

# A FLOOD OF PROTESTS

An exploration of municipal crisis management actions



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## **Foreword**

Writing this thesis has been a difficult process for me personally. As I already started this year while still recovering from an accident in May 2016, I had to balance medical procedures, physiotherapy and finishing my courses. This took a heavy toll on me personally as it was very exhausting. The reason why it was still possible to write a thesis without postponement to December 2017 was the support I received from the people surrounding me. First of all my parents who took me in after the accident and sacrificed a lot of their time and energy to make sure I could recover from the accident without permanent damage. Second I would like to thank my girlfriend and sisters for babysitting me when I needed the help and providing advice on my academic struggles. Third I would like to thank the lecturers and supervisors from Leiden University as they helped me immensely with both my academic development as well as my personal development throughout the year. Specifically I want to mention my supervisor Sanneke Kuipers as she had the patience to answer all the questions I had and provide feedback on numerous occasions—I would not have been able to write a thesis without that feedback. Fourth I want to thank my doctors and physiotherapist as they helped me achieve a full recovery—something that seemed impossible in May 2016—as well as be sparring partners for my many doubts. Fifth I want to thank my friends and co-students for the fun they brought to this intense year of studies. Without the occasional—terrible—joke and drink this year would have been a very long one. Finally I want to thank everyone from the municipalities who helped me to collect the information I needed to conduct the research. Specifically I want to thank Kees Hendriks for clearing his agenda to conduct an interview with me, when I found out that there was no evaluative report for Bernheze.

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## **Introduction**

### ***Problem Outline***

In the past couple of years mayors in the Netherlands have been confronted with the rise of a new type of incident. In the fourth quarter of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 municipalities are shaken up by protests against the settlement of refugee shelters in their municipalities. Because of the increasing news coverage surrounding the flood of refugees coming to Europe, citizens feel insecure and act on this feeling. This mostly transnational aspect of security becomes a local problem in the Netherlands as the central government asks mayors to establish refugee shelters in their municipalities. Some mayors and municipal councils draft proposals to establish refugee shelters without first consulting the municipality's inhabitants. This sparked protests in several municipalities around the country, however the decisions made prior to the incidents differ between the municipalities.

Therefore this study will focus on the municipalities of Bernheze, Geldermalsen and Steenbergen—three relatively similar municipalities with relatively similar outcomes—and try to determine which strategical decisions they have in common that had a possible impact on the degree of escalation. In all three of these cases, project groups are established to deal with the request by the central government to provide shelter for groups of refugees. These project groups—consisting of the mayor, several members of the Executive Board, communication advisors and public officials—are responsible for drafting the proposals and guiding the proposals through the decision making process. Although the intentions of the project groups are good—they wanted to help people in need—these good intentions are not perceived that way by the population. As the population feels that their concerns are ignored by the local government they engage in large scale protests. These unforeseen protests force the project groups to respond to the rapidly escalating events, which turned into local crises.

Because the escalation of the proposals can be perceived as local crises it would be interesting to evaluate the process leading up to these crises and their aftermaths. The research by Boin, Kuipers, and Overdijk (2013) provides ten different factors that can be used to objectively evaluate crisis management and is therefore ideal to use as a starting point for the research. The research by Boin et al. (2013) however does not provide an in-depth conceptualization and operationalization of the ten factors. Therefore this research uses other articles and books to provide the conceptualization, several sub-concepts of the factors and indicators to build the ten factors for evaluation into a practical evaluative framework.

### ***Research Question***

“Which type of strategic decisions by project groups in relatively similar municipalities have an impact on the degree of escalation of protests against refugee shelters?”

### ***Sub-question***

“In what way did crisis management actions taken by the project groups of Steenbergen, Geldermalsen and Bernheze contribute to the escalation of their proposals and how can these actions be objectively evaluated?”

### ***Academic and societal relevance***

Academically it is very interesting to conduct research on this subject as there is a need for a good evaluative framework with clearly defined concepts, factors and indicators. By enhancing the framework by Boin et al. (2013) a start can be made to establish such an evaluative framework. Furthermore as there have been several similar incidents throughout the Netherlands concerning refugee sheltering of which several did not escalate into local crises, it is interesting to look into what has plausibly led to these differences.

