we learn when we compare the results from the analyses of the two cases about the causes of policy change in social housing in The Netherlands?

1.2 TYPE AND GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

The goal of the research is theory development by testing several theories on policy change in order to explain the actual process of change of social housing policies in the Netherlands, using a combination of qualitative research methods. The type of research is therefore positive empirical and explanatory as it focuses on explaining the reality as it is using empirical facts (Toshkov, 2015). The research has a theory testing focus as it will test a theoretical framework on the different possible factors that can lead to policy change in a certain policy area. The theories that are used are partially contradictory which enables this research to contribute to the academic discussion on policy change since it will likely, at least partially, falsify parts of theories and possibly reaffirm other parts.

1.3 SOCIETAL AND ACADEMIC RELEVANCE

Because of the size of the Dutch social housing sector, changes in this policy area are relevant for a lot of people in the Dutch society. For example, the policy change that placed an income limit on social housing provides a negative change for people with a lower-middle income. The consequence of this rule is that people with an income between €34.000 and €43.000 annually (the middle income group) no longer qualify for social housing, but monthly rents in the commercial sector are too high for them (Boelhouver & Priemus, 2014). Additionally, hardly any new homes have been built by private investors for this group and buying a house is difficult due to factors such as high mortgages for their income. However, waitlists for social housing are already long and also including this group of people will make these even longer, creating a political dilemma. Different groups of people therefore have different interest in this policy area, making it a dynamic field which, because of the importance that housing has on people's lives, can have a big impact. Knowledge on factors that can enable policy change is therefore very relevant for society as it can empower groups who are unintentionally harmed by policies. By knowing which factors can bring about policy change they can more effectively defend their interest. Furthermore, knowledge on what factors contribute to change in social housing specifically are also important given the significance of the sector in the Dutch society and the amount of money that is tied to it.

Despite the plentiful research on policy change and in the field of social housing, no previous research exists that has researched policy change in social housing policy specifically (Bengtsson, 2015).

In fact, in the research field of social housing there is currently a lack of political science/public administrative theoretical research as almost all of the research that exists about this is descriptive (Ibid). This research therefore aims to fill this knowledge gap by comparing the three main theories on policy change and applying them to two cases about social housing policy in the Netherlands. One of these cases has resulted in an actual change of the policy while in the other case broadly supported change was proposed but was not implemented. By comparing these theories not only are they applied to a new policy area, but also lessons can be learned about the explanatory power of each of them. Also, there is a lack of literature that compares these theories in an integral way. For example, Brouwer and Bierman (2011), Timmermans and Scholten (2006) and Breeman et al. (2009) apply some of these theories to policy fields in the Netherlands, however, they do not test these theories in their totality but pick elements from them such as venue shopping, policy images and policy entrepreneurs to test. In order to properly assess the worth of a theory it should be fully tested, not just one of its aspects. This research therefore aims to contribute to both the theoretical discourse on social housing research as on the theoretical discourse of policy change.

1.4 STRUCTURE

After the previous explanation of the research's purpose and the question which this research aims to answer a theoretical framework which describes the theories on policy change that will be used in this research will be presented in chapter 2. Included in this theoretical discussion is an overview of propositions derived from the differences between these three theories. Chapter 3 on the research design will start with an operationalisation of the variables from the theories to make the perceptible and measurable. It will then explain the research strategy, the data collection methods and methods of analysis and conclude by giving an overview of the validity and reliability of the research. Next, chapter 4 will give a description of the cases, after which chapter 5 will present the findings in each case. Chapter 6 will analyse these findings in a discussion using the theories. Finally, chapter 7 will conclude the research and answer the research's main question and chapter 8 will provide a bibliography of all the literature used in the research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research the three theories that will be compared are Baumgartner and Jones's Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Framework and Kingdon's Multiple Streams Model. These three theories are considered to be the main models for explaining the policy process by various scholars (e.g. Birkland, 2011; Meijerink, 2005; John, 2003). The system of knowledge on policy change is thus a polycentric one, meaning that there are multiple theories that all have a powerful position in the scientific discourse (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 159). Also, these theories have been well researched and undergone various improvements over time. In this theoretical framework the most current versions of these theories are presented. However, none of these theories have been applied in the field of social housing policy change.

All of these theories are developed in an American context. However, they have proved their validity in the Dutch policy system as well by various applications to Dutch cases (e.g. Meijerink, 2005; Hoekstra & Kaptein, 2014; Timmermans & Scholten, 2006). No adjustments were therefore required for these theories to make them fit the Dutch institutional setup.

Besides the theories that are selected, other theories on policy change also exist. The reason these theories are chosen is because they offer a view of the policy process that is inclusive of research on institutions, networks, socioeconomic developments, choices and ideas (John, 2003: 487). Interesting and good theories exist that focus on one of these aspects. An example of a well-known specialized theory on the policy process is Ostrom's Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (Ostrom, 2011). The main focus of this theory are institutions. However I argue to not use this theory and others like it in the theoretical framework because it is not certain that this would lead to an all-encompassing view of policy change because institutions tend to constrict change rather than encourage it (John, 2003: 484). Nevertheless, the selected theories on policy change, though not focussing on it, include the effect of institutional setups and also other factors that could lead to policy change. Since the research focusses on the explanation of policy change and multiple factors are said to have an influence, the choice is made to focus on 'all encompassing' theories on policy change.

In order to make proposals about the comparison between the theories they are first explained in detail followed by a conceptual model which depicts the causal relations the theories offer for policy change. The agreements and disagreements between the theories are then discussed and the chapter will conclude with a operationalisation that states how the main variables from the theories will be measured.

2.1 PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

Developed originally by Baumgartner and Jones, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) argues that policy processes are generally characterized by stability and incremental change but occasionally large-scale changes occur (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 59). PET therefore explains both stability and change in the policy process.

2.1.1 CHANGE AND STABILITY

According to Baumgartner et al. (2014: 61) national political systems are conservative and therefore favour maintaining the status quo and do not prefer to make moderate changes to accommodate changing circumstances. This means that in order to create major changes, a conflict or an extraordinary effort is needed. PET therefore argues that in the policymaking process there are big leaps in attention, followed by periods in which the issue again disappears from the public agenda (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 61). Furthermore, public institution reinforce these movements and policy images can play a role in removing the control of specialists and special interest groups from so-called 'policy monopolies' (Ibid.).

Political systems do not constantly discuss all political issues at the same time, they are therefore often divided into multiple issue-oriented policy subsystems (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 62). These subsystems can be competitive, only contain one interest, dissolve over time or can become independent from other subsystems. They exist of professional communities of experts and therefore operate out of the political spotlight (Ibid.). However, issues can also come to the agenda of the 'macro politics', meaning they receive a lot of public attention, which can lead to changes in these political subsystems. This system thus creates both stability and punctuations in the attention for a policy issue.

Related to this is the fact that political systems can both engage in serial and parallel processing. Policy subsystems allow for parallel processing since a great deal of issues can be considered in multiple subsystems at the same time (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 63). By contrast, macro-political institutions such as a parliament or a ministry cannot simultaneously give a lot of issues attention. They therefore engage in serial processing as a limited number of issues is on the public agenda which lose attention to be replaced by others (Ibid.).

2.1.2 POLICY MONOPOLIES

When policy subsystems are dominated by a single interest they are called policy monopolies (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 63). This interest often is connected to shared political values and can be communicated in an direct and easy way to the public. Because of the shared values, these subsystems are resistant to change, they therefore contain a negative feedback process (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 64). Negative feedback in this context does not mean feedback that is negative and thus gives an incentive for change, it is feedback that maintains the system and thus only creates small and incremental change (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 65).

Policy monopolies can be broken. When pressure for change is sufficient, new and previously uninvolved actors might intervene in the policy system (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 64). In order to create sufficient pressure for change, a significant change in the underlying policy image is needed. By redefining or adding new dimensions to the issue, new actors will want to change the rules and the existing balance of power. This results in a policy change which is supported by new institutional structures which ensure that this new equilibrium can stay in place after the political attention for the issue diminishes (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 64). A positive feedback process can support this change process. Positive feedback occurs when a change, which could also be a small one, in the circumstances causes brings forth a bigger change (Ibid.). This is also called a 'bandwagon effect' and can be brought forth by both changing policy images and venues of public policy (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 65).

2.1.3 POLICY IMAGES

Policy images are images that contain both empirical information and emotionally appealing factors (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 66). Even if information is objective, it can be used in different ways and can affect people in different ways. Most policy images that are widely accepted and supported are related to a policy monopoly (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 67). However, different policy images on the same issue can also compete with each other with one group supporting one set of images and another group supporting another. For example, the image of nuclear power can be seen as one of technological expertise and economic progress, but also as dangerous and environment degrading (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 67). A new policy image can bring about support from previously uninvolved actors and cause public attention for a policy to rise, bringing it from the policy subsystem to the macro-political system (Ibid.). Macro politics is where different policy images compete, political manipulation and positive feedback occur. Policy images can contribute to both changing the views of the public on the issue and to the level of attention that an issue receives in this macro-political system (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 68). Related to this is the fact that people's attention to issues is serial.

Since the real world is multidimensional, rapidly changing and complex we do not have the ability to integrate opposing views (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 69). We therefore focus on one main aspect of the issue and attention is only given to at most a few things at a time.

2.1.4 VENUES OF PUBLIC POLICY

Policy is made within multiple venues, for the Netherlands examples of such places are Municipal Councils, the national parliament, and also the institutions of the European Union such as the European Council. Each of the institutional venues requires another strategy due to its unique language, set of participants and limitations (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 67).

Using a new policy image, strategic actors who want to change the existing policy monopoly can go 'venue shopping'. They then look for the institutional venue that provides the most support for their policy image, giving them the highest chance of disrupting the policy monopoly and ensuring a policy change to their preference. However, venue shopping is an uncertain process. When changing venues to broaden the scope of the new policy, previous decisions can be revoked instead of supported, and losing in one agenda does not guarantee winning in another (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 81).

Policy change according to Punctuated Equilibrium Theory can be depicted in the following way (figure 1):

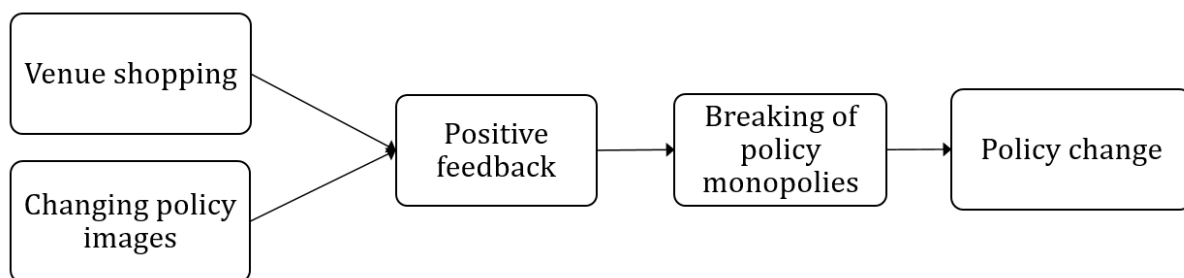


Figure 1. Conceptual model Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

2.2 ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

Like Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) confirms the importance of policy subsystems. In fact, in the ACF they are the main unit of analysis in the policy process (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 189). These subsystems can differ in topic, territorial scope and the actors who directly or indirectly influence them. In these subsystems various components such as institutional characteristics, resources and belief systems interact to produce outputs and outcomes for an issue (Ibid.). Also these subsystems are not comprised of all the people affected by the policy, people instead do not engage in subsystems at all or only in a small number of them given that time and attention are limited (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 190). The potential relevant actors in the subsystem are also not limited to the legislators, government agencies and interest groups, they also include bureaucrats from any government organisation, representatives from the private sector and non-profit organisations, journalists, scientists and researchers, court members and private consultants (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 190). Furthermore, policy subsystems are semi-independent for they overlap with subsystems of other topics and are nested in other subsystems of the same topic in higher levels of government (Ibid.). They also offer authority or a potential for authority because they could have the possibility to monitor or enforce a policy. Finally, these subsystems experience periods of stability, incremental change and major change (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 190).

2.2.1 ACTOR BELIEFS SYSTEMS

Individual actors within the ACF follow the logic of bounded rationality. They are rational in that they pursue their self-interest however full rationality is not possible because it is unclear how to achieve their goal and impossible to process all stimuli such as information and experiences (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 191). Also, actors remember losses more heavily than gains, which leads to overestimation of their opponent's power and maliciousness. They thus simplify the world and have biased perceptions of stimuli. The belief systems of these actors consist of three levels: deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 191). Deep core beliefs are not policy specific and they consist of the fundamental normative values of a person that are difficult to change (Ibid.). Policy core beliefs are related to a certain policy topic and can both be normative and empirical. Normative notions are about the basic notions, the value priorities and the prioritisation of welfare recipients of the policy subsystem (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 191). Empirical notions are about the seriousness of the problem, its causes and its preferred solutions (Ibid.). Finally, secondary beliefs are the easiest to change and relate to the preference for certain instruments that can be used to get the preferred outcomes of the policy subsystem. Because of the prominent position of beliefs, policies within the ACF are defined not just as the actions or inactions of government but also as the translation of belief systems (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 192). These beliefs are not just the values and preferences that actors hold, but are they are also the causal patterns and relationships that actors perceive that shape the world (Ibid.). An important source to these causal patterns is scientific and technical information which can notify actors of causal relations, problem attributes and policies (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 192). Information thus plays an important role in the belief systems of actors.

2.2.2 ADVOCACY COALITIONS

It is impossible to analyse policy subsystems by looking at all the actors that are directly or indirectly involved since these might be hundreds of individual actors per subsystem. However, a good way to analyse the subsystems is by combining actors into one or more advocacy coalitions consisting of actors who share the same policy core beliefs and coordination strategies (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 191). This also allows for the analysis of cross-coalition interactions, the cohesion within the coalition and the separation of the coalition (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 192).

Advocacy coalitions are strategic groups that try to influence decisions by government authorities that have an influence on institutional rules and policy outputs and outcomes (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 193). They are generally stable over time but it is not uncommon for them to fall apart or have changing members (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 195). Actors within the coalition can vary in their coalition membership. Principal actors are central and consistent members of the coalition whereas auxiliary actors are located more on the periphery of the coalition and are not as regularly involved in the coalition's activities and sometimes only a member for a short period of time (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 197). Actors in a coalition share the same policy core beliefs, but can have different deep core beliefs. An example of this is given by Birkland (2011: 300), he shows that religious conservatives and feminists can be together in an advocacy coalition despite their different ideologies. He uses the issue of pornography to illustrate that while religious conservatives might oppose this on moral grounds, feminists groups might oppose it on the grounds of a women's equality issue. This example illustrates the fact that groups can have very different ideologies but can find common ground in a shared idea. However, because these groups have very different underlying values they are not very likely to form a coalition on other issues as well.

In order to reach their goals advocacy coalitions have several resources that they can use. These include formal legal authority to make political decisions, public opinion, information, supporters who can be mobilized, financial resources and leadership (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 198). These resources influence the capability of a coalition to influence the policy subsystem.

2.2.3 POLICY-ORIENTED LEARNING

In the ACF the belief systems are not fixed. The concept of policy-oriented learning is important in the framework. This can be defined as experiences based enduring changes of mind or behavioural intentions of individuals or groups, which involve getting new or revising old understandings of the belief system (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 198). These changing perceptions are not only about problems and their solutions, but also about the use of strategies to achieve the coalition's objectives (Ibid.). The extent to which learning occurs is influenced by four factors: the attributes of the forum, the level of conflict between coalitions, the attributes of the stimuli and the attributes of the actors.

Forums are the venues where coalitions operate, they can influence the extent of learning through their institutional arrangements such as the degrees of openness and common analytical training and norms of conduct (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 198-199). Next, the level of conflict is the degree to which the actors in a coalition see the other coalition(s) as a danger to their core policy beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 199). When there are low levels of conflict there is little cross-coalition learning as there is little incentive for actors to improve their stance, the same goes for when there are high levels of conflict since actors are more occupied with defending their belief and rejecting information that challenges this. The likeliness for learning is therefore the greatest when there are intermediate levels of conflict since the coalitions are threatened enough to pay attention to the issue but also remain open enough to receive new information (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 199). Furthermore, the attributes of the stimuli refer to the characteristics of information and experience that induce policy-oriented learning (Ibid.). When the stimuli are intractable, the less likely learning is since this information does not allow for variation in explanation. Finally, the attributes of the actors like their belief system, resources, strategies and network contacts influence to what extent learning is possible. For example, actors with extreme beliefs will be less likely to learn from opponents than actors with moderate beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 199). Some actors can even be policy brokers and facilitate learning and the other policy processes.

2.2.4 POLICY CHANGE

The ACF encompasses both minor and major policy change, depending on the change of the policy compared to the previous one (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 201). Government policies are a reflection of policy-oriented beliefs. Major policy changes are therefore change in the core aspects of a policy like its direction or goals in the subsystem (Ibid.). Minor policy change on the other hand is change in secondary aspects, or the means for achieving the goals. Minor policy change is also more likely to occur since they do not require as much consensus, redistribution resources or evidence as major changes (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 201). Major policy change is more difficult because the beliefs that underlie it are more rigid and is therefore unlikely as long as the advocacy coalition that brought about this change is still in power (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 202).

There are four ways in which change can be brought about:

- External events: change can be brought about by conditions outside of the control of the subsystem actors (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 202). These events include involve change in socioeconomic conditions, government change, outputs from other subsystems extreme events such as crises and disasters. However, for these events to lead to policy change they require at least one enabling factor such as a rise in public interest, agenda change, the redistribution of coalition resources and the opening and closing of policy venues (Ibid.). These events can be used by minority coalitions to pursue their goals and change the policy according to their beliefs.
- Internal events: events that are within the boundaries and topical area of the policy subsystem or events that are affected by the actors from a subsystem can also lead to change (Jenkins-Smit et al., 2014: 202). These events can change beliefs and generate more attention for certain government policies, examples are political fiascos, scandals or policy failures.

These events can be used strategically by advocacy coalition to frame the event and change the perceptions about the problem, its causes and implications (Ibid.). The effect of these events are mediated through the same enabling factors as external events.

- Policy-oriented learning: through policy-oriented learning change can happen in an incremental way. By gradually changing the concepts and assumptions of the subsystems, government decisions can be changed (Jenkins-Smit et al., 2014: 203).
- Negotiated agreement: when previously opposing coalitions work together change can be brought about (Jenkins-Smit et al., 2014: 203). These agreements can be brought about using collaborative institutions that can facilitate negotiation such as trust, leadership, a hurting stalemate or a lack of alternative venues. These institutions provide coalitions with an incentive to work together and create a new policy change through their new agreement.