From a societal relevance perspective it is interesting if it could be made plausible that similar incidents can develop differently because of the actions of strategic leaders. The findings from the research can then be utilized to create a set of learning goals for local leaders on how to act during these incidents. This is particularly interesting as local leaders in general have less experience with crisis management and have a smaller budget for crisis simulations. This research can be used to argue which parts of the framework influence the (de-)escalation process and should therefore require more attention in training exercises. By knowing what to focus on during a training exercise, the training can be made more efficient. Finally this series of incidents is predicted to not be a single event by the UNHCR as they believe climate change is bound to lead to further displacement of people (UNHCR, 2016). This was also stressed by Groenlinks and PvdD during their political campaign for the parliamentary elections. Both Jesse Klaver and Marianne Thieme stated during the final debate of the elections that they expect a new stream of refugees to travel to Europe from the Horn of Africa. Elements from the findings of this research could possibly help with the response to this new wave of refugees as the research could provide possible best practices in drafting this type of proposals. Furthermore the findings from the research could show failures in the crisis response which can then be prevented in the future.

To be able to study the phenomenon this thesis shortly discusses the framework provided by Boin et al. (2013) and argues for the merits of using the dimensions from this framework in the

creation of an evaluative framework. The—for these cases—relevant concepts from the research are turned into factors for measuring good crisis management. These factors are enhanced and further specified using additional scientific articles and books. . Following the theory chapter is the methods chapter that consists of an explanation of the research design, argumentation for the case selection and an extensive operationalization. In this operationalization the factors derived from the theory are specified into a set of indicators that forms the core of the evaluation. Afterwards the cases are presented, described and analyzed according to the operationalization. Finally conclusions are drawn on the analysis of the three cases and recommendations for managing future similar crises are listed.

## **Theory**

The backbone of the theory of this research is the crisis evaluation framework as presented by Boin et al. (2013) in their article “Leadership in times of crisis: a framework for assessment”. This framework provides ten different aspects that together aim to provide an objective framework for assessing leadership performance in times of crisis. This framework is needed as evaluating crisis management is equally challenging as the crisis management itself. Due to the nature of what a crisis is—“a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitates making vital decisions (Boin, et al., 2005, p.2).”—it is impossible to write a protocol covering all crises. Similarly it is impossible to create an evaluation framework to evaluate all crises. For this reason the article by Boin et al. (2013) is rather general in its recommendations. As this research tries to provide an evaluative framework specifically designed for crises involving local decision making not all aspects of Boin et al. (2013) fit in. Therefore this thesis uses five out of these ten aspects to form the factors for good crisis management. The five dimensions used—*early recognition, critical decision making, meaning making, communication and rendering accountability*—are conceptualized in this chapter, the reason to include these five and exclude the other five dimensions are listed later on in this chapter. As already stated above, the framework by Boin et al. (2013) provides a solid but shallow idea of how crisis management should be assessed. To make it more applicable to the cases at hand, other scientific articles and books are used to provide further conceptualization.

## ***Conceptualization***

### *Adequate strategic crisis management*

The starting point for this theory chapter is the framework as presented by Boin et al. (2013). In this framework a set of ten different dimensions are coined that together aim to provide an objective framework for assessing leadership performance in times of crisis. However this framework only touches the top layer of these dimensions and does not give an in-depth conceptualization and operationalization. To make this framework into a theory that is applicable to the three cases it first has to be tailored to the situation as not all dimensions are relevant for this research.

Therefore the decision is made to select a group of five out of the ten possible dimensions to form the foundation of this research. The dimensions selected are the following: (1) *early recognition*, (2) *critical decision making*, (3) *meaning making*, (4) *communication* and (5)



*rendering accountability*. The reason to select these five is that they follow a logical pattern throughout the crisis.

Early recognition of a possible crisis is necessary to take precautions and allow for actual crisis management actions to de-escalate the situation.

Critical decision making is a logical follow-up to early recognition as these are the decisions made based on the information that is available on the crisis. The decisions made—or not made—by the crisis management team have the possibility to either further escalate or de-escalate the evolving crisis.

Meaning making is an important factor in explaining the decisions made to the population, without the right explanation it is possible for the decisions to be wrongfully framed. This could have the effect of further escalating the crisis.

The factor of communication build partially on meaning making and decision making. If crisis managers only act without explaining their actions and communicating with the press and population it is still possible for the crisis to further escalate. A solid communication strategy can therefore be helpful in de-escalating the crisis.

Finally the aspect of accountability has two different roles in crisis management. Rendering accountability is a mechanism that can be used to once again return to everyday life after an event escalated into a crisis. The second role of rendering accountability is the possibility for blame games. During crises there might be possibilities to shift blame or take other actions of political opportunism. When other political actors use the crisis to shift blame onto the crisis management team this can once again lead to further escalation, absence of these blame games can have a de-escalating effect.

In the paragraphs below each of these five dimensions is first explained on the basis of the article by Boin et al. (2013) and then more in-depth conceptualized with the use of different scientific articles and theories. The paragraphs conclude with a short summary of the concept, how these concepts will be used as factors in the research and the expectations of (de-)escalating effects of the factors.

The five dimensions that are not included in this research are: *sense making; orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination; coupling and decoupling; learning; and enhancing resilience*. The dimension of sense making is not included as it is very difficult to assess high quality sense making without being directly involved in the organization during the process.

Orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination is excluded from this research as a dimension as this research focusses on a single organization—the project groups of the municipalities—for each case and disregards the aspect of multi-level governance. This means that the relevance of this dimension is fairly limited as both vertical and horizontal coordination are not within the scope of this research.

Coupling and decoupling—separating critical systems to avoid a domino effect where one system failure causes linked systems to also fail—is excluded from the list of dimensions on the basis of these crises not being of a technological nature. As the protests are more focused on the perception of a threat and less on the actual disturbance of critical systems the research would not benefit from including this dimension.

The dimension of learning is excluded from the research as it would not allow for an objective evaluation. The three crises did not occur simultaneously which allowed the crisis teams in Geldermalsen and Bernheze to learn from the mistakes in Steenbergen. This would therefore not measure a crisis team's capability to learn and adapt during a crisis, but their ability to learn from the crisis in another municipality—with the exception of the crisis team in Steenbergen.

Enhancing resilience is excluded as this research has no intention to focus on the actions of the strategic leaders after the crisis was resolved, although this research could be used to enhance the resilience of municipalities against future protests.

### ***Early recognition***

The article by Boin et al. (2013) opens with the statement that in hindsight the media often claims that the crisis could have been foreseen. However before the incident occurs there is a limited availability of information. Boin et al. (2013) make a distinction between two different factors that can influence the early recognition of a crisis. The first factor—mostly present on the operational level—is the ability of the crisis manager to recognize patterns and deviations based on previous experience with similar incidents. To explain this factor a comparison can be made to the onset of an illness. Someone who has a serious case of the flu can use this experience to identify the onset of another case based on the memory of certain deviating health factors that occurred during the incubation phase of the previous instance. This gives the crisis manager the possibility to prepare for the expected event and therefore influence the possible impact of the incident.

The second factor of early recognition that Boin et al. (2013) state is of an organizational nature. This factor focuses on the presence of a culture of collective awareness of impending threats.

Both the operational and the organizational factor attach value to the crisis manager's willingness to act on weak signals and therefore also on the possibility of false alarms (Boin et al., 2013).

This way of perceiving is closely related to the work by Turner (1976) on the organizational and inter-organizational development of disasters and more specifically on what he defines as the incubation period. In his article Turner (1976) focuses on three major disasters which at first sight seem vastly different from the cases of this research. However it seems that there are many similarities on the possible foresight of both types of incidents. Turner (1976) claims that the unnoticed events that eventually lead to the incidents can be divided in two categories, they are either unknown or not fully understood by the local leaders. Whether or not incidents are included in either of these categories is determined by the presence of seven distinctive features during the incubation phase (Turner, 1976). However as the article focuses on crises that have a different origin not all seven of these features are relevant for this research. The features that provide merit in this research are: (1) rigidities of belief and perception, (2) decoy phenomena, (3) disregard of complaints from outsiders and (4) the minimizing of emergent danger.