Following from the above, the conceptual model of policy change in the ACF is displayed in figure 2.

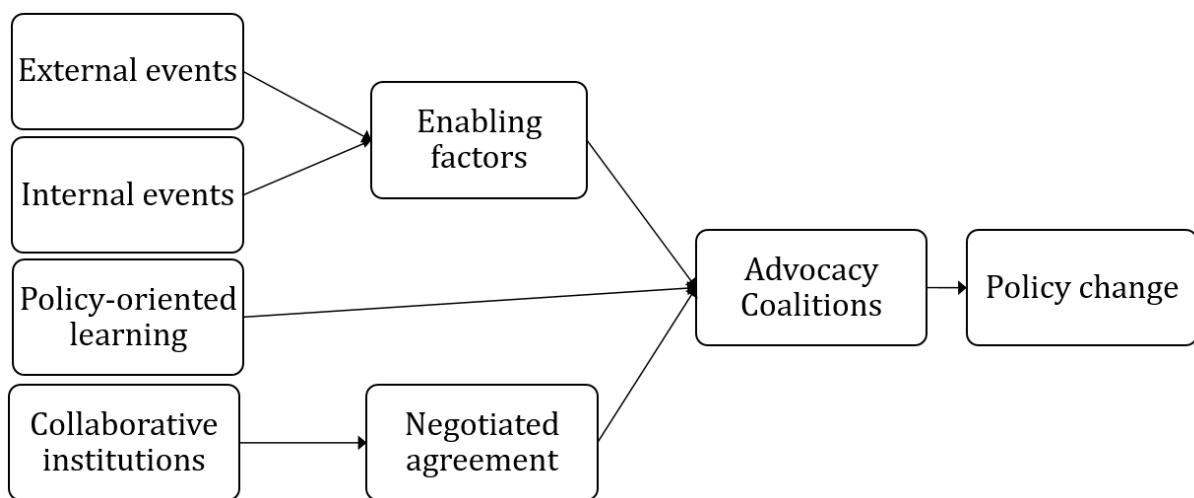


Figure 2. Conceptual model Advocacy Coalition Framework

2.3 MULTIPLE STEAMS APPROACH

In the Multiple Steams Approach (MSA) policy is made when the separate problems, policies and politics streams are combined by policy entrepreneurs during the opening of a 'policy window' (Zahariadis, 2014: 25). Based on the 'Garbage can' model of decision-making in organisations, Kingdon's MSA does not see policy systems settling into equilibrium but sees them as constantly changing. The different streams are somewhat independent and run parallel to each other until they meet in the policy window (Birkland, 2011: 297).

In the MSA policymaking happens under conditions of ambiguity. This can manifest itself in policymaking in three ways. First, participation in the process is fluid (Zahariadis, 2014: 27). The time and effort participants put into the process varies, turnover of participants is high and interest groups exercise influence over the decisions taken (Ibid.). Second, objectives in the public sector are often not as clear as the ones in the private sector (Zahariadis, 2014: 27). Time constraints prevent the formulation of precise objectives or preferences and the decision-making process may be facilitated by ambiguousness (Ibid.). Third, the processes that turn input into output are unclear. The individual responsibility of a person is often clear, but the way their position fits into the organisation's mission is often not known (Zahariadis, 2014: 27). Also, boundaries of the jurisdiction are often vague, departments compete with each other for organisational resources and politicians and civil servants are often entangled in a principal-agent problem (Ibid.).

Given this centrality of ambiguity, political manipulation is an important way for actors to become a winner in the political struggle (Zahariadis, 2014: 29). Ambiguity leaves room for information to be interpreted, which means that it can be strategically used. Rational institutional theory states that individuals pursue their own self-interest and are utility-maximizing within the limitations provided by institutions such as decision-making rules and the absence of perfect information (Ostrom, 2011: 13-14). The MSA however adds to this that if this bounded-rational behaviour creates manipulators, there are also people being manipulated (Zahariadis, 2014: 30). Policymakers and policy entrepreneurs manipulate information in the problems, policy and politics streams to pursue their goals. This means that actors like the public can be influenced and that the streams can change.

2.3.1 PROBLEM STREAM

A problem arises when certain conditions are addressed by policymakers and the public (Zahariadis, 2014: 32). These conditions reach policymakers through indicators, focusing events and feedback.

Indicators can be used to signify the existence and magnitude of a problem (Zahariadis, 2014: 32). Examples are crime rates, program costs, or the change of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Even though indicators are generally objective numbers, they can be used politically. Conditions are generally connected to certain values, indicators notify people that these values are violated (Zahariadis, 2014: 32). When people can compare these conditions to past performances or to other countries the conditions are defined as a problem and activate interest and attention (Ibid.). Problems are therefore a very normative issue, some conditions can be seen as a problem during one time, but might not be the next.

During focussing events the media or policy entrepreneurs direct the attention of the public to certain problematic conditions (Zahariadis, 2014: 32). A well-known focussing event is the 9/11 attacks which, among others, had a big impact on aviation security (Birkland, 2004).

Furthermore, feedback shows which measures are successful and which are not. Positive feedback can be used to let the program spillover into another policy area, while negative feedback can function as an indicator that there is a problem and that change is needed.

2.3.2 POLICY STREAM

In the policy stream multiple ideas compete for the attention of policy makers. In this competition technical feasibility, value acceptability and resource adequacy are the selection criteria that determine the acceptance of ideas (Zahariadis, 2014: 33). This means that ideas that are implementable, fit the norms and values of policymakers and are not very costly are much more likely to be adopted.

Ideas also do not necessarily rise to the top of attention of policymakers in an incremental way. Because policy networks differ in their size, capacity, accesses and mode, ideas can rise at different speeds depending on these characteristics (Zahariadis, 2014: 33). Large networks are less integrated and highly competitive but easily accessible, this means that ideas can come and go more quickly. Smaller networks are more restricted, but have a consensual mode which means that ideas are in the system for a much longer time (Ibid.).

This stream goes against the notion of rationality; sometimes policies do not solve problems or they are searching for a problem to which they can be linked, and not the other way around (Stone, 2011). An example of policies searching for a rationale is American war in Iraq in 2003. Initially the rationale provided for the solution of going to war was the threat of Saddam Hussein possessing weapons of mass destruction (Zahariadis, 2014: 42).

However, later other rationales of connections to terrorists or the liberation and democratization of Iraq were used to justify the same policy (Ibid.).

2.3.3 POLITICS STREAM

The third stream of politics is made up of three elements: the national mood, pressure group campaigns and administrative or legislative turnover (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). When a change in the national mood is combined with a government turnover this leads to the most profound change in the political agenda (Ibid.).

The national mood reflects the logic that the citizens of a certain country have common opinions which change over time (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). Public opinion polls give politicians a way to know the national mood and use this to promote or remove items on the agenda. The opinions of interest groups are also used as an indicator for the opinion of their members (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). Government officials will therefore pay attention to the issues that these interest groups deem important. When interest groups have conflicting views politicians can frame this support and opposition in a certain way which can either increase or decrease the chances of the issue getting much attention (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). Finally administrative and legislative turnover can also have an impact on the policy process. When the ideological composition of a legislative body changes after an election, preferences and possible majorities also change causing attention to shift to other issues (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). The same goes for administrative turnover since officials like ministers have a significant influence on politics and have their own preferences for certain issues.

2.3.4 POLICY WINDOWS

Policy windows are created when the three streams are joined together during a critical moment (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). They define the context of policymaking and can facilitate the adaption of certain policies. The duration of a policy window is short, and they can both be predictable and unpredictable (Zahariadis, 2014: 35). Predictable policy windows are recurring events such as annual budget allocations. They are usually institutionalized which allows for spill-overs and issue-linkage (Ibid.). Unpredictable policy windows occur because of compelling problems or events in the political stream. For example, a sudden outbreak of an animal disease might lead to stricter animal health regulation and a sudden drop in public opinion for a policy might be an opportunity for to change it.

Policy entrepreneurs are actors who try to connect the three streams. When a policy window occurs it is their task to link problems and solutions and find political support for these ideas during the time of the policy window (Zahariadis, 2014: 35). In general, policy entrepreneurs with more access to policy makers and resources and those applying manipulating strategies are more successful in connecting the three streams and thus reaching their goals (Zahariadis, 2014: 36). However, the danger lies in the use of an incorrect policy window by a policy entrepreneur. This can lead to the undermining of both the issue the policy window was about and of the goals of the policy entrepreneur (Zahariadis, 2014: 35).

For a visualisation of the Multiple Streams Approach see figure 3 for a representation of the theory's conceptual model.

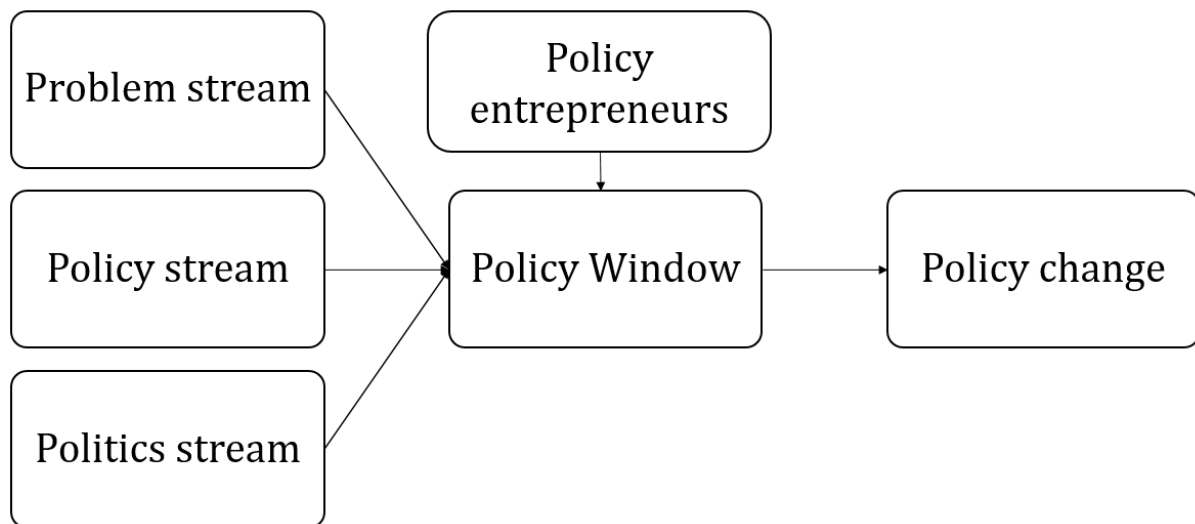


Figure 3. Conceptual model Multiple Streams Approach

2.4 THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Multiple authors show the validity of these theories in the Dutch governmental system, despite them being of American origin (e.g. Meijerink, 2005; Hoekstra & Kaptein, 2014; Timmermans & Scholten, 2006). Characteristic for Dutch the political system is for opposing parties to form coalition agreements together since single political parties do not get more than 50% of the votes during elections. Breeman et al. (2009) show that despite these political and institutional differences the pattern of media attention is the same in the Netherlands and the USA for environmental legislation. However, the Dutch system of forming coalitions in government could potentially mean something for other variables from the theories.

In the Dutch political systems, coalitions governments are the norm. These multiparty governments have to form coalition agreements that are usually negotiated behind closed doors (Breeman et al., 2009: 10). In these coalition agreements the agenda for the coming government is set, meaning these issues will be the topic of political discussion. This seems to contradict the notion that Baumgartner and Jones make in their PET, in which incremental change is connected to policy monopolies of policy experts who try to keep the issues from being macro-political, meaning they have the attention of politicians (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 65-67). The fact is that government (coalition) agreements can also contain plans to keep things as they are, meaning that no or incremental change is tried to maintain in this macro-political setting. Parties not included in the agreement can oppose these plans but these plans are generally made to reduce mistrust, settle dispute and reduce uncertainty (Timmermans & Breeman, 2015: 3). Although venue shopping remains an option for opposition parties, changing the policy image without some sort of focussing event will not have much of an effect due to the majority of the coalition group. This means that in the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, the wish to not change the policy can also be present outside of the policy monopolies and subsystems. This reflects the notion of the Advocacy Coalition Framework in which negotiated agreement can play a role. With the importance of coalition agreements, this theory should explain part of the Dutch system of policy making that the PET does not.

However, contrary to what the ACF proposes, coalitions do not necessarily have to be made of actors with the same policy core beliefs, but can also arise when different actors bargain with each other. Logrolling or issue-linkage, for example, would be a situation in which actors give their support on one issue to ensure the support of the other party on another issue that is more important to them (Huiteima & Meijerink, 2007: 16). Capano (2009: 11) calls the beliefs that bind the actors in an advocacy coalition factors of stability, but not of change.

Following the logic of the AFC in which individual actors are bounded rational, striking a bargain with another actors seems like a rational choice, despite not sharing the same policy beliefs. Advocacy coalition therefore can be not only formed because of shared beliefs, but also because collaboration is beneficial.

Also, in the ACF negotiated agreement is presented as an agreement in which actors have an incentive to work together and actually want to do this freely, for example because of a hurting stalemate or a lack of alternative venues (Jenkins-Smit et al., 2014: 203). However, negotiated agreements can also be the result of force. When looking at the European Union, the Commission has been given competences which member state's governments do not have, for example regarding the competition in the internal market. The government of a member state would then have no other choice but to form a negotiated agreement with the Commission if they want to have at least some input in the decision. This means the researcher regards negotiated agreement also as something that is possibly not of an entirely voluntary base when other levels of government are involved with delegated competences.

Furthermore, in the PET there is an interconnectedness between the policy images and different venues that Baumgartner and Jones do not mention. As Princen (2010) shows with the example of EU fisheries policy, actors can give the same policy a different image and choose their venues accordingly. In his example of fisheries policy Greenpeace frames the policy area as an environmental issue while other stakeholders prefer Europeche, the EU fishermen umbrella organisation as their venue (Princen, 2010: 40). Actors therefore prefer to act in the venue that they consider their 'home ground', which is a venue that is embedded in the image that they have of the policy. This connection between a certain policy frame and the actors also applies to the ACF, although this theory does not explicitly mention the importance of a certain frame. Ulmanen et al. (2009) using Sabatier's ACF, found that in Sweden and the Netherlands advocacy coalitions used different frames for bio-fuels to influence the policy, leading to a different outcome for the policy in both countries. Linking the policy to a certain frame can therefore also be of influence for advocacy coalitions and not just in the PET.

Each theory has a way of looking at the actors in the system, including political parties. The can be found breaking the policy monopolies in the PET, as part of the advocacy coalitions in the ACF and in the MSA in the politics stream. Also other actors have a different position in the theories. The MSA ignores other actors besides political actors in the politics stream and those trying to change the policy as policy entrepreneurs, the PET only sees those in policy monopolies and those trying to break them, and the ACF groups all actors in different advocacy coalitions. These classifications seem different, but a certain advocacy coalition can also be the policy monopoly or the policy entrepreneur. It seems that actors not necessarily fall into only one category, but fit into one depending on which theoretical frame one uses. Mintrom and Norman (2009) find this when looking at policy entrepreneurs. Naturally these have a central position in the MSA as agents of change and users of policy windows (Mintrom & Norman, 2009: 655). Additionally, they find policy entrepreneurs in the PET in actors who bring issues on the public agenda by trying to influence the policy image (Mintrom & Norman, 2009: 656-657). Finally in the ACF policy entrepreneurs are not mentioned explicitly but actors are needed to transfer the effects of the internal and external events into political effect (Mintrom & Norman, 2009: 657). This example shows that actors have a different role, depending on the theory. Therefore it might prove useful to categorize the actors according to the different theories to see if this will lead to new insights.

The role of research is also different in the theories. The MSA does not mention it accept for its use in presenting a problem, but in the PET it is covered in venue shopping (the scientific venue) and in the ACF research can cause policy-oriented learning. In the PET and the ACF science therefore has much more of a political role than it does in the MSA where science is understood as statistics that indicate a problem.

This is shown by Van Buuren and Edelenbos (2004) who find that scientists, advice bureaus and consultancy firms can also be included in advocacy coalitions and that the knowledge they produce can be used in the fight between coalitions. Scientists therefore have a different role depending on the theory,

Another factor that is features in all of the theories are (focussing) events. They are differentiated in the ACF between internal and external events. However, according to Breeman et al. (2009: 35), incidents can also differ in impact. According to their research the events with the most impact are incidents that feature a clear dramatic storyline, involve well-known people and have a national aspect,

The MSA proposes that the problem, politics and policy streams are separate from each other (Zahariadis, 2014: 25). However, according to Brouwer and Bierman (2011) they are linked and policy entrepreneurs can even to some degree have an influence in directing the streams towards each other by acting strategically. They give the example that the problems in the problem stream have to be defined by the actors in the policy stream and that the policy options in the policy stream also depend on this problem definition (Brouwer & Bierman, 2011: 14). The streams therefore influence each other as they develop, contrary to Kingdon's statement.

Finally, policy change as presented by Kingdon in the MSA does not explain policy stability. As John (2013: 10) also states, Kingdon's model assumes continual policy change. This seems illogical because political attention shifts, and the time of both civil servants and politicians is limited. This does not allow for them to continuously focus on all of the policies. It only seems natural that policies are not in a constant state of change. The analysis will point out whether the PET or the ACF will be more useful in explaining this.

2.5 PROPOSITIONS

In order to properly compare the different theories, the causal connections that differ between the theories have to be identified. This will be done by deriving propositions from the theories. Propositions "specify the constitutive concepts and formulate the causal connections to define and characterize a paradigm or theory" (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 160). Since this research will be comparing theories and not paradigms these propositions will include causal propositions and are thus more specified than when using paradigms (Ibid.). Propositions can be specified in three different ways; by formulating the constitutive and causal propositions as comprehensively as possible, by focussing on the causal relationship between two concepts in much detail, or by focussing on the comparison between the expectations derived from divergent theories (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 179). Since the theories have different causal mechanisms the research will be using the third way of specification. The propositions will therefore be focussed on the points where the theories have contradictory expectations (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 184). Since some causal relationships can be found in two theories, these theories are combined in one proposition and compared to the other, deviating theory.