Rigidities of belief and perception is quite self-explanatory, when an organization holds a set of certain beliefs and perceptions this will eventually become part of the culture of the organization (Turner, 1976). By relying only on the perception of the crisis management team a collective perception of problems and risks is created based on the team's beliefs. By not being open to different opinions and perceptions from outside the group the organization is blind to the risks that fall outside of this collective perception (Turner, 1976). An example of this related to the cases would be that the crisis management team beliefs that involving the population early on in the decision making leads to chaos and unrest. The group does not check this belief with the population or experts on the subject and are therefore blind to the escalating effect a possible leak of the information can have.

Decoy phenomena are defined as situations where an organization is faced with multiple hazards at once of which one draws the most attention (Turner, 1976). The focus of the organization on avoiding the "main" hazard could therefore lead them to ignore or even unconsciously strengthen one of the less prominent hazards (Turner, 1976). These less prominent hazards could then in turn grow out to be a more threatening hazard than the previously determined "main" hazard and surprise the organization (Turner, 1976). An example of this could be that the project group is so focused on making sure that their proposal is realistic and supported by the COA that they ignore the opinion of the population. Having a not entirely

realistic and finished proposal would be bad for the process, but ignoring the concerns of the population can lead to the termination of the proposal in any capacity. Through focusing on the COA's support for the proposal, the exclusion of citizens becomes worse, making the main problem escalate while focusing on a minor problem.

The disregard of complaints from outsiders could also be an important feature for these cases. When organizations or leaders—possibly wrongly—assume that they are experts on the subject they are more likely to dismiss complaints or concerns from people outside of the organization (Turner, 1976). This feature impedes the possible early recognition of an incident when organizations ignore valid complaints due to a feeling of superiority (Turner, 1976). An example of this would be to ignore the early signals of citizens that they feel ignored by their political leaders as political leaders do not share the feeling of their constituents. By ignoring this problem in an early stage it grows out to be a serious problem that can no longer be ignored.

Finally the minimizing of emergent danger concerns the organizational failure to see or appreciate the possible degree of impact of a certain hazard. Even if there is no blindness due to rigidities of beliefs it is still possible for organizations to be surprised by the impact of a hazard (Turner, 1976). When the effect of a possible hazard is underestimated previous to the actual onset of the hazard it might not matter that precautions were taken as they are too little and too late to deal with the hazard (Turner, 1976). A comparison can be drawn to the risk of a flood, when a storm is predicted on a weather forecast precautions are taken by the government to make sure that the dykes are sufficiently high to deal with the storm. However when the forecast wrongfully assumes the intensity of the storm to be lower than it actually is, the dykes prove to be useless and the country will be flooded regardless of the measures taken. Therefore the assumption is made that precautions are only useful if they are of the same magnitude as the actual hazard.

To conclude this paragraph, this research assumes that early recognition of municipal crises has several similarities with the conditions as presented by Turner (1976). The factors that are assumed to be relevant for this research are: (1) rigidities of belief and perception, (2) decoy phenomena, (3) disregard of complaints from outsiders and (4) the minimizing of emergent danger. The expectations of this research are that further escalation is possible if the project groups show that they fail to challenge their own beliefs, focus on the wrong sides of the crisis, ignore the concerns of citizens and miscalculate the possible impact of the events.

### ***Making critical decisions***

When defining the concept of critical decision making Boin et al. (2013) focus their attention more on the process of decision making within the crisis management teams and less on the actual decision. This makes sense as in most cases the crisis did not escalate because of a single decision, but because of a flawed process of decision making at the core of the organization. This research will use the same approach as it will also focus on the process of decision making as the foundation for good crisis management. To create a measurable framework this research will use several findings from the book by Boin, Hart, Stern, and Sundelius (2005). In their book on the politics of crisis management Boin et al. (2005) divide critical decision making into many smaller parts. This research will use two main clusters of factors from the research by Boin et al. (2005). These two clusters of factors are group dynamics and decision making. The cluster of group dynamics consists of two groups of factors—positive and negative group dynamics. The cluster of decision making is also split up in two groups—non-decision making and improvisation from protocol. The paragraph below will explain what both clusters—and the factors that are part of these clusters—encompass and how they fit into the theoretical model of this research.

#### *Group dynamics*

The first cluster of factors that will be used to analyze the decision making process of the cases is group dynamics. The importance of group dynamics in the decision making of crisis management teams is fairly straightforward. Most decisions are made as a group and are made on a consensus basis or complete agreement and therefore are subject to the effects of group dynamics (Boin et al., 2005). This is not inherently good or bad, but it does have an influence on the way decisions are made (Boin et al., 2005). There are two types of group dynamics, the ones that have a positive effect and the ones that have a negative effect on the decision making process. This research uses factors from both of these effects to investigate the effects of group dynamics.

The negative group dynamics originate from one of the two extreme forms of group behavior—conformity and conflict—so it is important that crisis management teams avoid either of these two dynamics (Boin et al., 2005). A group with a conflicting dynamic can become paralyzed in its decision making as the group will never reach a consensus (Boin et al., 2005). On the other side of the scale an extremely high level of conformity leads to members of the team abstaining from presenting dissenting views—as they see this as obstructing the decision-making process

(Boin et al., 2005). As both conformity and conflict are rather abstract concepts this research uses a set of factors provided by Boin et al. (2005) to clarify these concepts.

For conformity these factors are the presence of “new group syndrome” and “bunker syndrome”. “New group syndrome” is a situation that develops when group members in a new group are uncertain about their roles and status—and therefore fear the possibility of being made a scapegoat (Boin et al., 2005). This leads them to avoid expressing opinions that are different from the leader’s or other powerful person’s opinion. This avoidance of conflict leaves the group vulnerable to collective ignorance and self-censorship (Boin et al., 2005). Bunker syndrome is a situation that develops when a group stops discussing decisions with people outside of the group due to increasing criticism and pressure on the group—referred to by Boin et al. (2005) as “creating a sanctuary”. The main reason for the creation of a sanctuary is the shared pressure and responsibility among the members (Boin et al., 2005). As a result the group might seem like the only place to escape this outside pressure (Boin et al., 2005). Inside the group this can lead to a—possibly inaccurate—feeling of optimism, which causes less optimistic members to stop expressing doubts and concerns regarding the crisis response (Boin et al., 2005).

Similar to the research by Boin et al. (2005), this thesis uses the politicization of a group as a factor to clarify the concept of conflicting group dynamics. Every group has a set of pre-existing tensions and discussions between some of the members. Boin et al. (2005) argue that the high-stakes circumstances of a crisis can work as a catalyst for these tensions and discussions and therefore lead to the politicization of the group. This politicization allows crisis response teams to turn into political arenas where information is not freely shared, but used as a tool to gain the upper hand in the political struggle (Boin et al., 2005). Instead of having a group of members who freely discuss the options and share information, the team will turn into a struggle between the members to avoid blame and discredit the other members (Boin et al., 2005). If not kept in check this could lead the crisis response team to fall apart as each member will be concerned with his own position (Boin et al., 2005). A second negative result of this process could be that less-favored or institutionally “smaller” group members do not get the possibility to share their opinion—even though theirs might be the most relevant (Boin et al., 2005).

The positive group dynamics originate from two different factors—previous experience with managing a similar crisis and pre-existing interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships. If members of a group are familiar with the management of a similar crisis they can use this experience to improve the decision making process of the group (Boin et al., 2005). A pre-

existing relationship only leads to an improvement of the decision making process in a group if the relationship is based on mutual trust—or at least the lack of rivalry (Boin et al., 2005). This relationship makes it easier to reach a consensus and provides the possibility to create a general acceptance of the role division in the group (Boin et al., 2005).

### *Decision making*

While the factors listed above are concerning the group dynamics of critical decision-making, they are not directly concerning the decision-making during a crisis. Regarding the decision-making process this research follows the assumption by Boin et al. (2005) that it would be wrong to assume that leaders are always in control of the crisis response. A significant part of crisis response is not based on active decision-making, but influenced by non-decision making and improvisation as there is a very small time window to act (Boin et al., 2005). This research therefore uses both non-decision making and improvisation as the two factors that allow analysis on critical decision making.