In the PET and the ACF actors actively work together to pursue a certain policy. In the MSA policies are pursued by individual policy entrepreneurs representing their own, or an organisation's interests. This leads to the following proposition 1:

Proposition 1: Groups of actors who share an interest in the change of a policy in a certain direction have an incentive to work collectively. They therefore collaborate in order to achieve their goals. Another possibility is that policy change mainly happens through the actions of individual policy entrepreneurs representing their own or a represented interest.

Resources of actors are important in the ACF. They are enabling factors for change since a shift in resources can give a group of actors more influence over another. The other two theories do not include the importance of resources which means that proposition 2 is the following:

Proposition 2: A shift in the distribution of resources such as financial resources, ability to mobilize and access to information can enable policy change by increasing the influence of a group of actors while diminishing the influence of others. In other theories however, resources are not stated as a factor of influence on policy change.

The MSA includes a focus on different policies that the other two theories do not have. Kingdon emphasises the existence of multiple solutions for a problem and actors playing an active role in combining the two (Birkland, 2011: 297). Since the other theories do not mention this, proposition 3 is:

Proposition 3: Alternative selection is an important notion preceding change, actors actively look for different policies to solve their problem. This means that not only actors compete for change, also policies compete for the support of actors. The other theories however, do not mention different policies competing in the change process.

Compared with the MSA and PET, the ACF shows the influence of policy oriented learning. Actors in this theories are not set in their beliefs but these can change following new information. Following this logic proposition 4 is:

Proposition 4: Learning is an factor that can contribute to policy change. By learning actors' belief systems can change somewhat, leading to them preferring another policy and actively pursuing this. Alternatively, learning is not of influence on policy change.

In the ACF and PET policy subsystems and the policy experts within them play an important role. The MSA does not mention these systems and only looks at the level of macro-politics as the area where policy change happens. This difference in levels leads to proposition 5:

Proposition 5: Policy subsystems like governmental agencies, parliamentary committees or workgroups are important for maintaining policy stability, change is obstructed by the actors within these venues. Alternatively, the policy subsystems have no influence on policy change.

Elections or other governmental change is an important factor in both the ACF and the MSA in which change in the governing coalition is part of the change in the politics stream. Changes in government due to elections do not play a part in the PET, which forms proposition 6:

Proposition 6: Elections and other governmental changes can enable policy change, since politicians and other government officials have preferences of their own. Alternatively, they have no influence on the process of policy change.

Finally, institutional venues are important in enabling change in both PET and the ACF. Actors can use alternative venues strategically by 'venue shopping'. The MSA does not mention the option of alternative venues for policy making which leads to the final proposition 7:

Proposition 7: Venue shopping can enable policy change because institutional venues have different preferences and rules that can be beneficial to certain policies and constricting to others. Alternatively, different venues do not have an influence in policy change.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 OPERATIONALISATION

In order to properly measure the variables from each of the theories from the previous theoretical framework and propositions they need to be made more explicit. This operationalisation will serve this goal by making the variables more perceptible and measurable.

3.1.1 PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

Venue shopping

Venues are scientific institutions such as advisory councils or research institutes, formal political arenas such as the parliament or court, or the media. In these venues policy is formulated and discussed. Actors engage in venue shopping when they change venues with the goal of getting support for the policy image that they think is true. The venues themselves are not objective, hence actors engage in venue shopping in order to find the venue that suits their policy image best and where they consequently get the most support for it. The act of venue shopping can be observed when actors go to multiple venues to get support for their policy image. In order to measure the variable, a question will be asked in the interviews about this variable and also in the document analysis it is taken into account when coding.

Policy images

Policy images can be understood as a conception of an abstract goal or value (Stone, 2012: 14). The same policy can be presented, or framed, in a different way according to the meaning an actor gives to the policy. One policy can therefore have multiple conflicting policy images. This variable is measured by observing the way actors present the policy, meaning which words they use and which frame they give the policy. Do they present the policy as something good or bad, as a solution to a problem or as a measure that will make it worse? In interviews the researcher asks how the problem was presented by various groups and in the document analysis quotes by actors about the goal of the policy are used to measure it.

Positive feedback

Baumgartner and Jones (2014: 64) define positive feedback as “small changes in objective circumstances that can cause large changes in policy” (Baumgartner et al., 2014: 64). This concept is also known as the ‘bandwagon effect’ meaning that when circumstances gain public attention, their effect is amplified because of this increase in attention reinforces itself. To measure this I will look at objective circumstances such as the findings in a research report, that are later being used by an increasing amount of actors as feedback that things need to be changed.

Policy monopolies

Policy monopolies are influential groups in the policy subsystem with the same interest that “can hinder the ability of outside groups to actually engage in significant decision making and policy change” (Givel, 2010: 190). The groups aim to preserve the current policy that has their support and do not want the proposed change to happen. Policy monopolies are formed by policy experts in the policy sub-system, which can be understood as governmental agencies, parliamentary committees or workgroups in which policy experts come together. They want to policy to remain in these secluded arenas and not go to the macro-political level, meaning the level that can be seen as the level of politics when policies are being talked about in the Second or First Chamber. Indicators for this variable are groups of actors with an interest that represents the current policy that use feedback that indicates that change in the form of the new policy is not needed. They can be observed by groups hanging on to the policy image of the current policy and not wanting to change this and by the policy having no or only incremental change for a while.

Questions in the interviews were asked about this variable and also documents provided a source for information on this variable.

3.1.2 ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

External events

External events are events such as changes in socio-economic conditions, changes in public opinion, changes in systemic governing coalitions, policy decisions and impacts from other policy areas or crises or disasters. These are events that happen outside of the social housing sector but do affect it. The events are consequently outside of the control of the people in the sector. During the interviews I asked whether there were any external events that affected the policy change and also in documents I looked for the mention of events that affected the policies but were not in the social housing sector.

Internal events

Contrary to external events, internal events are seen as events that are influenced by the actors in the subsystem. They occur within the topical area of the policy subsystem, for example policy fiascos, scandals and failures. For this research this means events that happen within the social housing sector and its policies. In interviews there was also a question regarding internal events and in documents mentioned events were either categorized as external (not social housing) or as internal (in the social housing policy area).

Policy oriented learning

Learning occurs when groups or individuals change their belief systems based on new information. For example, new research may point out the ineffectiveness of a measure, which causes actors to no longer support this measure. Both interviews and documents were used to measure policy oriented learning by looking whether the stances/beliefs of actors were changed based on new information that they received. This new information should then be consequently used to adapt the policy. This means that if actors did not change their preferences, learning did not occur.

Negotiated agreement

Negotiated agreements are agreements in which different coalitions come together behind the same policy. These agreements are made between actors of different groups such as representatives of tenants and lessors. The agreement is negotiated since the different groups do not have the same beliefs and preferences, hence a plan has to be found which has the support of all. This variable is measured in both interviews and documents by looking at different actors with different belief systems working together and creating a policy proposal together.

Collaborative institutions

Related to negotiated agreement are collaborative institutions. These are the institutions that facilitate negotiation (Jenkins-Smit et al., 2014: 203). Examples of this are a hurting stalemate, broad representation, leadership, consensus decision rules, funding, commitment by actors, importance of empirical issues, trust, and lack of alternative venues (Jenkins-Smit et al., 2014: 203). This variable is only measured when there is at least an attempt to negotiated agreement, and is measured in both interviews and documents as the institutions that lower the costs of agreement for the various actors and thus enable the agreement to happen.

Enabling factors

Enabling factors are causal mechanisms that are required for external and internal events to lead to policy change. The events itself are not enough to cause policy change, they need to be used to get a rise in public interest, agenda change, the redistribution of coalition resources or the opening and closing of policy venues (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 202).

These previous indicators are the enabling factors and were measured in both interviews and documents.

Advocacy coalition

These are coalitions of actors who are united around a shared set of values and beliefs in a policy domain (Birkland, 2011: 299). This means that these are groups that have the same beliefs and preferences and work together to get their preferred policy implemented or maintained. These advocacy coalitions are measured as actors having the same policy core beliefs, meaning that they agree on the basic notion of the policy, its value priorities, the prioritisation of welfare recipients, the seriousness of the problem, its causes and its solutions. This is measured in both interviews and documents by looking at the stance of actors on the goal of the policy, who should benefit from it, how urgent it is to implement it, what problem it solves and by what this problem is caused. When actors agree on these aspects they are considered to be in the same advocacy coalition.

3.1.3 MULTIPLE STREAMS APPROACH

Problem stream

The problem stream contains, as the name states, problems. Problems in this context are normative, what is seen by some as a problem is not by others. Attributes of a problem are whether the situation is getting worse or better, the situation has suddenly sprung into public and elite attention through a focusing event, and whether the problem is solvable with the alternatives from the policy stream (Birkland, 2011: 297). In both interviews and documents problems are measured by the presence of focussing events, media attention cases, indicators of deterioration or improvement of social housing in the Netherlands (e.g. number of people living in social housing, average income of people in social housing, amount of people with income not fitting of social housing).

Policy stream

This stream contains the potential ideas that could be advocated as a solution to a problem (Birkland, 2011: 297). As problems can be interpreted in multiple ways, also multiple solutions, or policies, can be present in the same policy field. This variable is measured in interviews with a question regarding the possible solutions that were discussed during the cases and in documents by looking which ideas actors in the policy field of social housing mention in order to solve the problems related to the cases.

Politics stream

Finally, the politics stream contains the state of politics and public opinion regarding the cases (Hoekstra & Kaptein, 2014: 245). This can be found in measures of the national mood, pressure group campaigns and administrative or legislative turnover (Zahariadis, 2014: 34). Thus, in both interviews the role of politicians, pressure groups and the public opinion is asked about and in documents opinion poll developments, questions and motions by politicians and pressure group stances and actions are analysed.

Policy window

In the MSA, the policy window, also known as a window of opportunity, is the possibility of policy change. They are “critical moments when advocates of new policies have opportunities to draw attention to their problems or to find new solutions or have policies accepted and adopted.” (Meijerink, 2005: 1064). These are moments when the problem, policy and politics streams come together meaning that for a problem there is a clear solution which has the support of the public, politicians and pressure groups. Predictable policy windows in this research are annual budget allocations and planned elections.

However, unpredictable policy windows are more broadly measured, they are developments related to problems from the problem stream that cause shock events and consequently ask for urgent public and political attention and solution. Additional to observing these events in both documents and interviews, this variable is also measured by asking in interviews what the planned timing of the change was and whether this succeeded.

Policy entrepreneurs

Actors who put significant effort into promoting policy change are considered policy entrepreneurs. They are stakeholders of different kinds who are prepared to invest in the policy they stand for. They wait for the right circumstances to present a problem, then try to place it (higher) on the agenda or to push their solution to the forefront in order to initiate a link between the three streams (Hoekstra & Kaptein, 2014: 245). This variable was measured in documents by looking for actors who advocate the policies in the cases, frame the policies in a way to gain more support and engage in venue shopping. In the interviews a specific question was also asked to indicate the presence of people who were central in the process of getting the policy to change.

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

In this research a comparative case study is used as a research strategy. This is a strategy with which a researcher can gain a profound and full insight into several cases (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 178). Qualitative, unstructured and open research methods are used to compare and interpreted the relatively small amount of cases, two in this research. The cases are strategic samples which are chosen with the research question in mind (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 179).

In order to properly establish causal relations between the independent variables and policy change, two cases were selected. In one of the cases the proposed policy change did happen, in the other case the proposed policy change was not as successful. By analysing both cases it becomes clear which factors contribute to policy change as these factors should be present in the first case and absent in the other.

Furthermore, the hierarchical method is applied to the cases; first they are studied as separate, individual cases, after which the results of the cases will be compared (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 182). Next to the general result of the cases, which theories were applicable to the case, the results of the different data collection methods will also be compared. This allows the researcher to draw additional conclusions on the differences or similarities in the findings of the different data collection methods.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The main technique to collect data in this research is through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. A document analysis will be used as an additional way of data collection to validate the results. Interviews are the main data source in this research since they allow the researcher to collect data themselves. This means that the data collection can be targeted to the concepts from the theories specifically, using the correct questions in the interviews. This way the researcher can make sure to get a complete picture of the process of policy change and will also be able to measure actor perceptions in a better way. Naturally, documents used in the document analysis are not produced with the goal to find out which theories of policy change are applicable to Dutch social housing policy. This means that this data might not show a complete image of this process. Also, some concepts such as policy images, learning, and the presence of negotiated agreements or policy entrepreneurs are difficult to fully measure just by an document analysis.

Interviews will allow for the researcher to hear the first-hand accounts from involved actors, thus providing much more information on, for example which policy images were dominant at the Dutch ministry and which were not, than documents would provide.

3.3.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews were held with multiple people from each group of actors that was involved in the policy change. These were several civil servants of the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, a scientist specialized in the Dutch housing market, employees of the Dutch municipal Bank (BGN Bank), a housing association (Woonlinie), the federation of tenants (Woonbond), the Association of Institutional Property Investors in the Netherlands (IVBN), the Association of Dutch social housing organisations (Aedes) and the Dutch association of brokers (NVM). Interviewees were selected per case based on their involvement in the policy change process. By interviewing people from all the involved groups, a wide range of perspectives is taken into account, improving the validity of the data. Unfortunately it was not possible to interview civil servants working for the European Commission or any other EU institution. Since there is still a court case pending on the state support case these people were not allowed to speak about the case.

The interviews were conducted in person in a semi-structured way, meaning that a small list of the same questions was prepared in advance, but that during the interviews more questions could be asked (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 221). This method allows for interaction between the researcher and interviewee, meaning questions can be clarified so that confusion can be avoided and more questions can be asked once it is clear that the interviewee has knowledge of a certain topic (Ibid.).

The language of the interviews was Dutch because this is the mother tongue of the interviewees. By interviewing people in their mother tongue the risk of people misunderstanding the questions will be reduced and it will be easier for interviewees to formulate their answer, which means that the validity of their answers will be higher.

The interviews are recorded and transcribed after the interview had taken place. By doing this the researcher has more time during the interview to focus on the answers of the interviewee and to think of follow-up questions. When an audio recording was not allowed, notes were taken on the answers, which were then expanded after the interview. Both these methods allowed for the creation of interview transcripts which were later analysed using a content analysis.

3.3.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

To increase the triangulation in the research a document analysis is also used to collect data. As stated before, the disadvantage of this data collection method is that the researcher used secondary data which has been written with another purpose than the purpose of this research (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 198). This means that these documents could have been subjected to editing, causing them to not properly give an overview of the cases or of the actors involved in the research. However, data collection can be used as a way to increase the validity of my research. When the content analysis of these documents points to the same theories as the interviews, the evidence of the presence of the theoretical relationship in my cases will be stronger. This data collection technique will therefore mainly be used to strengthen or mediate the results of the research.

To obtain a more general idea about the preferences and actions of the various involved actors publically available documents from each of the actor groups will be used as a data collection technique.

This means that policy documents, press releases, meeting and debate transcripts and other forms of written documents from the actors that were involved in the cases will be analysed to discover whether the theories of policy change can be observed.

All of the documents come from publically accessible sources such as websites of the Dutch government (e.g. Overheid.nl), European institutions (e.g. Eur-Lex) or other involved actors such as Aedes, the trade organisation for Dutch housing associations (Aedes.nl) or various advisory organisations such as the Central Plan Bureau (CPB.nl). For governmental documents all available documents with the dossier number 29453 (dossier housing associations) and dossier number 33606 (parliamentary enquiry) are analysed. For the housing associations dossier these are the 300 most recent documents in this dossier which at the time of enquiry went back to nr.259 from July 2012. Also other governmental documents are analysed using 'Wonen 4.0' or a combination of 'housing associations' and 'state support' as key words. Furthermore, all of the governmental coalition agreements are analysed of the governments that have been in office since the state support case started. All of these documents, both from governmental sources and otherwise are then analysed using the same method as the interview transcripts.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In this research the congruence analysis method will be used to analyse the data and answer the research question. This method is the most appropriate one since it allows for the comparison of theories using empirical evidence from case studies. The congruence analysis approach is one that according to Blatter and Haverland (2012: 144) can be used to "provide empirical evidence for the explanatory relevance or relative strength of one theoretical approach in comparison to other theoretical approaches". This approach is therefore very appropriate for this research as comparing the explanatory strength of the different theories on policy change is the goal.

Within this approach there is a differentiation between a competing theories approach and a complementary theories approach. The first approach looks at which theory has the most explanatory power and assumes that the theories differ greatly (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 145). The complementary approach however, states that the use of multiple theories provides a more comprehensive understanding of the real world (Ibid.). The three theories that are used in my thesis are partially overlapping and partially conflicting (Meijerink, 2005: 1061). For example, the policy window from the Streams Model can be created by external events, which is also a concept in the Advocacy Coalition Framework. However, these theories also have contradicting causal mechanisms, like the influence of policy-learning. Because of these partial agreements, it is not predicted that one theory will be all explanatory and rather predict that some sort of combination of the theories will be able to explain the policy change in the cases, thus choosing the complementary approach.

In paragraph 2.5 propositions have been drafted based on the theories that will be used to answer the research question. In order to know which propositions can be found in the cases, the concepts from the theories need to be observed in the data from the cases. In the cases of this research this will be done through the coding of data in a content analysis. Both interview transcripts and documents will be analysed using the same coding scheme derived from the theory. This coding scheme corresponds with the concepts from the operationalisation. The coding will be very open, meaning that the concepts are not constricted to be able to only take-on certain values. In a congruence analysis it is decided step-by-step whether an observation corresponds with a certain concept or not (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 166).

This same method of coding will be used in both methods of data collection (document analysis and interviewing) as both will be treated as a content analysis. A qualitative content analysis entails getting information from a large quantity of textual and/or audio-visual material that is relevant for the research (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 228).

The open coding mentioned before fits this method very well since it is more important to indicate and understand the contents and broadly classifying these, rather than classifying them in closed categories (Ibid.).

Next, the empirical observations that are broadly categorized by the coding will be used to draw conclusions on the explanatory power of each of the theories. The congruence analysis approach does not use the scoring of variables or the causal process observations that the co-variational and the causal-process tracing approaches use. Rather, the data analysis can have the following results: the observations are in line with the expectations, they contradict the expectations, or they lie outside of the expectations that can be linked to the theories (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 189).

	Observation(s) in line with expectations deduced from theory B	Observation(s) in contradiction to expectations deduced from theory B	Observation(s) beyond the expectations deduced from theory B
Observation(s) in line with expectations deduced from theory A	Conclusion A: Connections to other observations	Conclusion B: Strong evidence necessary for preferring A to B	Conclusion C: Evidence underscores explanatory power of A
Observation(s) in contradiction to expectations deduced from theory A	Conclusion D: Strong evidence necessary for preferring B to A	Conclusion E: Strong evidence necessary for the need for other theories	Conclusion F: Evidence undermines explanatory power of A
Observation(s) beyond the expectations deduced from theory A	Conclusion G: Evidence underscores explanatory power of B	Conclusion H: Evidence undermines explanatory power of B	Conclusion I: Evidence for the need of expanded or other theories

Figure 4. Ways of drawing conclusions in the congruence analysis proper. From: Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 190

Following figure 4, there are nine possible conclusions when comparing two different theories. Since this research compares three theories, this figure does not fully apply but the principles remain the same. The evidence for a theory is strong when the evidence is in line with the propositions of one theory and contradicts the propositions of the other theories (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 190). An example would be that if the data would point out that policy change is only possible when there is a window of opportunity (thus proving the Streams Model and contradicting the other two theories). The coding scheme would then only show data for the concept of windows of opportunity and not for the alternative concepts of advocacy coalitions and policy monopolies.

Furthermore, since this research follows a complementary theories approach conclusions C, F, G and H are most valuable. This evidence is less theoretically strong than the evidence that forms conclusions B and D since the evidence cannot be connected to another theory (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 190). An example of this if evidence were to be found in the data for both the changing of policy images from the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, and also for negotiated agreement from the Advocacy Coalition Framework, but for both no evidence was found that underscores these observations. This would mean that parts of both theories were influential in the policy change process and that a more comprehensive theoretical model is needed.

This method of analysis also takes into account alternative explanations for policy change that the theory does not predict (conclusion E and I) (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 191).

If in the document analysis evidence is found that points towards something none of the theories take into account it can be included in the analysis. Also, in the interviews one general question on the process of policy change will be asked which is not derived from any theory to make sure that no alternative explanations are left out.

Following these conclusions about the explanatory power of the different theories about policy change, the research question can be answered. Depending on the evidence, this answer can be either straight forward stating that only one theory was relevant in explaining policy change in Dutch social housing policy change, or can be a bit more complicated by forming a comprehensive framework of parts of different theories or provide new insights not included in the theories.

3.5 VALIDITY

3.5.1 INTERNAL VALIDITY

The internal validity is high when there is a causal relationship between the variables and when the operationalisation is a good display of the theoretical construct (Van Thiel, 2010: 58).

To try and prove the causal relation between the variables multiple data collection techniques are used to analyse the cases, as was previously mentioned, to create triangulation. In every case both techniques are used since documents are fairly objective and do not show reactive behaviour, whereas interviewing people can provide additional insights and experience with the cases that documents do not provide (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010: 215). If both research methods show the same relations between variables the validity is higher. Also, multiple people from will be interviewed per case and documents from various organisations will be used to create more triangulation of sources. This will create an analysis of the situation which takes into account a wide range of perspectives. The triangulation decreases the chance of an accidental appearance of a variable and creates a varied picture of actor's attitudes and perception.

To prove a causal relationship the interviews are conducted in an open way, which means that the theories will not be made clear beforehand and will not be made explicit in the questions as to prevent the steering of answers. Also, a "other" category will be added during the interviews and in the coding to not exclude other possibilities that the theories do not account for. This will be a variable that is undefined beforehand, but as data is analysed, it will be clear that it is something that contributed to policy change (or prevented it), but which is not included in the existing theories. This allows the researcher to potentially enrich existing theories or find a new explanation for policy change.

Furthermore, the insurance of causal relationships between the dependent and independent variables is optimized by selecting cases in the same policy environment, but with different outcomes. For example, if the variables that cause change in the one case are absent in the non-change case, this also contributes to the validity of the causal relationships.

Finally, in order to properly observe the variables all the core concepts were clearly defined and made measurable in the operationalisation. These definitions mostly came from already existing and frequently cited research and were in those journals or books deemed adequate to measure the concepts.

3.5.2 EXTERNAL VALIDITY

The external validity can be seen as the generalizability of the research, the degree to which the results also apply to other situations (Van Thiel, 2010).

In case study research generalisation is difficult to realize since only two cases in The Netherlands are analysed and both these cases depict a specific situation which is not likely to happen again in the exact same way. However, the research does contribute towards theoretical generalization since its results will show the differences in explanatory power of the different theories on policy change (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 31). The congruence analysis approach focusses specifically on theoretical generalisation as opposed to statistical or possibilistic generalization (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 29).

When looking at theoretical generalization within a complementary approach, the research can make a contribution towards the claim that other causal processes and results are possible than the ones expected from the current literature (Blatter & Haverland, 2012: 202). This means that existing theories can be slightly improved as to represent the actually observed causal mechanisms in a certain policy context. Future research can test this new framework to see if it also applies to other cases or policy fields.

3.6 RELIABILITY

The reliability of a research can be determined by the consistency in the results of the chosen indicators (Van Thiel, 2010: 57). This means that when the research is repeated, the same results are found.

To increase the reliability the cases will be analysed in the same systematic way and the same list of initial questions for the interviews will be used indicating that in each interview those points were all taken into account. For the content analysis the same coding scheme will be used for all documents, this also increases the consistency in the execution of the research and should increase the chances of finding the same results when repeated.

Also, the previous step-by-step description of the data analysis gives a detailed overview of how the research is conducted. This transparency enables other researchers to repeat the research in the same way, increasing chances of finding similar results.

4 CASE DESCRIPTIONS

Social housing in the Netherlands is part of a long tradition. Churches, wealthy citizens and unions were the first to supply forms of social housing. However, in 1901 the Dutch government deemed the supply of sufficient and affordable housing important enough to create the *Woningwet* (Housing act), making itself partially responsible for this task (De Jong, 2013: 11). This act created the possibility for non-profit organisations to receive government social housing subsidies, but only if their sole goal was social housing, effectively creating the Dutch housing association system (Ibid.). The housing associations proved very successful, especially to solve the post Second World War housing shortages and fast growing population.

Relations of housing associations with municipalities and the national government changed over time. Where in the 20's they were relatively independent, in the 30's-70's government control was more tight (De Jong, 2013: 12). However, from the 80's onwards housing associations increasingly become more independent as ideas like New Public Management were more frequently used in the government. In 1984 the *Waarborgfonds Sociale Woningbouw* (WSW, Guarantee Fund Social Housing) was founded which guarantees the debts of housing associations to creditors, the fund itself is backed by the national government and municipalities for 50% each (Elsinga et al., 2008: 26) Also, government subsidies shifted from objects (the social housing) to the subjects (tenants) making the social housing sector a 'revolving fund' that was able to finance itself from its own revenue (WRR, 2004: 96). Furthermore, the so-called 'bruteringsoperatie' (grossing and balancing operation) in 1995 caused the outstanding debt of housing associations to the state to be written off against future government subsidies (Hoekstra, 2013: 1). Housing associations now are financially independent, relying on rent income and the sale of houses to pay for the building of new housing, refurbishment and community investments (Hoekstra, 2013: 2).

4.1 STATE SUPPORT

In 2002 the minister responsible for social housing, Remkes, asked the European Commission for their judgement on the state support that housing associations receive in order to gain legal security for the policy coordination system that he envisioned (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 131). Later, this notification from the minister was withdrawn, but European attention was drawn (De Jong, 2013: 34).

Following this, the European Commission sends the Dutch government a so-called 'article 17-letter' in which they question whether the Dutch social housing system meet the European rules regarding state support (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 131). In that same year the Commission publishes the SGEI package (Services of General Economic Interest), indicating when state support is allowed for the SGEIs, such as social housing (Ibid.). For social housing, state support is only allowed when this is given to a clearly defined group of 'socially disadvantaged'. The current minister then sends a letter to the Dutch Second Chamber to inform them of the requirements for state support to SGEIs and defines the target group for housing associations at €33.000 annually (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 132). This decision sparks a lot of discussion about the income limit.

In 2007 the IVBN (Association of Institutional Property Investors in the Netherlands) adds to the state support discussion by sending a letter to the Commission claiming that the state support that housing associations receive creates an uneven level playing field in the rental market, which goes against one of the core principles of the European single market (Czischke, 2015: 95). In 2009 the IVBN is joined by fellow private investor Vesteda, but also multiple motions are filed by Dutch parliamentarians to broaden the income limit (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 133). The Dutch government then sends a letter to the Commission proposing the income limit of €33.000. Housing associations have to rent 90% of their vacant social housing to this target group, leaving 10% not linked to an income level (Aedes, 2013: 2).

The Commission reacts to this with a decision regarding the state support to housing association in the Netherlands. They deem that social housing associations in the Netherlands were indeed in open competition with private housing actors, which the Commission, due to the state aid, saw as harmful to the competition and to the companies in the private housing sector (Elsinga & Lind, 2013). The state aid for housing associations included their access to the Central Housing Fund (CFV), their access to the Guarantee Fund for Social Housing (WSW) in which the government is obliged to back interest-free loans, their exemption from corporation tax and their right to borrow from the Municipal Bank (Gruis & Priemus, 2008: 489-490). The Commission and the Dutch government also agree on the €33.000 income limit for 90% of the social housing, leading to an end of the European disagreement with the Dutch social housing system.

Debate then erupts on the definition of this target group and the level of income. Concerns are expressed for people with a median income who will not qualify for social housing anymore but do not have an affordable alternative on the commercial rental market or are not able to get a mortgage to buy a house (Boelhouwer & Priemus, 2014).

In 2010 the Commission adjusts their decision from 2009 following a complaint from the BNG Bank (Dutch Municipal Bank) that their loans should not be considered part of the state support (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 134). Other critique on the state support agreement is not as successful and in 2011 the regulation is implemented using a ministerial order, setting the income limit at €33.614 and obliges housing associations to allocate 90% of the vacant social housing (housing with a rent of maximum €652,52) to this group (Ibid.). Also, a start is made for the actual revision of the Housing act that is supposed to permanently codify the state support regulation by means of the 'Herzieningswet toegelaten instellingen in de volkshuisvesting'. This proposal also allows housing associations to engage in non-SGEI activities by dividing their activities by either an administrative or legal separation of activities (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 136). In 2012 the income limit is slightly to €34.085 because of indexation and to make sure that people of 65 years or older are not excluded from social housing (Eskinasi et al., 2012: 138). Also the new Housing act is accepted in the Second Chamber.

Second chamber elections also happen in 2012, leading to a delay of the adaption of the new Housing act. Opposition to the income limit also does not stop and in 2014 the Dutch government agrees to temporarily raise the income level for social housing to €38.000 and allows housing associations to rent an extra 10% of their stock to the lower middle income group for the period of 2015 to 2020 following a motion from the Second Chamber (Tweede Kamer, 2014a). Finally, in 2015 the state support rule is implemented in the new Housing act by means of the 'Herzieningswet toegelaten instellingen in de volkshuisvesting' which is then also accepted by the First Chamber.

4.2 WONEN 4.0

Discontent with housing policies will always exist, but the financial crisis showed that most housing markets need reform. In order to reform the Dutch housing market in an integral way, several housing related organisations came up with the plan Wonen 4.0 (Living 4.0) in 2012. The collaboration was unique since the plan was written by Vereniging Eigen Huis (Association for home owners), NVM (Dutch association of Brokers), VBO (Trade organisation for brokers) and VastgoedPro (Professional association for real estate) who together represent the owner-occupied sector and also by the Woonbond (federation of tenants) and Aedes, (organisation for housing associations), representing the rental sector. Never before had such a collaboration of the owner-occupied and rental sector occurred, making this an unique broadly supported policy proposal. Key to the plan is creating ownership neutrality, meaning that a person should be free to decide whether to rent or buy a house and that government policy should not make one option preferable to the other (Aedes, 2012: 6). Also, this should be done in a budget neutral way and start in 2015, the estimated moment the economy would be improving again (Aedes, 2012: 5).

The plan consists of the following main points (Aedes, 2012: 4-5):

- Gradual reduction of the 'hypotheekrenteaftrek' (mortgage interest relief) over a period of 30 years.
The extra income the government receives from this will be used for:
 - Abolishment of capital transfer tax
 - Gradual reduction of the 'eigenwoningforfait' (own house forfeit)
 - Compensation through the income tax; people will be compensated for their higher expenditures by a lowering of the income tax rates.
- Gradual raise of the rents till a market conform level on the basis of the 'huursombenadering'. This lets the government set a maximum allowed total rent increase, but housing associations can differentiate the raises depending on current rent of the house related to its quality. This rent raise will be based on a maximum of 4,5 of the 'WOZ-waarde' (Waardering Onroerende Zaken, value of real estate) of a house.
The extra income from this can be used by the lessors for the:
 - Financing of the 'woontoeslag'
 - Building of new buildings in areas where there is a housing shortage, for improvements on the quality of houses, energy-saving and greening of the energy production.
 - Compensation through a lower income tax
- Both home owners and tenants can claim a 'Woontoeslag' (living benefit) depending on their income and household size. This means that the current 'Huurtoeslag' (rent benefits) will be abolished since only tenants profit from them. For the areas where there is a scarcity of houses like big cities there can be an extra living benefit.

Since the plan was presented before the 2012 Second Chamber elections, some aspects of it were taken into several party's election programmes. However, none completely incorporated the plan. On the 15th of February 2013 a 'woonakkoord' (housing agreement) between the government parties and D66, ChristenUnie and the SGP was agreed upon. The agreement was necessary since the government coalition did not have a majority in the First Chamber, making a grand coalition a necessity. Still, the agreement was difficult to accept in the First Chamber due to the verhuurdersheffing (lessor tax) which Wonen 4.0 did not agree upon (Aedes, 2012: 20). In the end the cabinet Rutte-Asscher adopted the following measures for the housing market that are related to the measures from Wonen 4.0 (CPB, 2013: 6):

- A limitation of the 'hypotheekrenteaftrek' (mortgage interest relief); from 2013 till 2040 the maximum rate is lowered with 0,5%-point annually till eventually the rate of the third tax bracket.
- The interest on the remaining debt that can possibly be a result of the sale of house can subtractable for a maximum of five years.
- And adaption of the 'points system' which determines the rent based on a valuation points system, to partially include the WOZ-waarde (value of real estate).
- A 'verhuurdersheffing' (lessor tax) will be implemented.

However, these measures are not the same as different percentages are chosen for example. It can be argued that plans were 'cherry picked' from Wonen 4.0, meaning that actors claimed support for the separate measures since they were also featured in Wonen 4.0. However, the plan had been a carefully negotiated package-deal, a condition for their support for the measures from the plan therefore was to implement it in its entirety (Aedes, 2012: 12).

Wonen 4.0 therefore might have had some impact on the reforms of the Dutch housing market, but the plan itself was not transferred into policy.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 CASE 1. STATE SUPPORT

5.1.1 PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

Venue shopping

During the state support case there were multiple accounts of venue shopping. It started when the IVBN (Association of Institutional Property Investors in the Netherlands) went to the European Commission with their complaint regarding the state support, later they were joined by fellow investor Vesteda. There are multiple accounts on why they did this. Some interviewees claim IVBN did not think the limits for social housing that were discussed in the Netherlands were high enough. As one interviewee stated: *“The IVBN did try to accomplish this in the Netherlands at first, when that didn’t work out, they went to Europe.”*. However, according to other actors the IVBN went to the European venue in order to speed up the process of implementation because no action was taken and as a consequence things remained unclear for all parties involved. *“Here (in the Netherlands) it was stuck, no real action was taken while it was a recognized problem and the politicians themselves had made agreements about it with the minister and the Commission”* is what one of the interviewees stated.

Following the complaint from the IVBN and the Commission’s decision that followed, several parties also started cases at the Court of Justice of the European Union (Cases T-201/10, T-202/10, T-206/10 and T-151/10). Two of these case were from the IVBN and Vesteda to give extra power to their complaints. However, case T-202/10 was filed by a coalition of several Dutch housing associations and case T-151/10 was from BNG Bank, the Dutch municipal bank, both of which were again the European Commission. The housing associations decided to start a court case because they felt that Aedes, the association for Dutch housing organisation, did not take a stance that was though enough. However, BNG Bank decided to bring their case to court because they did not agree that the loans they provide to housing associations were mentioned as state support in the Commission’s decision (European Commission, 2009). They approached the Commission about this but also started a court case because *“we wanted clarity, also on a short term, because it could be also in the way of the provision of services in other sectors. According to us it had to be arranged as soon as possible”*.

Also scientific venues were used by actors. As one interviewee stated: *“it just doesn’t work when only Aedes or the Woonbond calls for that, at some moment in time you also need evidence that is as objective as possible”*. An example of this was a report commissioned by Aedes and the Woonbond on the effects of the 90% income norm (RIGO, 2010). Also the Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure (RLI, 2011) and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL, 2014 & Eskinasi et al., 2012) made reports about the position of middle income groups in the housing market and how the new income limits would affect them.

Finally media was also used a venue. Especially the Woonbond contributed to this by starting a website to portray personal stories of people. *“because the press was interested in portraying people”* is what one interviewee stated.

Policy images

Several competing policy images are present during the state support case.

The first is a technical image of rules for state support to which have to be followed. As one actor says: *“we could have also been talking about cars or refrigerators”*. This is image presents the Commission decision as logical because these are rules that the Netherlands agreed to and now has to follow up on. *“there is now a new case, the Altmark case. That tightens the strings regarding accepted state support, we now have to comply to this”*.

The following image is one of distortion of the level-playing field and unfair competition by housing associations. As the European Commission states in their 2009 decision: *“Due to State aid they receive, private competitors suffer from unfair competition from the wocos.*

They are also constructing owner-occupied houses thereby competing beyond rental markers” (European Commission, 2009: 2).

Another image is one that housing associations should limit themselves to their core business because this can cause risks. This image comes from previous scandals at housing associations in which investments in the private sector did not succeed. The government therefore presents the state support case as an opportunity to define the borders of social housing so that housing associations can focus on this sector (Tweede Kamer, 2014a).

The fourth image is an anti-European one in which actors present the case as one that is not an European competence but a national matter. “there was an anti-Europe atmosphere in the Chamber” and “this is not their business was the message” are quotes by interviewees. This was also used by politicians as an argument to deflect any negative attention: “*the Netherlands made the proposals do to it at these levels, Brussel said, if this is what you want, then that is fine with us. But back in the Netherlands all the politicians made play with it as obligations from Brussels*” is what an interviewee told.