In this research the factor of non-decision making is divided—similar to the categorization by Boin et al. (2005)—into four different types of non-decisions: (1) decisions that are not taken; (2) decisions not to decide; (3) decisions not to act; and (4) strategic evasion of choice opportunities. The first type involves all situations where crisis leaders are not aware of the possibility to make a decision and therefore do not act. The second type involves situations where strategic leaders recognize that they have the possibility to not interfere and leave the decisions to the operational leaders, this can result in either total chaos or the creation of a non-politicized environment in which operational leaders can excel (Boin et al., 2005). The third type involves situations where there is a possibility to act, but leaders deliberately decide that not acting is better than acting. The fourth type involves all situations where leaders try to disassociate themselves from the decision-making process. This can be because they doubt their—or their organizations—capabilities to deal with the crisis or because they feel the chances of a successful crisis response are slim and they do not want to be associated with and held accountable for the crisis (Boin et al., 2005).

The factor of improvisation during the critical decision-making process can have a positive impact on the crisis response, but only under specific circumstances. Boin et al. (2005) argue that it is important to adhere to at least some aspects of the standard operating procedure, while ignoring aspects of the procedure that could hinder critical decision making. It is impossible to provide a general indication of the ideal amount of improvisation, however it is clear that both of the extremities are unwanted (Boin et al., 2005).

To conclude this paragraph the concept of critical decision making has many different factors that could influence the escalation of a crisis. This research uses vulnerabilities and benefits of group dynamics, non-decision making and improvisation as the factors that allow for the analysis of critical decision making. The expectations are that the presence of a vulnerability dynamic provides chances of further escalation as it causes friction in the project group. The presence of a benefitting dynamic is expected to provide opportunities to de-escalate as the decision making process becomes smoother. The presence of any of the types of non-decision making is expected to allow further escalation of the crisis as they present failed opportunities to de-escalate the crisis. The expectation for improvisation is that it could have a de-escalating effect on the crisis if there is a basic procedure that is adhered to. Either complete improvisation or complete adherence to a pre-built procedure comes with the expectation that it will not allow for de-escalation of the crisis.

### ***Meaning making***

The concept of meaning making as described by Boin et al. (2013) focuses on the way leaders explain the incident to society. The most prominent way to do this, according to the article by Boin et al. (2013), is by presenting an authentic and convincing story which connects the events to the desired beliefs of the leaders. This presentation of a “frame” is only of use if it is the dominant frame surrounding the crisis. If a situation occurs where political opponents of the crisis leader impose the dominant view it could happen that public opinion rapidly changes to become less supportive of the crisis management efforts (Boin et al., 2013). The risk of this happening shows the importance of framing a crisis in a favorable manner and therefore also the importance of meaning making. The concept of meaning making is represented in this research by four factors of meaning making three of which come from the research by Boin et al. (2005) and one from the research by Rosenthal, Boin, and Bos (2001). The four factors that this research uses to indicate successful meaning making are (1) the creation of a clear and common definition of the problem, (2) the creation of a clear and common definition of the actions needed to resolve the problem, (3) the creation of a shared enemy and (4) de-politicization of the crisis. These four factors are clarified and explained below.

The first factor for successful meaning making is the creation of a clear and common definition of the problem. Boin et al. (2005) state that a crisis can only be resolved if there is a clear and common conception of what belongs within the boundaries of the crisis and what does not. This is the result of the evolution of the definition of a crisis, as previously a crisis was believed to be a short term disruption of daily life (Boin et al., 2005). The new definition of a crisis states



that the crisis is no longer clearly demarcated by territory or time and therefore needs to be demarcated by strategic leaders (Boin et al., 2005). This is where meaning making comes in. In practice the new type of crisis can drag on for years on end, this is highly unwanted in the political arena—where strategic leaders act frequently. It is therefore important to define what should be accepted as the “resolution” of the crisis—the second factor of meaning making. Only at this point it is possible to make up the balance and decide on the success or failure of the crisis response (Boin et al., 2005). Framing is an important factor in determining success or failure as the one with the dominant frame decides on the demarcation of the crisis (Boin et al., 2005).