The final image is that of the people who suffer from the new state support rules, especially the negative effects for people with a lower middle income. The Woonbond collected personal stories of people affected by the state support rules. They started a website, ikwilookwonen.nl (I also want housing) where people could present their stories. “*we showed that with an income of 35.000, that you cannot buy anything with that and in the commercial sector lessors ask four that you earn four times the monthly rent, so you also can't anything there*” was stated by an interviewee. These stories and other questions about the negative effects of the income limit were also asked in the Second Chamber (Tweede Kamer, 2011).

Positive feedback

This variable is not very present in interviews and documents except in the form of the scandals at the housing associations. As the parliamentary enquiry also states that since the 90's there have been multiple scandals such as a director who has a Maserati as his official car, adoption of a monkey, an elephant parade and buying a stream ship for a quarter of a million Euro's (Tweede Kamer, 2014b). However, when the largest housing association in the Netherlands, Vestia, has lost billions in the derivative exchange, people became fed up and the Second Chamber called for a parliamentary enquiry, the heaviest measure of investigation that it has (Ibid.). After, this all the previous scandals and all new things that surfaced all contributed to a public outrage about housing associations and the need for change. As an interviewee stated: “*the atrocities at the housing associations, everyone knows them They are so well known and capturing*”.

Policy monopolies

The policy field of social housing in the Netherlands was described by one of the interviewees as a star: “*one centre and everything is attached to that. That centre is the State. For some reason this has been like this for an incredibly long time.*” It seems like the policy monopoly is formed by the minister and civil servants from the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Affairs, the one in charge of the housing market, and the parties that represent the actors in the housing market such as Aedes, the Woonbond and IVBN or as an interviewee states: “*It is a bit of an old boys club. But through the political parties it (change) can happen*”. “*A discussion between the Woonbond and Aedes takes place at a table at the ministry*” and the fact that several interviewees mentioned the word ‘old boys club’ when asked about the policy field confirms this notion of actors together in a policy subsystem outside of the macro-political environment.

5.1.2 ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

External events

The financial crisis is an example of an external event outside of the field of social housing that did influence the state support case, this can be seen as a change in socio-economic conditions.

According to the RLI (2011: 10) the crisis caused middle incomes to have a harder time on the housing market because of, for example, higher requirements for a mortgage. This influenced the decision to temporarily raise the income limit in 2014. According to an interviewee: *“because of the crisis people go into bigger problems and we could temporarily raise the limits so that that housing at that point remained. Housing associations were then allowed to build for this group with state support”*.

Furthermore, new jurisprudence on state support and Services of General Economic Interest (SGEIs) also had an influence on the case, an. *“In the meantime there were also developments in the jurisprudence. The Ferring decision and in 2003 the Altmark decision, this gave direction but also doubts”* is what one of the interviews said. The Dutch government or any of the other actors in the state support case do not have influence on these decisions and they are also outside of the policy field of social housing. As the Commission themselves state in their 2009 decision: *“the Judgement of the Court of Justice on Altmark defines the criteria to be fulfilled for public measures to be regarded as compensations for public service obligations and for them to escape being regarded as State aid under Article 107(1) TFEU.”* (European Commission, 2009: 5).

A final external event that influenced the case was the 2005 referendum on a European constitution which in the Netherlands was denied. This especially enabled politicians to use the anti-European frame which was part of the policy image variable. As was mentioned during a debate in the Second Chamber, politicians state that the European constitution could have potentially changed the competences of ‘Brussels’ on social policies (Tweede Kamer, 2005 :2).

Internal events

The internal event that had the biggest influence on the state support case were the previously mentioned scandals at housing associations. Because of these not only more control was required on the social housing sector, but also the definition of the working field of housing associations was affected. The incidents had a big impact on the sector. As one of the interviewees says: *“the image of housing associations was really bad, so it is logical that such a housing association does not get a bigger task and that you suddenly need to serve more people”*. This quote indicates that the incidents in the sector were used as an argument to restrict housing associations to their core business of social housing, which consequently was not defined in a really broad way. One interviewee even called the scandals *“... the incidents that were used by Blok as godsend to pass through his legislation”* meaning that minister Blok was able to use the scandals to get the new Housing act accepted, of which the measures in the state support case were a part. The parliamentary enquiry that followed from these scandals was even tougher on housing associations than the government proposed. While the government had always pleaded for a 10% margin of space for housing associations to do market activities when commercial parties are not interested to do this, the parliamentary committee used the phrase: *niet-DEAB, niet doen often (not SGEI, don’t do it)* (Tweede Kamer, 2014b).

Another internal event that is mentioned by multiple interviewees is the amount of ministers the state support case has known. During the length of the case, which is now about 15 years, 10 ministers have been responsible for the housing market. These were Remkes, Kamp, Dekker, Winsemius, Vogelaar, Van der Laan, Van Middelkoop, Donner, Spies and Blok respectively (De Jong, 2013: 20). This especially contributed to the length of the process or as one of the interviewees contributed: *“what I noticed from a distance is that every time the policy dossier needed to be studied by the minister. You needed to explain where we were coming from and what the goal was”*.

Policy oriented learning

In the Commission decision of 2009, the loans from BNG Bank, the Dutch municipal bank, are mentioned as a form of state support. BNG Bank disputed this and consequently filed for a case at the Court of Justice but also talked to the Commission in person. About these talks an interviewee states: *“on the basis of that they concluded pretty fast that it was correct that we should not be regarded as state support.”*

The most important reason for this is that BNG BANK has an independent position, our shares are in the hands of the government but we act in an open market and the government does not have a direct influence on our policy". On the basis of this new information that the Commission received from BNG Bank they revised their 2009 decision to not include them as part of the state support charge anymore.

However, the most influential policy orientated learning in the case came in the form of the temporary raise of the income limit and the percentage allowed for non-SGEI action. Services of General Economic Interest (SGEIs) are services for which state support is allowed, anything outside of that is market activity, due to this increased space for market, non-SGEI activities housing associations can offer slightly more of their properties for market prices. One of the interviewees states that the government *"recognized that there was a problem"* with the middle income groups. Another states that *"the policy has changed because there were bottlenecks in practise after all"*. Also, the Commission has become slightly more flexible towards social housing, for example, they adjusted their SGEI rules in 2011. Remarkable about this revision is the explicit mention of social housing in exemptions. As an interviewee states: *"For a lot of measures there is a maximum limit of 15 million to get an exemption or else you need to report it, but for social housing this is unlimited."* Partially because of this revised Commission decision, the temporary raising of the state support requirements was possible. Also one interviewee remarks that a new EU Commissioner responsible for state support stated that *"That is their business, I'm not the Dutch minister of housing"* when asked about the income limits. This contradicts to the strictness of Commissioner Kroes who was in charge when the Commission made its decision.

Negotiated agreement

In this case the most mentioned negotiated agreement by interviewees is the limits under which state support was allowed for social housing between the Dutch government and the European Commission. As the Commission also states in their decision *"Since the Article 17 letter there have been ongoing consultations between the Commission and the Dutch authorities on the possible ways of reforming the system for it to comply with State aid rules."* (European Commission, 2009: 1).

The other negotiated agreement is one between Aedes and the cabinet from 2013. In this agreement among other it is decided that in order to differentiate between SGEI and non-SGEI activities, housing associations can choose between an administrative or a juridical division of activities (Eerste Kamer, 2015: 1).

Collaborative institutions

With regard to the negotiated agreement between the Commission and the Dutch government the fact that Commissioner Kroes is also Dutch was mentioned by one interview: *"that makes things a bit easier, I assume"*. Another actor stated that the minister also felt pressure to make an agreement with the Commission because he of the treat of a court case against the Netherlands: *"The IVBN timed that well regarding their complaint in Brussels that caused more pressure on the Commission and also for the Netherlands. I think that the Netherlands really felt that pressure. Someone once told me that Van der Laan (minister) really wanted to get that subsidy back then, but that he thought that if he didn't agree to a tight income limit with the Commission that there would be big sanctions for the Netherlands"*. Besides this no other collaborative institutions were measured.

Enabling factors

An important enabling factor in this case is agenda change by the cabinet to helping troubled neighbourhoods, called 'special project aid for the revival of declining urban regions by the Commission (2009: 18). The areas that were supposed to get this aid were later known as 'Vogelaar areas' like the minister that was going to implement the plans. In the coalition accord of 2003 extra help for troubled neighbourhoods and the role that housing associations can play here is mentioned for the first time (CDA et al., 2003: 13).

Despite earlier conversations with the Commission this policy goal remains in the next coalition agreement of 2007 (CDA et al., 2007: 31-32). However, the influence of the 2009 Commission decision is noticeable in the coalition agreement from 2010 in which housing associations is focussed on those who do not have any alternative, meaning that are slightly confined than in previous coalition agreements (VVD & CDA, 2010: 46). In the latest coalition agreement from 2012 the income limits are explicitly mentioned (VVD & PvdA, 2012: 32). Also interviewees notice the importance of the changing government agenda towards the 'Vogelaar aid': *"she (Vogelaar) had the assignment to renew the problem neighbourhoods but she didn't have the money so it also depends on the political choice of which assignment the minister gets"* and *"Vogelaar wanted the neighbourhood approach with special support for housing associations, then the Commission said: if you want new support than we first have to agree on the existing system"*. Therefore, due this government agenda change the state support case became more pressing for the government to deal with.

Another enabling factor is public interest. Due to the earlier mentioned scandals there was a rise in public interest, as one of the interviewees says: *"I think that those incidents do not matter much accept for helping in the public opinion"* and another adds to that *"media attention, especially for things that do not go well, that does it."* The rise in public interest therefore was an enabling factor for the internal events.

Finally different policy venues were also measured. However this was already mentioned at the separate variable in the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory.

Advocacy coalition

In the state support two separate advocacy coalitions can be distinguished who both try to influence the policy in a different way.

The first coalition consists of Aedes (the housing associations), the Woonbond (tenants), VNG (Dutch municipalities) and political parties PvdA, SP, CDA, 50PLUS and ChristenUnie. When looking at the parties outside of the political field, it can be concluded from the interviews that they do collaborate, but that whether they do depends on the issue at hand. As interviewees state: *"Aedes and the Woonbond got along as far as the income limits go, but they didn't on other parts"* and *"In the battle against the income limits Aedes and the Woonbond were able to find each other. Yes that was more like the commercial lessors against the social lessors and the tenants."* and *"For example, the income limit of 33.000, Aedes, Woonbond and VNG agreed that it should be raised but IVBN was against. But if you look at which activities a housing association is allowed to do, then the playing field is different: you see VNG and Aedes for example together and other parties against It differs per subject"*. However the previously mentioned parties were aligned in an advocacy coalition based on their common policy core beliefs. These parties believed that social housing was not a task for the European Commission: *"VNG, together with Aedes, thinks that the Commission should not venture their opinion on how the Netherlands arranges its social housing"* (VNG, 2016). They agreed it was a problem that housing associations has spent money wrongly causing all the scandals, an interviewee says about the: *".... the incidents, of course that never should have happened, everyone agrees on that"*. Therefore they were not against a definition for social housing, but they did not agree on the limits that were set for this. For example, they wanted the limits to be depended on the region and the middle income group also taken care of. *"We were less glad that the line of reasoning of the CDA and the PvdA was rejected by the European Union. We would like to totally stop with the income limit and that this point will differentiated regionally"* (Tweede Kamer, 2013a: 18). With regards to the prioritisation of welfare recipients all parties agreed that social housing is for the needy, but this also agreed that people from the middle income group should not be excluded since there is no reasonable alternative for them next to social housing. They therefore tried to raise the income limit and succeed with a motion by Monasch, a PvdA politician. Despite the agreements between the parties, a small sub-advocacy coalition of housing associations did arise. During an Aedes congress a few housing associations filed a motion that housing associations should ignore the state support rules set by the government which passed with more than 70% of the votes.

However, the Aedes board did not agree with this decision and some of the housing association decided to continue their battle on their own. This was the group of housing associations which filed a case at the Court of Justice of the European Union against the Commission. An appeal in this case is still being treated.

The second coalition consists of the Dutch government, the European Commission, IVBN and Vesteda (institutional investors) and the political parties VVD and D66. Even though the Commission's decision criticized the Dutch social housing system, the government seemed to agree that change was needed. *"It kept coming back that the Dutch sector is so big, that it receives state support etc. They just wanted to end that discussion. I think the Commission and the Dutch government were fairly like-minded and did not disagree. The IVBN also did prompt that further"* is what one of the interviewees said. The problem that this advocacy coalition sees is scandals and market distortion because housing associations are unbound. Social housing should be for the socially disadvantaged. *"According to D66, housing associations should be allowed one task in the future, namely the building of social housing for lower income groups, period"* (Tweede Kamer, 2013b: 15). However, they also see the problem with the middle income groups, but they think the problem that these people cannot find a suitable house to rent on the commercial market is because there is no level-playing field for commercial lessors (PBL, 2012: 10). Even though they did not think initially that raising the income limits was a good idea, the Dutch government broke from this coalition by allowing the income limit and the space for non-SGEI activities to be raised temporarily. Following reports by the PBL amongst others, they saw that especially in the short term middle income groups indeed did not have an affordable alternative to social housing. However, they did not want to go as far as raise the limit to €43.000 as proposed by Second Chamber member Monasch (Tweede Kamer, 2013a: 31). For the position of the Dutch government, it seemed that the political 'colour' of the minister in charge of housing also was of influence. This has been mentioned by a lot of interviewees that some were more open to changing the limit than others. *"Brussel said: you should make a clear delineation, and the Netherlands afterwards made their own proposal. We kept on emphasizing that you could also make another proposal and see what Brussels would do with it. From all of the ministers Spies has been the one who earnestly went to Brussels to talk about the possibilities of stretching it a bit. What she then got out of those conversations, that has now been accepted in the new Housing act as temporary rule"*.

5.1.3 MULTIPLE STREAMS APPROACH

Problem stream

Several problems were presented by the actors in this case.

The first is that of the IVBN complaint of unfair competition. In this problem housing associations distort competition in the housing market by receiving state aid which should be spent on disadvantaged tenants and not to compete in commercial markets (European Commission, 2009: 3). However, as research also pointed out, there are too few commercial dwellings currently to provide for the middle income group who would then be excluded as clients of housing associations. Commercial parties can fill this gap, but this will take time, or as one of the interviewees put it: *"And when they say that the middle level rent sector, from say 700 to 850 euro, that this should get off the ground in the Netherlands, then I say: yes, 500.000 houses I understood? That can be a part of the existing stock but a part has to be new. That is not arranged today or tomorrow. If we achieve that in five or ten years you should be happy, and in the meantime housing associations should just play their role, also on that market"*. This eventually opened the way for the temporary raise of the limits.

Following this problem, another problem was the income limit and the consequence for middle income groups, as previously mentioned *"from the consultancy and science we have showed that the middle income groups indeed would fall into a void"*.

Or as the Councils for the Environment and Infrastructure (RLI) state in their report (2011: 6): “After analysis the Council determine that for lower middle income groups (€ 33.614 tot € 43.000) there are few alternatives outside of the social housing sector”. This problem was also given a lot of media and public attention “... especially the income limit because with that you can point out people, we also experienced that often in the chamber that someone said: this family cannot pay for it anymore” is a statement by an interviewee. Another states: “We also made movies and sought people from the website in case the press was interested. So we also delivered people to the press as examples, that worked quite well”.

The final problem that was presented in this case was that of the incidents at housing associations. “there are a few who started playing entrepreneur, that did not always work out that well, with sometimes quite disastrous consequences for the housing associations” is what an interviewee added about this. These incidents started the discussion about the domain in which housing associations should operate, which was later connected to the income limits.

Policy stream

Different solutions were mentioned in the state support case to also solve the different problems. The most noticeable are the different income and SGEI limits that were discussed over time. The first proposition of the Dutch government to which the Commission also agreed was the income limit of €33.000 and a 90% SGEI allocation space (European Commission, 2009). Later this limit was raised to €38.000 and 80% for SGEI activities. Furthermore, a proposal to raise the limit to €43.000 as this is the top limit of what is considered a middle income was also made (Tweede Kamer, 2013c). However, this policy proposal did not make it.

Another more far going proposal came from the committee of the parliamentary enquiry. They suggested ‘non-SGEI, don’t do it’ (Tweede Kamer, 2014b). This meant they did not agree to the 10% space for non-SGEI activities that the government offered.

This division between SGEI and non-SGEI activities did provide another policy choice on how to separate these activities. Options for this were either an administrative separation where the same organisation would do both but would have a separate administration for each activity. The other option was a juridical separation in which a daughter organisation would be founded for the purpose of non-SGEI activities, making it a separation that is a bit more impactful. An interviewee stated about this: “That also got in the act, that the housing association could make their own decision. There has been a lot of discussion about this, it wasn’t suggested in the European rules, those said that there should be a separation of costs and earnings at the least”. In the end Aedes and the cabinet made an agreement together in which the separation of non-SGEI activities was one of the points. The cabinet agreed to give housing associations the option to choose either the administrative or juridical option themselves because a juridical separation would not be desirable for some housing associations (Eerste Kamer, 2015: 1).

One of the most far going policy proposals that was mentioned was a total abolishment of state support for housing associations. This would mean that they would be fully independent and be in direct competition with commercial organisations, creating a level playing field. However this solution seemed to far-fetched for most, as one interviewee said: “That guarantee that is an amount that doesn’t cost the Dutch state anything, also not for municipalities, only some ground, on that they lose some. So it is a very efficient system with regards to government budgets. For housing associations it is also very nice because it is not just an advantage of the interest, but the system also creates a direct channel towards the banks. It is not just about the costs of the financing but also about the accessibility of financing. That is arranged really well and that seemed like a bad idea to everyone to abolish that.”

Politics stream

The state of politics and public opinion was very dynamic in this case.

As discussed previously the main political struggle was about the income limit. Especially left parties such as the PvdA really tried to change this and make it higher. Also confessional parties such as the CDA and ChristenUnie who are traditionally pro social organisations such as housing associations were in favour of a strong role for these organisations.

These politicians have been crucial in the process since *“through motions in the Chamber it was asked to talk in Brussels again”*. Liberal parties VVD and D66 have been against expanding the task of housing associations beyond taking care of people with a low income.

It therefore depend on which government coalition was present which point of view dominated. When the case started in 2005 the government coalition was made of CDA, VVD and D66, together these parties favoured a social approach and a big role for housing associations in developing problem areas (CDA et al., 2003: 13). After the elections in 2007 a new coalition of CDA, PvdA and the ChristenUnie proceeded with this same line of thought (CDA et al., 2007: 31-32). However, in 2010, also following the Commission decision but also with the liberals winning the election the new VVD and CDA government, supported by the PVV, social housing was limited and rents were raised (VVD & CDA, 2010: 46). This continues in the current coalition between VVD and PvdA in which the housing market portfolio is delegated to a liberal from the VVD.

With regards to the public opinion this has also changed. As the Jong (2013: 9) states that the public opinion on what is acceptable for housing associations has become significantly stricter over the last couple of years. This is mainly because of all the scandals. However this does not mean that tenants want the social housing sector to be very limited. In 2013 the Woonbond placed a poll on its website to ask tenants about the task that housing associations should have. A big majority of the visitors of their website indicated that housing associations should not only help low incomes, but should also work for middle incomes (Woonbond, 2013). Any other indicators of the public opinion on social housing or housing associations were not found.

Policy window

The window of opportunity in this case was what caused the European Commission to express an opinion about the Dutch social housing sector and the consequent set income limit by the Dutch government. As an interviewee states: *“The IVBN timed that well regarding their complaint in Brussels that caused more pressure on the Commission and also for the Netherlands. I think that the Netherlands really felt that pressure. Someone once told me that Van der Laan (minister) really wanted to get that subsidy back then, but that he thought that if he didn’t agree to a tight income limit with the Commission that there would be big sanctions for the Netherlands”*. The European involvement therefore increased the pressure which led to action after years of inaction and no policy change on the role of housing associations.

Policy entrepreneurs

When asked to interviewees whether there was a person who acted as a policy entrepreneur nobody came up. As one interviewee stated: *“It was more of a lobby against the law. I can’t really point towards a person that it got this far thanks to that person”*.

However, the importance of the role of the IVBN has been mentioned by multiple interviewees. *“Because that discussion had been going on for a long time, it was a long discussion between Europe and the Netherlands, but that never really led to a decision and suddenly it was there. The IVBN did trigger that back then”* is what one of the interviewees said on their role.

5.1.4 OTHER FINDINGS

In the state support case no observations were done in either interviews or documents regarding the process of policy change that did not fit one of the variables from the theories.

5.2 CASE 2. WONEN 4.0

5.2.1 PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

Venue shopping

One of the venues used to get Wonen 4.0 to be implemented as a policy was scientific institutions. Added to the plan was an analysis of its effects by the OTB (Research for the built environment).

However one of the interviewees did say about this: *“I haven’t seen that very clearly to be honest. I also can’t deny it but I haven’t really seen that analysis being cited or something”*. However, later in the process an analysis by the Central Plan Bureau (CPB) was planned, an interviewee stated on this: *“So the CPB would analyse it, which was quite good because then you have another party saying something about it. Accept then the elections came and all of the political wanted to have their election programmes analysed, and that wasn’t over and you got the cabinet saying that they wanted their coalition agreement to be analysed. We actually got grinded by the time pressure at the CPB. Because of that the analysis at the CPB never really took off and they only just recently dusted off the plan and took it along in their own vision”*. In order to do their analysis the CPB needed extra information on the plan, which they requested in a letter that was also send to the Second Chamber (CPB, 2013). However, this was never followed up on because of the fall of the cabinet, elections were earlier causing the CPB to prioritize other analyses.

Another venue that was used by the Wonen 4.0 coalition is the media. One of the interviewees said: *“The was a reasonable amount of media attention. However that attention also slipped away again. But in the period after it, it got a place in opinion pieces etc. at different places, websites, trade journals, policy pieces, it did get its place. So it was quite broad that people said give that plan a chance because it is a broad plan and do something with it”*. Also on TV the plan was discussed, for example, the TV news show ‘EenVandaag’ devoted a segment in their show to the plan Wonen 4.0 (EenVandaag, 2012).

Policy images

The plan was presented as an integral solution for a failed housing market by the Wonen 4.0 coalition. Interviewees stated: *“when they eventually presented it, it was the Walhalla of the future.”* and *“it was a common vision of the parties that something had to happen”*. Among the makers of the plan there was dissatisfaction with the current housing market and with the way the government tried to improve it. One interviewee said on the government policy: *“It is like a containership that changes course really slowly and sometimes takes countermeasures like the high rentable value fixed sum, yes the politicians also take a lot of measures to not touch this or that, but they do take countermeasures to make sure that the budgetary story is right”*.

Also, the plan was presented as one that would make renting and buying a home equally attractive option. *“The level playing field is not even”* was what one of the interviewees said about this. However, because the plan was not very concrete, when comparing it to the state support case an interviewee said: *“Wonen 4.0 was a plan that was not very concrete, it was more the main lines had been set, so the state support case was much more visible, less abstract”*. This allowed the state support case to involve the personal stories of people affected by this, due to its abstractness, this was not possible for Wonen 4.0.

Furthermore it was also presented as a budget neutral plan, however not as a plan that would cut back costs. *“In hindsight, which was a bit dumb, was the emphasis that it wasn’t an austerity plan, in that time it really revolved around cutbacks, while the plan could have been used to cut costs. I’ve said that it was presented as a reform without cutbacks, but as we got were cutbacks without reform. That combination, you could have combined a cutback and a reform just fine, accept it was because of this that it wasn’t compatible”* is what one of the interviewees said.

Finally, the plan was also presented as being a much too radical change. According to the minister political parties were startled by the plan and didn’t think it was something they actually wanted to implement (Eerste Kamer, 2015: 14).

Positive feedback

No accounts of positive feedback were observed in interviews and documents. No objective circumstances that reinforced themselves were measured that influenced the success of the plan.

Policy monopolies

As previously mentioned in the other case, the policy monopoly is made out of the minister and his civil servants and the representatives of the parties on the housing market.

For this case this is the same, accept a part of the policy monopoly broke apart from it and formed their own coalition with Wonen 4.0. However, the exclusion of politics is seen by some interviewees as a mistake. One stated: *“They did not talk to us and then they immediately had a problem with their own supporters. What does the State think of it? Yeah, they don’t know. That went wrong. When the State said no, then suddenly the discussion ended”*. Another quote that confirms this is: *“In hindsight it did have to do with the political parties of which we thought that they would be happy with such a civil initiative from a big association Vereniging Eigen Huis, Woonbond is big, but they said you took our place and we don’t feel like signing at the x. That was an actual quote that has been said often. Yeah you see that they then fall back into their political rhetoric of an election rhetoric that says the VVD won’t touch the mortgage interest relief, the own house is safe. And you can begin from the start. So actually they weren’t ready yet, and the question is whether they will ever be.”* Also another interviewee stated: *“Also at the ministry they were quite pleased, accept the politicians determine what happens, and that was really clear. They said you need to listen, thanks for the report, nice, but we are in charge of this, and that is true”*.

5.2.2 ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

External events

In Wonen 4.0 the crisis is mentioned as an event that showed the shortcomings in the housing market (Aedes, 2012: 2). As interviewee stated: *“Yes, it kind of was ‘never waste a good crisis’. There is something in that, the crisis was indeed a good opportunity to do it”*. However, at the same time the plan said to wait with implementing it until the crisis was over (Aedes, 2012: 5). Interviewees said on this: *“You did have the crisis obviously that caused on the owner-occupied housing market, that people said that something had to happen there. However, others said that you had to leave it alone and shouldn’t mess too much with it cause that would cause more insecurity, which causes even less homes to be bought”*. Because of the crisis politicians wanted measures that dealt with the crisis straight away, an interviewee therefore added: *“When I look back now then I think it should have been a combination of long and short term measures. If you said something like on the short term we stimulate the housing market, but we pay that from the long term reforms... Then you should have gotten something out of the reserves of housing associations in the first couple of years or something”*.

Another event that affected the case but that was outside of its influence was the fall of the cabinet VVD and CDA which was no longer supported by the PVV. The plan was to have Wonen 4.0 presented before the elections, and interviewee said: *“It also had to do with the elections, it actually came too late, in hindsight. Most election programmes had already been made, because the elections were earlier. With regards to timing it was good, but in hindsight it wasn’t. Had the elections been in the fall and not in the spring it would have had more influence.”* Also because of these earlier elections the support for the plan could not be expanded: *“So what could we have done differently: we were taken by surprise by the break in the cabinet with the PVV, because of that we weren’t able to expand the support”*.

Internal events

Again in this case the scandals at housing associations were mentioned. However they weren’t of as big an influence as in the state support case. An interviewee elaborated: *“It wasn’t implemented for two reasons. The first is that they just needed money for the financial deficit. The second is that they wanted housing associations back in their cage, so they thought we are going to deal with them so they won’t do any crazy things anymore. That is also what the VVD now says, those scandals did contribute to that”*. Also another interviewee adds: *“And then you have the public opinion, then you get those scandals, that wasn’t connected very much to Wonen 4.0. I do think that that did happen in The Hague, that if it came from the housing associations that it did fall behind. It was more broadly than just the plan, but then it is a stick that you can hit with if you as the VVD do not want anyway, than that the plan didn’t go well because of that. For a lot of parties it wasn’t an option anyway.”*

Especially the suggestion from Wonen 4.0 to abolish the lessor tax (verhuurdersheffing) was important in this context and did not fit it.

Policy oriented learning

No observations of policy oriented learning were made in this case. The plan itself could be seen as a whole group of actors learning and adapting their preferences, however since it was more like a negotiated bargain it is not perceived that actors actually changed their beliefs system since they went back to their own preferences when the plan was not accepted.

Negotiated agreement

The plan Wonen 4.0 is the negotiated agreement in this case. It was made by an unique coalition of actors who normally did not collaborate. On this process an interviewee said: *“From that point of departure we looked what we could do for the whole housing market. That has been a whole negotiation game with plusses and minuses. We also had a discussion with our members about the plan. Not everyone was very enthusiastic because there were also disadvantages for tenants. So we really needed to do our best to explain that correctly. Eventually our members did massively vote in favour”*. Because it was a negotiated plan between actors with different interests they sometimes had to compromise as well, an interviewee said on this: *“I think it was a balanced plan. It is giving and taking from all parties, but what remained was something that everyone could fully endorse”*. However, the plan proved too much for political parties, most of which are traditionally also aligned with either renters or home owners. And interviewee explained: *“I think the risk was too big for the political parties, they want to present themselves on one part, and the Woonbond, Aedes, NVM and Vereniging Eigen Huis they stepped over their own shadow, but that seemed a bridge too far for politicians.”*

Collaborative institutions

One of the institutions that made the collaboration possible was leadership. Ger Hukker from the NVM is often mentioned in this context as initiator and also the person who kept the coalition together. One interviewee said: *“I think that Ger Hukker from the NVM, he was also called the ‘greaser’, that he really put effort into keeping the process going and got everyone involved when they were in danger of getting at a distance, so he played a really important role in the process”*. Another adds: *“It also depended on the people who were leading those organisations, so especially Ger Hukker, that is a real builder of bridges, he sort of took the initiative”*.

Also creating a common goal of what they all wanted the ideal housing market to look like helped to keep the actors involved: *“So we started that in the frame of trust, we said how would the ideal housing market look like, let’s put that as a ‘dot on the horizon’. How do you get to that point? So listening, putting yourself in an others place, being convinced of the fact that the housing market can function in a better way. That was actually the trigger for people at the table”*.

What also made the process easier is that the people who negotiated the plan already knew each other. Because of this it is much easier to empathize with the stance of others. Before, the policy monopoly was called an old boys club, one of the interviewees stated that this facts helped in the collaboration: *“Before that, and that is from what I have heard how it went, is that for a year it was especially a process of the directors and chairmen. Marc Colon, Ronald Paping, Ger Gukker and the one from Vereniging Eigen Huis, I forgot his name. Also, Bob Maas from Eigen Huis was the secretary of that club. Especially those four, they came together every month and devised the plan. Peter Boelhouwer was also often there, Bob Maas was the author of the plan”*. Because the people already knew each other well it created trust and also made the process easier: *“Those men run into each other, they consciously chose to also keep it with those four so it wouldn’t get too complex”*.

Enabling factors

Public attention was mentioned by an interviewee: *“It was known that these parties were having talks but every through that they wouldn’t succeed. With tenants and buyers, they are not going to look over their own shadow. So yes, when at a certain moment it became clear that we were going to work it out, then the press dove on it.*

So it is not a matter of did you approach them, they were approaching us because nobody expected this". Another one confirms this attention but also mitigates this effect: *"The was a reasonable amount of media attention. However that attention also slipped away again."* It seems that the media attention was more because the plan was made by the unique coalition and not because of the plan itself. On the public attention one actor even put the it in a more extreme context and said: *"Rarely has something died a quicker death"* about the plan.

A changing agenda by the government also played a role in this case. The agenda did not change the way Wonen 4.0 wanted, in the way that there was not enough urgency perceived by politicians that an integral change was needed in the housing market. *"I think that the politicians saw little urgency for such a big change. That is the most important thing."* and *"Yeah you see that they then fall back into their political rhetoric of an election rhetoric that says the VVD won't touch the mortgage interest relief, the own house is safe. And you can begin from the start. So actually they weren't ready yet, and the question is whether they will ever be."* are what interviewees added on this variable.

Furthermore, different policy venues played a role as enabling factors as could already be read in the separate variable in the PET.

Advocacy coalition

In this case the main advocacy coalition is clearly that of the plan's writers Aedes, Woonbond, Vereniging Eigen Huis and NVM. As stated before, this coalition was based on their shared policy goal, the plan itself being an overview of their negotiated policy core beliefs. *"Those measures had been there for a while, but what was actually revolutionary was that different parties got together. From all sides, the tenants were involved, the NVM was involved, Aedes, so the housing associations. So it was a well-supported piece, more or less by the urgency of the market"* is what an interviewee remarks on the coalition. It was actually the plan to expand this advocacy coalition: *"We actually thought to take the time. A year, year and a half we get on with the plan and we see if we can broaden it, so find more ambassadors. Especially Bouwend Nederland (Building Netherlands) was fiercely against any movement with the mortgage interest relief and what you saw in the banking sector was division..... the banks weren't a homogenous group. Actually VNO-NCW (employers' organisation) and MKB Nederland (SME Netherlands) they were really on the VVD line off keep your mouth closed about the mortgage interest relief, just don't start with that".* The coalition seemed of a temporary nature, one actor said on this: *"It is totally not stable because everyone dropped it afterwards like it was acid".* Another other add more mildly: *"but as soon as you remove one brick out of the plan and you cherry pick, then everything collapses. That is what eventually happened"* and: *Especially the combination of rent and buying is special. But fallen apart it think is too strong, they just didn't give it another push afterwards".*

Political parties cannot be counted as part of this coalition since they did not copy the plan in their election programmes in full. Some stated that they thought it was good that these parties had come up with a plan together and also supported an integral approach for the housing market, but none fully supported the plan like it was presented. When advocating their own reform plan the minister and politicians did reference to Wonen 4.0. measures like the huursombenadering (rent sum approach) which were also present in the plan (Eerste Kamer, 2015:14). Thus they stated that the measure had the support of the authors of Wonen 4.0 while this actually was not the case. The authors only agreed to Wonen 4.0 in its completeness, not just separate parts of it. An interviewee also stated: *"I think at the minister had a measure, and he said yes this is what you proposed in Wonen 4.0 at the time so what are you complaining about".*

5.2.3 MULTIPLE STREAMS APPROACH

Problem stream

The problem that Wonen 4.0 would solve was the ineffectiveness of the current housing market. *"I think that every party, every organisation on the housing market sees that a lot of things are wrong."*

The analysis on what is wrong and what the solutions are, in the there are differences, but they agree that there are troublesome elements in the housing market". Part of this problem was that policy never was made for the long term: "That is the problem when politicians do that, then it is the short term policy while real estate actually often needs a long-term strategy".

Also, the renting and buying sector did not share the same advantages, buying a house was made a preferable option due to government policy. An interviewee said on this: *"Actually it is, especially from the politicians, very focussed on the buying sector, but they forget the renting sector, that that is a very different policy but very separated from each other. While the rent and buying sector actually have a lot to do with each other because people switch from one to the other. It is preferable that people choose which option fits them best and not because the one is financially made attractive with amongst other the mortgage interest relief. So you need a good balance with an equal treatment. From this point of view we looked what we could do on the housing market".* Another interviewee added to this *"Because he actually is saying you are favouring people with their own home and he is right in that. The level playing field is just not equal. We said in our plan that tenants should be able to save a higher amount tax free in their rented house, someone with an own home who later becomes a renter, and a renter can become a buyer. So making sure it is more or less equal".*

Policy stream

Wonen 4.0 was a policy proposal with elements that were budget neutral for both renters and home owners. As an interviewee explains: *"It was chosen to have a long transition time and also a compensation, so ok mortgage interest relief, fine but then we also go for tax reduction, then people can make the choice on their own, and fine higher rents but then we need better rent benefits. That is the problem right now, a raise in rents but the rent benefits are not sufficient. That was one of the conditions".*

In the case description the policy measures proposed by Wonen 4.0 are mentioned. However, one of the main point of the plan was to implement it in its entirety, anything otherwise would be a deal breaker. In the end only some parts of the plan were adopted in the new Housing act, an interviewee states on this: *"I don't have the feeling that it is picked up. Especially not in its completeness, that was actually one of the main points of the plan, you shouldn't turn on small things but you need to approach it in an integral way on the buying market and renting market. But that hasn't happened. What you do see is that on some points there has been selective shopping from the plan.". Wonen 4.0 was referenced in the context of the mortgage interest relief, raising the rents based on 4,5 of the WOZ-waarde (value of real estate) and the huursombenadering (total rent sum approach). An interviewee confirms this: "You can say that this cabinet has copied a couple of measures that are in the line of Wonen 4.0. It doesn't go far enough, but still a reduction of the interest relief, some more market based rent, well that was all in that plan." Also another adds: "Then the cabinet also came with their own ideas about the lessor tax and the income depended rent increases, that really did not fit into the plan of Wonen 4.0. Then they did say something like this element is from Wonen 4.0, but that had been pulled from its context so much..... "*

Finally with regards as to how the policy options were presented an interviewee states: *"The last point is that with politicians you actually always have to give them a sort of menu so that you are actually saying, I'm putting up a frame but PvdA can get something here, GroenLinks can get something there CDA can get something there. So if you would do it again, then you could get to work with that".* Because politicians did not have any options to choose from they found it difficult to accept.