The third factor of successful meaning making is the creation of a shared enemy. This is done by strategic leaders to alleviate the pressure on policy makers to defend their policies—who would oppose or question policies that reduce the “imminent threat to society” (Boin et al., 2005)? Through correct framing it is possible for strategic leaders to create the image of people opposing or questioning the decisions as the enemy (Boin et al., 2005). Both Boin et al. (2005) and Rosenthal et al. (2001) state that this type of meaning making is a form of symbolic crisis management to limit the possible negative effects of the crisis on the position of crisis leaders and power-holders and with it maintain the legitimacy of public institutions.

The fourth factor of successful meaning making is concerned with the de-politicization of the crisis. It is favorable for the power-holders in society to de-politicize the crisis through focusing on either the judicial or the scientific aspects of the event (Boin et al., 2005). If the crisis is framed as a technical problem that is the same regardless of political decisions the attention can be focused on the resolution of the crisis (Boin et al., 2005). By dragging the event outside of the political domain there will be less focus on the critical decisions of leaders and therefore create more leeway for their decisions (Boin et al., 2005).

To conclude this paragraph, the concept of meaning making is conceptualized in this research using four different factors of meaning making.. The first factor is the presence of a clear and commonly accepted definition of the problem at hand—the crisis. The second factor is based on the presence of a commonly accepted definition of what needs to be done to resolve the crisis. The third factor focuses on the creation of a shared enemy during the crisis. The fourth and final factor of meaning making in this research is the whether or not the crisis response team was successful in de-politicizing the crisis. The expectation is that the presence of any of these factors in the cases can have a de-escalating effect on the crisis. If all factors are absent

in a case it is expected that the project groups fail to create a dominant frame of the crisis and therefore allow for further escalation.

### ***Communication***

According to Boin et al. (2013) communication with citizens and between organizations is of vital importance during a crisis. It can either turn out to be the main source of problems—also in critical decision-making and meaning making—or be a main factor for successful crisis resolution (Boin et al., 2013). There is a significant difference between the regular type of communication and crisis communication, this can be explained through the much faster and unpredictable pace of the crisis and the difficulties in acquiring verified information (Boin et al., 2013). Boin et al. (2013) coin several factors that are fundamental to correct crisis communication. This ranges from explaining the crisis, its consequences and the way the crisis is dealt with to offering actionable advice to citizens (Boin et al., 2013).

Even though these factors are indeed relevant for successful crisis communication they are not complete. This research therefore uses the factors presented by Coombs and Holladay (2011) as they offer a more complete set of factors for successful crisis communication. They argue that there are ten factors that together—when followed correctly—lead to successful crisis communication, these ten factors are: (1) process approaches and policy development; (2) pre-event planning; (3) partnerships with the public; (4) listening to the public's concerns and understand the audience; (5) honesty, candor, and openness; (6) collaborate and coordinate with credible sources; (7) meet the needs of the media and remain accessible; (8) communicate with compassion, concern, and empathy; (9) accept uncertainty and ambiguity; (10) messages of self-efficacy (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

The process approach refers to the fact that communication should consist of more than the communication of decisions, there should be a strategy and a logical order of providing information to the public (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

This can be linked to the second factor—pre-event planning—as the strategy to be used in times of a crisis should be determined beforehand in a protocol. This protocol has to be updated frequently to make sure it is still relevant, this process of updating can also take place during the crisis period (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

The third factor is becoming more and more relevant as social media continue to develop, by using the public as a source of information it is possible to acquire information close to the crisis more rapidly than through other means (Miller & Goidel, 2009). This way of information

collection is already being used by the mainstream media and is one of the reasons why media tend to be faster in providing new information (Miller & Goidel, 2009). The public can also be used as a medium to distribute information directly and avoid possible misconceptions (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

The fourth and fifth factor both focus on the establishment of a feeling of trust and understanding between the crisis response team and the public. Through the process of listening to the public and trying to understand their problems it is possible to create a feeling of understanding (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). This could calm the public opinion as they will feel like their concerns are being dealt with. However this trust can be easily lost if the crisis response team does not adhere to the best practice of honesty, candor and openness (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). This does not mean that the crisis response team should freely share all available information with the public—this is not realistic as it could cause problems with the operational crisis management (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). It is however important that the information that is released is the truth and has been verified before release to prevent having to retract the statement later on.