Politics stream

Wonen 4.0 was presented just before Second Chamber elections, however this did not have the desired effect. As one interviewee said about the elections, *"back then just the combination of parties who were not perceptible for that. That just is bad luck".* Another says about the state of politics: *"I think that the politicians saw little urgency for such a big change. That is the most important thing."* When asked why politicians did not take up the plan one interviewee stated: *"That is because of politicians, party political positions. In the case of the housing market that happened because people are very afraid of the electorate".*

As indicated by another interviewee, agreeing to Wonen 4.0 and its measures took courage, they stated: *“A lot needed to be changed, especially organisations like Vereniging Eigen Huis, their chairmen was against the abolishment of the mortgage interest relief for years, he really fought it, his successor did dare to do it. At a given moment they also had a survey under their members and they you saw that a lot of member found it reasonable that something should happen there”*.

Furthermore, it did not fit the political state of mind that during a time of crisis measures were needed at that time to fix the crisis while the plan proposed to wait with its measures until the economy was improving again.

As with regards to the state of the public opinion, the people that were affected by the plan (tenants and home owners) had agreed to the plan in their respective representative associations. 72% of the members of the Woonbond agreed and 66% of the home owners agreed (Woonbond, 2012). The scandals did not have much of an effect on the plan *“And then you have the public opinion, then you get those scandals, that wasn’t connected very much to Wonen 4.0.”* is what one interviewee said.

Policy window

The makers of Wonen 4.0 tried to use a policy window in the form of the Second Chamber elections. They wanted to get their plan taken up into election programmes of parties and eventually the coalition agreement of the new government. However, this did not go as planned as an interviewee elaborates: *“It also had to do with the elections, it actually came too late, in hindsight. Most election programmes had already been made, because the elections were earlier. With regards to timing it was good, but in hindsight it wasn’t. Had the elections been in the fall and not in the spring it would have had more influence.”* Also another interviewee confirms this: *“It was legitimate to make a plan in preparation for the elections and take the State and politicians by surprise with that. But then your story has to be flawless, especially when you want to do it completely on your own”*.

Policy entrepreneurs

In this case there is one person who is named as the policy entrepreneur multiple times. This is former VNM chairman Ger Hukker. He was the one to keep the coalition together according to one interviewee: *“I think that Ger Hukker from the NVM, he was also called the ‘greaser’, that he really put effort into keeping the process going and got everyone involved when they were in danger of getting at a distance, so he played a really important role in the process”*. Also, he was the one who took the initiative for the plan: *“It also depended on the people who were leading those organisations, so especially Ger Hukker, that is a real builder of bridges, he sort of took the initiative”*.

5.2.4 OTHER FINDINGS

With the Wonen 4.0 observations were done about the reasons for policy change, or in this case, lack thereof that did not fit with any of the theories. This is with regards to measures in the plan that in the end weren’t workable. As one interviewee put it: *“It contained a blunder of the first order. The value of real estate would be determinant for the level of the rent. When we analysed that it turned out that the rents in the Netherlands, especially in peripheral regions would rise enormously. The percentage was too high. At that we happily said, well you can increase the rents that much, but we are not going to make up the difference with the renting benefits”*. In their letter announcing an analysis of Wonen 4.0, the CPB (2013: 2-5) was also critical and raised questions, for example about the elaboration on the market conform rents. Also minister Blok criticises the plan. Even though he through it was a brave initiative, he also comments on the mistake with the 4,5% of the WOZ-norm (value of real estate) (Tweede Kamer, 2013d: 36). Even through this was initially copied in the coalition agreement, it seemed to lead to chaos in practise (Ibid.). Additionally criticism is given that the WOZ-norm will be used for the full 100% in Wonen 4.0, which would also lead to a huge increase in rents and consequently rent benefits (Tweede Kamer, 2015: 17). Another aspect was the wrong distribution of costs and benefits of the plan. It would be a long period of negative measures before the actual benefits would be noticeable.

One interviewee explains: *“But Wonen 4.0 is actually a plan of well in 2040 it will all be great and before that we have to struggle for 30 years. That is a difficult story that you get the benefits so late”*.

5.3 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS FINDINGS

In the state support case all of the variables from the three theories were observed. From the point of view of the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) venue shopping was observed in the form of the higher European level, court cases, scientific institutions and the media. Also, a technical, unfair competition, limitations for housing associations, anti-European and the negative effects for middle income groups were the different policy images that were presented. Scandals at housing organisations took on the form of positive feedback and the policy monopoly consisted of the minister for housing and his civil servants and the parties representing the different interests in the housing market. Some actors from this policy monopoly also were the ones who proposed policy change. From the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) external events were the financial crisis, jurisprudence on state support and the Dutch referendum on an European constitution. Internal events were the scandals at housing associations and the relatively quick changes of ministers responsible for housing during the case. Policy oriented learning occurred in the form of the BNG Bank no longer being seen as part of the state support and with the temporary raise of the income limit and space for non-SGEI activities. Also, two negotiated agreements are observed in the state support case; the agreement between the European Commission and the Dutch government and the agreement between the Dutch government and Aedes. However, the only collaborative institution that was observed was the pressure the Dutch minister for housing felt to come to an agreement with the Commission. Enabling factors were agenda change, public interest and the already mentioned different venues. Finally for the ACF two competing advocacy coalitions were observed; one of which wanted to limit the policy change as much as possible and who also pursued the interests of middle income groups and a coalition that encouraged the policy change and wanted to limit the tasks of housing associations. For the Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) there were several problem definitions, one of unfair competition, one of the problems the policy would give to middle income groups, and one of the scandals and problems at housing associations. Also different policies were discussed in the form of different income and SGEI allocation limits, different ways to separate SGEI and non-SGEI activities and even the policy option of totally abolishing state support for social housing. In the politics stream the state of politics mattered. Different political parties had different preferences and different governmental coalitions took different stances. This was in line with the changing public opinion which favoured stricter measures due to the scandals at housing associations, but did not want to limit social housing access for middle income groups that much. Finally, the actor that was observed as somewhat of a policy entrepreneur, the IVBN, was also the one to open the policy window in the case by going to the European Commission, an act which truly got the process of policy change started.

However, in the Wonen 4.0 case not all variables were observed in both documents and interviews. From the PET, venue shopping was observed however the scientific institutions were not cited very often and an attempt to get an analysis from the CPB failed. Media attention was present, however it also dwindled fast. Connected to this, there were no observations of a positive feedback process. However, there were different policy images of a plan to save the failed housing market, to make buying and renting equally attractive, a budget neutral plan, but also as a plan that was too radical. In this case, logically the same policy monopoly was present as in the state support case, however this time other actors from it initiated the change process. Also not all of the variables from the ACF were present. External events were once again the crisis, but also the early elections played a role. Internal events were once again the scandals at the housing associations, however this was of a more limited influence than in the state support case.

In the case there was no observation of policy oriented learning, but negotiated agreement was present since Wonen 4.0 itself was an example of this. The collaborative institutions that made this possible were leadership, a common goal and already existing relationships between the actors. As an enabling factors media attention and different venues were once again mentioned as present in the PET, but also agenda change was observed, however not in the way that fit Wonen 4.0. Once again two advocacy coalitions were observed, one of the makers of the plan, and one of government and other political parties because they did not fully support this plan. Finally for the MSA the problem stream was once again the ineffectiveness of the housing market and the differences between renting and buying. In the policy stream different aspects of the plan were present, the plan being budget neutral, it being an integral plan and not separate measures, and the policy option that it did not contain a 'menu' with several options for politicians to choose from. The state of politics from the politics stream was also observed, however this was not in line with Wonen 4.0; politicians did not see the urge for such an integral change, and they wanted a plan that could be implemented straight away and that would save money, not be budget neutral. However, as far as the public opinion could be observed, the Wonen 4.0 did have the support of the people affected by the plan through their different interest groups. In this case there was a clear policy entrepreneur in the form of NVM chairman Ger Hukker, however he and the other creators of Wonen 4.0 did not manage to fully use their envisioned policy window, causing this variable to also be absent. However, observations were made in the Wonen 4.0 case that do not belong to any theory; the plan contained measures that weren't properly workable in practise, which made the acceptance of it by different actors more difficult.

6 ANALYSIS

6.1 PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM THEORY

In the state support case the observations were mostly in line with the expectations deduced from the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET). Venue shopping played an important role in the case in the form of the media, the involvement of other governmental levels and scientific institutions. Positive learning occurred when the scandals at housing associations were increasingly used as an argument something had to change in the sector, which was one of the multiple and competing policy images that were presented. In the end the established policy monopoly was broken, however the actors that proposed the change, the minister responsible for the housing market and his civil servants, were also part of this policy monopoly. This goes against the notion that actors in a policy monopoly try to prevent change, as the theory suggests. Also, the punctuated equilibrium theory proposes that incremental change happens in the policy subsystem and bigger changes at the macro-political level. However, the incremental change of the income limits being temporarily raised was also discussed at the macro-political level, which means that it is not just big change that happens at this level as the theory proposes.

In the case of Wonen 4.0 venue shopping also happened, however in this case it was in the form of media, though this attention dwindled down and in the form scientific institutions, however this also did not have a strong effect. There were also competing policy images, but there was no observation of positive feedback. Additionally, the same as in the state support case, the group who proposed the policy change was part of the policy monopoly, except this time it were other actors. They however did not succeed as well in the other case as breaking the policy monopoly in moving the policy change to the macro-political level of the First and Second Chamber. The only mention of the plan is the appreciation of politicians for the coalition, and in the context of several loose measures form the plan. No actor supported the plan in its completeness and actively supported its full adopting at the macro-political level. This means that for this case, the absence of positive feedback and the non-successful breaking of the policy monopoly would explain the lack of policy change, which is in line with the expectations from the theory. However, it again goes against the notion that actors from the policy subsystem counteract change, which is contradictory to the PET.

6.2 ADVOCACY COALITION FRAMEWORK

The expectations derived from the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) were fully in line with the observations made in the state support case. Both external and internal events influenced the policy change process in the form of the crisis, new jurisprudence, the referendum on an European constitution, the scandals at housing associations and the large amount of ministers responsible for the housing market over the past 15 years. New knowledge led to policy oriented learning on both the involvement of the BNG Bank and the effects of the policy for lower middle income groups, allowing an incremental change of the policy. Negotiated agreement was also present, however it remained unclear as to what exactly were the institutions that facilitated this collaboration. Finally the enabling factors of agenda change of the government, public interest and different venues allowed the actors from competing advocacy coalitions to influence the policy change process in their preference.

External events in the form of the crisis and the fall of the cabinet in 2012 had an influence on the Wonen 4.0 case and gave an incentive for the policy change. Also internal events in the form of scandals had an influence, however not as strongly as in the state support case and more in a obstructing way for the policy change. No policy oriented learning was perceived but negotiated agreement was very important as this was how the policy proposal was formed, collaborative institutions helped form this agreement.

Enabling factors of a rise in public interest and the use of multiple venues was present, however it was not enough for the advocacy coalition that proposed the Wonen 4.0 plan to get the change implemented. Public attention dwindled and the makers of the Wonen 4.0 plan did not manage to use the scientific institutions in the way they planned. The opposing advocacy coalition did not share a preference for the measures the plan suggested but did appreciate the fact that the other coalition has managed to work together and create a plan. They referenced this support when they passed through several loose measures from the plan. This means that also these observations are in line with the ACF and this theory can be used to explain the lack of change.

6.3 MULTIPLE STREAMS APPROACH

Several problems were present during the state support case, all of which gained attention at different parts of the process, making for different problem definitions of the various actors. This observation is actually quite in line with the different policy images that were presented in the PET. Also multiple policy proposals were suggested indicating the presence of a policy stream and a dynamic process of public and political attention confirms the presence of also a politics stream. Furthermore a policy window opened during the case, allowing for the policy change to be set in motion. The IVBN played an important role in the creation of this window, confirming their role as policy entrepreneur in this part of the policy process. All of these observations were therefore in line with the Multiple Streams Approach (MSA).

In the Wonen 4.0 case there were multiple problems regarding the case, competing policies were also present as Wonen 4.0 was one of various options, and these problems and policies were not all equally supported by actors in the politics stream. This is all in line with the expectations from the MSA. Also in line with this was the presence of a policy entrepreneur, Ger Hukker, former NVM chairman and initiator and coalition builder for Wonen 4.0. The makers of Wonen 4.0 also tried to utilize the policy window that new elections provided but were not successful, partially because these elections were earlier than predicted. This lack of a policy window for Wonen 4.0 explain the lack of policy change in line with the MSA.

6.4 OBSERVATIONS OUTSIDE OF THEORY

In the Wonen 4.0 case there were also observations outside of the expectations from the theory. They are not contradictory of it because it could be related to the policy stream, however it is an observation that is currently not included in the expectations of the policy stream. One of the reasons that Wonen 4.0 was not implemented was because it contained policy measures that weren't sound. The policy stream therefore does not only contain competing policy proposals, for these policies to be even considered they have to be perceived a well-made, a notion that is currently not included in the MSA.

6.5 PROPOSAL ANALYSIS

Proposition 1: Groups of actors who share an interest in the change of a policy in a certain direction have an incentive to work collectively. They therefore collaborate in order to achieve their goals. Another possibility is that policy change mainly happens through the actions of individual policy entrepreneurs representing their own or a represented interest.

In both cases groups of actors are seen working together to achieve their goals, it being advancing a policy, trying to modify it or trying to counteract it. The only indication of an individual policy entrepreneur is in the case of Wonen 4.0. However, his main activities were initiating and keeping the coalition together, meaning that he actually worked as an collaborative institution to keep the actors from working together.

The notions from the PET and ACF therefore are more valid than the one from the MSA. This evidence for preferring ACF and PET over the MSA is strong for this aspect of the theories since it is in line with the expectations of the ACF and PET but contradicts the MSA.

Proposition 2: A shift in the distribution of resources such as financial resources, ability to mobilize and access to information can enable policy change by increasing the influence of a group of actors while diminishing the influence of others. In other theories however, resources are not stated as a factor of influence on policy change.

Shifting resources were not perceived in any of the cases as the actors' abilities to have influence on the policy process did not change. For example their access to information did not suddenly change or their ability to mobilize their supported also did not change. This seems to be an enabling factor that was not relevant in both of these cases, while other enabling factors such as agenda change or changing of venues and public interest did matter. This notion from the ACF therefore does not hold true in these cases. However, this observation is not very strong since the variable has simply not been observed, there is no evidence that contradicts this proposition from the ACF. This means that the other theories have slightly more explanatory power with regards to this notion for the cases, but not that the notion from the ACF is totally wrong.

Proposition 3: Alternative selection is an important notion preceding change, actors actively look for different policies to solve their problem. This means that not only actors compete for change, also policies compete for the support of actors. The other theories however, do not mention different policies competing in the change process.

In both cases different and competing policies indeed played a role. Some of which got support from actors and others did not. In the state support case different solutions were talked about and in the Wonen 4.0 case, that policy plan was one of the competing policy proposals, but it did not manage to get support from political actors. It can be therefore concluded that the notion from the MSA about different policies does have a role in the process of policy change that the other two theories do not emphasize. This means that on different policies the explanatory power of the MSA is underscored, the other theories are not contradicted since they simply do not mention the variable.

Proposition 4: Learning is a factor that can contribute to policy change. By learning actors' belief systems can change somewhat, leading to them preferring another policy and actively pursuing this. Alternatively, learning is not of influence on policy change.

The effect of learning was indeed perceived in the state support case as contributing to the adaptation of the involvement of BNG Bank in state support and in temporarily adjusting the SGEI conditions for housing associations. In the Wonen 4.0 case policy oriented learning was not perceived, however there was also no policy change in this case. If there had been policy learning this would have meant that actors would have adjusted their belief systems towards Wonen 4.0 and this could have contributed to the success of the policy proposal. We can therefore conclude that policy orientated learning as proposed by the ACF can have an influence on the likelihood of policy change. Once again this means that the explanatory power of the ACF on learning is underscored, however no notions of the other theories are not contradicted.

Proposition 5: Policy subsystems like governmental agencies, parliamentary committees or workgroups are important for maintaining policy stability, change is obstructed by the actors within these venues. Alternatively, the policy subsystems have no influence on policy change.

In both cases the researcher observed that actors from the policy subsystem, the policy monopoly, were the ones initiating the process for policy change.

Policy monopolies got broken in both cases in the sense that actors from the policy monopoly in the subsystem actually wanted policy change and did not counteract it. This contradicts the proposition from PET but is in line with the notion from the ACF in which actors can change from advocacy coalition. We can therefore state that policy subsystems do not have an obstructing effect on the policy process. This proposition therefore is also has theoretically more strong evidence since it contradicts a notion from the PET but confirms notions from the other theories that the policy subsystems do not play a role.

Proposition 6: Elections and other governmental changes can enable policy change, since politicians and other government officials have preferences of their own. Alternatively, they have no influence on the process of policy change.

This notion from the ACF and MSA played a role in the policy change process of both cases. In the state support case government elections enabled agenda change due to changing coalition agreements. When the government adopted a social approach this caused the European Commission to get involved in the state support case. Later the government adopted a more strict role regarding housing associations, leading to a preference for more stringent regulation for them. In the Wonen 4.0 case the elections were would could have had an effect as a window of opportunity, however it did not due to the elections being earlier than planned. Also, the new government and its coalition agreement enabled the new Housing act, which contains some measures from Wonen 4.0. Governmental changes therefore influence the process of policy change like the ACF and MCA predict. This underscores the explanatory value from these theories, however it does not contradict a notion from the PET since this theory simply does not mention the variable.

Proposition 7: Venue shopping can enable policy change because institutional venues have different preferences and rules that can be beneficial to certain policies and constricting to others. Alternatively, different venues do not have an influence in policy change.

In the state support case venue shopping was an important variable. Media, scientific institutions, international and judiciary venues were all used and had an influence on the policy change. In the Wonen 4.0 case the proponents of the change tried to use the venues but were not as successful as in the other case, contributing to the reasons why there was no adoption of Wonen 4.0. Scientific knowledge was not used liked they wanted and the rapport from the CPB was postponed. Additionally, media attention was present but dwindled fast when there was no positive feedback. Venue shopping therefore enable policy change as the PET and ACF suggest, this therefore underscores the explanatory value of these theories. However it does not contradict the MSA since this theory does not mention venue shopping.

6.6 CONCLUSION ANALYSIS

Out of all the three theories the ACF was perceived fully in the way that it proposes policy change to happen, it therefore has a lot of explanatory power. Both external and internal events had influence on both cases. Enabling factors like venue shopping, a rise in public interest and agenda change made sure these factors gave the advocacy coalition that wanted the change a benefit. Also policy orientated learning occurred in the case where there was policy change and lacked in the case where change was not the case. Furthermore negotiated agreements, facilitated by collaborative institutions also played a role in both cases. Finally, the division of actors in advocacy coalitions proved a useful tool to see which preferences and beliefs the different actors had and also show that actors can change these. As opposed to what the policy monopolies from the PET suggest, actors who are part of these monopolies can actually change their preferences and try to create policy change, instead of trying to maintain the current. This notion means that the ACF better explains the way that actors function than the PET does for the two cases in this research.

However the other theories provided variables that the ACF did not include but which have shown to contribute to the understanding of the change process. Most of these factors do not undermine the value of the ACF since they do not contradict any notions from the theory, however they do underline the explanatory power of the other theories on other important points.

From the PET comes the notion of policy images. While the ACF includes the beliefs of actors, this does not include the image or frame that they use to 'promote' the policy of their preference, which gives an extra insight on why some policies are successful and other are not. However, positive feedback is needed otherwise the impact of these images is not very big, as was seen in Wonen 4.0. Enough media and public attention through positive feedback will make sure that these images are impactful, otherwise they will dwindle fast. Also from the PET comes the notion that venue shopping is not just an enabling factor for external and internal events, but is something that can enable policy change on its own. This notion seems to hold true in the state support case where venues such as the European Commission did not need internal or external events to be an enabler for policy change. This means that with regards to venue shopping the PET has a higher explanatory power than the ACF since the variable is not just enabling as this theory suggests. The MSA also adds variables that the ACF does not mention. A separate policy stream is an addition that shows that not only advocacy coalitions compete for change, but also policies themselves compete for the support of these actors. Within the same coalition of actors from multiple policy options one has to be chosen, this means that in order for your policy to be implemented, it first has to win the favour of your own coalition as well. Also the addition of a separate politics stream provides an overview of the political and public state of mind, that the ACF does not. For example, this stream takes into account legislative turnover, which can have an effect on the composition of advocacy coalitions. Furthermore the MSA shows the importance of timing that the other two theories do not show in the form of policy windows. However, contrary to what Kingdon says, they are not conditions for change, but can make it easier. In the state support case the policy window sped up part of the change, but it lasted another six years before the change was finalized in the new Housing act. In the Wonen 4.0 case the policy window of Second Chamber elections did indeed provide more opportunities to get the plan implemented, but it was not sufficient. Also, policy entrepreneurs as individuals were not conditional to policy change, but important to the process. IVBN in the state support case sped up the policy process and Ger Hukker was initiator and coalition builder of the plan Wonen 4.0. However, both needed the other actors in their advocacy coalition to get the change to be accepted. Finally there is a factor for policy change that none of the theories mentioned. This is a factor that precedes the policy variable; the soundness of the policy. In Wonen 4.0 part of the reason the policy was not adopted is because the measures it proposed were not perceived as well-made and workable in practise. This is an important factor that should not be forgotten when looking at ways to get a policy changed.

7 CONCLUSION

Although the three theories that were tested in this research were partially contradictory, all of them seem to hold some truth to them in explaining policy change. The answer to the main research question of which of the theories on policy change can be best used to explain policy change in social housing in the Netherlands is therefore not a simple one.

As could be concluded from the analysis chapter, not one of the three theories is sufficient in explaining policy change in the Dutch social housing sector. A combination of the three theories is needed as they all add different aspects of the change process. To illustrate this the researcher made a conceptual model of the combined variables from the different theories that are found in the cases to have an effect on the policy change process, as pictured in figure 5 below.

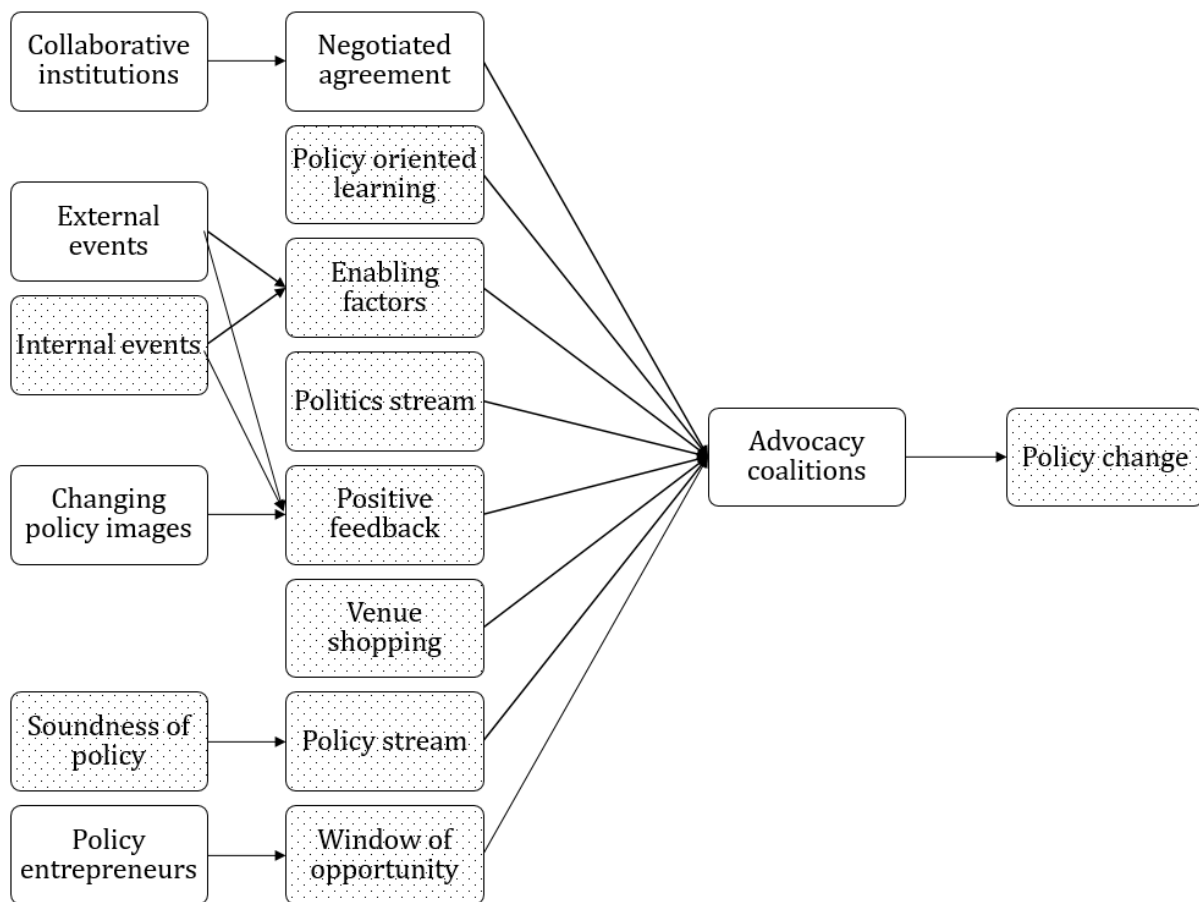


Figure 5. Conceptual model combined theories

Figure 5 gives a version of a combination of the tested theories that is based on the observations from this research. Whether the relationships between the variables are actually like this will have to be tested in future research. In this research the model will be used as a proposition of the way in which the theories can be combined. The variables that have a dotted background are the variables that were absent or the content of which did not properly correspond with Wonen 4.0 in that case. This indicates that this combination of theories does not only explain why policy change does happen, it also helps in explaining why policy change does not happen if these variables are missing or are not properly utilized.

In this research I found that the best way to group actors who pursue policy change is by advocacy coalitions as stated by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) from Jenkins-Smith et al. (2014).

A break in policy monopolies as proposed by Baumgartner et al. (2014: 64) is not observed in both cases from the Dutch social housing sector as the policy change was proposed by different actors who actually make up the policy monopoly. Also, policy entrepreneurs from the Multiple Streams approach do not have the influence as proposed by Zahariadis (2014: 35). They needed the help of the other actors in the advocacy coalition that they were part of in order to get their preferred policy change. The policy entrepreneurs did play a role during the policy windows, or at least tried to in Wonen 4.0 when there was no policy change. These windows do indeed have an influence on policy change as it initiated the change process in the state support case and was missed in the Wonen 4.0 case, contributing to the reasons why there was no change.

Negotiated agreements contributed to the policy change in both cases and were enabled by collaborative institutions, though in the state support case it was not clear which institutions these were apart from pressure. However, from Wonen 4.0 it became clear that negotiated agreement is not sufficient for policy change if not all actors from the different advocacy coalitions are included, then other factors are also needed to achieve change. This is in line with the notion from the ACF by Jenkins-Smit et al. (2014: 203) that the different coalitions need to make an agreement, which in Wonen 4.0 was successful between buyers and renters, but did not also include political parties.

Policy oriented learning was absent in the Wonen 4.0 case, but did contribute to the slight shifting of advocacy coalitions in the state support case as proposed by the ACF (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 198). For example, the Dutch government conceded to the demand of the other advocacy coalition that middle incomes also needed to be taken into account by agreeing to temporarily raise the income limit and non-SGEI space after reports had given evidence that these groups would otherwise indeed have a problem in the short term.

External and internal events were present in both cases, and the distinction that the ACF makes between external and internal events proved useful as in the Wonen 4.0 case internal events actually affected the policy change negatively but external events influenced it in a positive way. These notions from the ACF were useful not only combined with enabling factors such as agenda change in the state support case as proposed by Jenkins-Smith et al (2014: 202) but also affected the positive feedback process from the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET). The state support case showed that an internal event, the scandals at housing associations, created positive feedback, external events can have this same effect.

Connected to this are the different policy images, which were perceived in both cases. The problem stream was left out of this conceptual model since it can be seen as part of the different policy images that actors give. Where the policy images from the PET show the different frames a policy is attributed by different actors, the problem stream shows the different problems that actors perceive. However, an image of a policy can be as a solution to a problem or the policy change itself can be perceived as a problem, meaning that different problems are covered in the policy images variable as actors will likely either present the policy change as something good (a solution to a problem) or something bad (a problem itself). The policy image variable is chosen because this more broad than the problem stream, meaning that it can also include policy images not related to problems.

The politics stream from the Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) was useful in showing the state of politics and public opinion, both of which can influence the size of advocacy coalitions, for example when a political party belonging to a certain advocacy coalition gets more seats in parliament following an election. In Wonen 4.0 the state of politics, contrary to the public opinion, did not fit the policy change the plan proposed, contributing to it not being implemented.

The variable of venue shopping from the PET proved useful in explaining policy change. It is therefore a separate variable and not part of the enabling factors such as in the ACF (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014: 202). In Wonen 4.0 this variable was present, however actors from the advocacy coalition were not successful in using the venues to their benefit. For example, media attention was present but dwindled quickly.

Also from the MSA, the policy stream as proposed by Zahariadis (2014: 33) proved to be a useful addition to the cases as well.

In the state support case several policy options clearly competed to be implemented, providing additional insight in which options were used by the advocacy coalitions. In Wonen 4.0 the policy proposed was very clear, however it did not fit the policy preference of politicians at the time and did not give them an option to choose from several options, resulting in the end, for them choosing a whole other policy than Wonen 4.0 to implement. Additionally to this, the Wonen 4.0 case provided a variable not mentioned by any theory that precedes the policy stream; the soundness of the policy. Wonen 4.0 seemed to contain several measures that turned out to not be workable in practice, contributing to its lack of success and indicating that this has to be a requirement for a policy to seriously compete with others in the policy stream.

In short, policy change in the Netherlands can be best explained by a combination of the three main theories on policy change. The ACF serves as the main framework with the adjustment that venue shopping is a variable of its own and not just an enabling factor. Added to this model have to be the policy images and positive feedback from the PET, and the separate policy and politics streams, policy windows and policy entrepreneurs from the MSA. However, none of these factors proved to be sufficient for change by themselves in the cases, but a combination of all these factors made policy change possible. Finally, in addition to the three theories, the policies that are proposed need also be perceived as sound in order for the policy change to be successful.

7.1 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

In this research I have looked at the process of policy change in the Dutch social housing sector using the three main theories on policy change. These theories had never been tested in this policy area before, also outside of the Netherlands, but have proven their use also in this application. Furthermore, besides applying the theories in a new policy area, the theories have been tested in an integral way. In previous research often only parts of the theories were tested, however this research has looked at the value of the theories in their completeness. The research therefore has contributed to the theoretical discussion of policy change because parts of the theories were falsified while other parts were confirmed. Following from this research additions can be made to the theoretical discussion of policy change. The research showed that each of the three theories has parts that are true but that no theory tells the complete story of policy change. The theories therefore need to be combined into an integral model. The research also adds the notion of policy soundness to the theoretical discussion on policy change. This notion might seem like a redundant one, but as it showed in the Wonen 4.0 case, was influential in the lack of success in the adoption of a policy proposal and also was not mentioned in any theory. Furthermore the research showed the importance of new venues such as the European Commission in venue shopping and the effect that these venues can have. It showed issues can be reframed to be a EU competency, even though they have never been before. This is an interesting notion that needs more research to further clarify this.

Interviews were a good method to collect the data necessary for the analysis of the theories on policy change. They were a good way to hear the different preferences and stances of the important actors in the field of social housing from these actors themselves, and to hear their view on the process of policy change. Furthermore, the interviews provided information that was not found in the document analysis and often provided a first-hand-account from actors that were involved in the change process themselves. This account was necessary since not all sources for documents were available until the start of the cases.

For example the website for governmental documents only showed the latest 300 documents related to housing associations, which went until 2012, while the state support case already started in 2005. The interviews therefore were a good method to fill this gap of data. Finally, the interviews allowed for targeted questioning towards certain aspects of theories, the documents were existing data sources and therefore sometimes less helpful in measuring variables, for example collaborative institutions.

However, the document analysis also added aspects to the research. Besides confirming many of the variables and thus making the results more reliable, it also allowed for the point of view of various politicians to be made clear by the transcriptions of debates. Due to a lack of time and access it was not possible to interview politicians who were related to the case, however interviews were not needed as their points of view were recorded in governmental documents. Nonetheless, the same limitation of the availability of governmental documents holds true for this as well. Because of this it was not possible to know the stances of politicians and political parties before 2012 from documents.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude this research, the researcher is aware that this research has not answered all of the questions that surround the policy making process in social housing and in general. The researcher therefore has some recommendations for future research. Additionally, the research has another function; it can be used by actors who want to bring about policy change. Policy recommendations will therefore also be given in this final paragraph.

7.2.1 FURTHER RESEARCH

As was already mentioned before, the role of the European Commission was important in one of the cases and contributed to the enabling of policy change. It would therefore be interesting to see if the Commission is used by national actors as an alternative venue in more policy areas under the guise of state support rules or whether the Commission itself also tries to get more influence in national issues in this way. Furthermore, in order to test whether the comprehensive theory for policy change that is suggested by combining the theories holds true, it needs to be tested on other cases within social housing and also in other fields. The researcher is aware that with only two cases tested the results are difficult to generalize. Especially international comparisons could provide new insights here because the research was conducted in a country that is known for its consensus based networks, as stated previously. This could affect the advocacy coalitions and the negotiated agreements that were made. Also, due to time constraints the researcher was not able to do a full media analysis to extensively analyse the way the media portrayed a certain policy over a period of time. Other authors, such as Scholten (2011) have dedicated whole articles to the sole purpose of such analyses. An addition of such research could provide more insights on the cases and the way the media sees social housing and housing associations in the Netherlands in general. Furthermore, it was not possible to measure the public opinion through public opinion polls because such polls were not available online on Dutch social housing or housing in general. The only data that can be found online are statistics on the amount of people in social housing, their income, rent etc. No account exists of the opinions of these people. Future, quantitative research is needed find out what the opinion of Dutch people is on social housing and the changed policies. Finally, the researcher is aware that because the research was conducted retrospectively some things are missed or not properly remembered by interviewees. It would be interesting to see what research that is done in time with the policy change would produce.

7.2.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research are not only of a theoretical nature, but also of a practical one. The results can be used by actors who want to pursue policy change in their policy area. For this it is important that the strategy that they follow to achieve this change is in line with the proposed comprehensive theory from this research. The variables from this theory might seem like common sense, however as we have observed, policy change still does not succeed even if you have a strategy that is seemingly good, as we saw with Wonen 4.0. These policy recommendations are not very concrete because they are dependent on the content of the policy that one would propose. Nevertheless they are factors of importance for people pursuing policy change. First off the proposed policy needs to be sound. Its effects should help solve the problem that you envision and the policy itself should not only be workable in practice, it also needs to be perceived by political actors as such.

In Wonen 4.0 this was an important factor of why the policy change did not happen as the plan would ensure much higher rents and expected the government to compensate these with housing benefits, which the government was not very keen on doing. It is therefore important to also check with political parties what they think of your proposal as they are the ones that have to vote to agree to it and they have to deem the plan to be better than the other policy options that it is competing with. The policy also needs to be in line with the overarching budgetary goal of the government. If the government needs to save a lot of money, a plan that will only increase the costs is not very likely to make it.

Furthermore, external and internal events are very important in creating urgency for your proposed policy change. If the public and consequently politicians do not feel that there is a need for change, the policy will not be adopted. In order to do this also compelling policy images will have to be presented and the media needs to be engaged as an alternative venue so that a positive feedback process will be created. An example of this is making the problem that the policy solves concrete so that personal stories of people affected by the current bad policy can be presented to increase support. Scientific venues can also be helpful, but as long as this scientific knowledge is not cited by other actors and does not come from a credible source, its effect will be minimal. Also, negotiated agreement can be a solution if parts of the policy proposal are exchangeable for measures favoured by initial opponents. Especially in countries such as the Netherlands where coalition forming is the norm, it is easier to form a collaboration between actors who usually do not work together as support for the policy will be easier to get when it has a broad backing. Moreover, using venues such as the European Union whose law is superior over national laws can be very useful if you want change to happen. The key in this is linking the policy to an issue that these institutions have a competency in and in which they are likely to agree with you. For example, for the European Union these would be issues that disturb the internal market or prevent a level playing field.

Finally, windows of opportunity need to be used. Governmental elections or budgetary negotiations can be good moments to initiate the change proposal. However, sometimes these moments can be difficult to predict beforehand as governments can fall very suddenly.

Therefore, be aware that change, not only of governments, but any kind of change, can happen much sooner than anyone can predict or can take much longer when you were sure it was going to happen. As this research already pointed out, change is depended on a large number of factors, but hopefully this thesis has shone some light on the black box that is policy change.

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