The factor regarding working with credible sources is not only important for communication purposes, but also for the meaning making process. By ensuring that both the crisis team and the media report on the same story the possibility of a negative frame arising decreases significantly (Boin et al., 2005). For communication purposes it is important that the same story is told by different credible organizations to avoid confusion among the population (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). This is once again closely linked to another factor, in this case meeting the needs of the media. By providing the media with the information they need to report on the crisis it becomes more likely that the crisis team is able to control the story that is reported (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). This turns the media from a possible liability into a strategic resource to be used for meaning making (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

By not only providing the public with messages surrounding the technical management of the crisis—but also showing compassion, concern and empathy—it is possible to increase the legitimacy of the team and the political leaders (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

The ninth factor—accepting uncertainty—looks like common sense, however during a crisis the pressure from the public in a search for answers can force policy makers to provide information that is not factual (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). This need for over reassurance can backfire in a later stage if the information turns out to be false (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

Finally providing the public with messages of self-efficacy can help with the return of a sense of control for citizens (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). By creating advice for citizens to act on a possibility is created for them to enter an atmosphere of reassurance and decrease the perceived threat of the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2011).

To conclude this paragraph, the concept of successful crisis communication in this research is based on ten factors provided by Coombs and Holladay (2011) for successful crisis communication. The expectation is that if more of these factors are present in a case there will be less escalation of the crisis. It is expected that the presence of all ten factors in a case leads to successful crisis communication. For every factor that is absent the communication is expected to become less successful.

### ***Rendering accountability***

The concept of accountability is a very broad one, over the years many different authors have used many different conceptualizations in their research (Bovens, 2010). In the article by Boin et al. (2013) it is not clearly defined which type of accountability is used. It is however made clear that the focus is on three aspects of accountability: political, legal and social accountability. To make sure that the framework can account for the different types of accountability this research will focus on accountability as a mechanism and as a possibility for blame games.

The definition used in this research when referring to accountability as a mechanism is the one as defined by Bovens in his article on the two concepts of accountability from 2010: “Accountability is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences (Bovens, 2010 p.951).” This definition of accountability is also referred to as passive accountability or ex post facto accountability (Bovens, 2010). Bovens (2010) creates three different factors—political, legal and social—to render accountability that are similar to the three factors by Boin et al. (2013). Bovens (2010) also adds the factor of rendering accountability as a way of public catharsis.

This division into three different factors are based on the question to which forum the account is rendered. Crisis management teams are usually composed of multiple political actors and therefore the team will be held politically accountable for the crisis management (Boin et al., 2005). Next to the political accountability the crisis team also has to act according to the laws set for government actions. The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality create a

foundation for the team to be accountable to the Dutch law and with it to Dutch court, this is called the legal accountability (Bovens, 2010). Finally as crisis management teams partially act in the public view there is a high risk of damage to the legitimacy of the members and the organizations they represent (Boin et al., 2013). For this aspect they are accountable to the public and this is referred to in this research as social accountability (Bovens, 2010).

This leads to the question why accountability as a mechanism is important. Bovens defines this importance as: “Accountability as a mechanism is in fact instrumental in achieving accountable governance. Accountability arrangements assure that public officials or public organizations remain on the virtuous path. Therefore, ultimately, accountability as a mechanism is also important because it contributes to the legitimacy of public governance (Bovens, 2010 p.954).” In addition he also states that the processes of public account can also have a strong ritual function in the case of crises (Bovens, 2010). This is presented in the research as an additional factor of rendering accountability called “public catharsis”. Public catharsis helps with putting a tragic period to an end (Bovens, 2010)—this is also utilized in the process of meaning making to demarcate a crisis. The process creates the possibility for victims to voice their grievances and ask for perpetrators to be held accountable, after this process the situation can return to a state of normalcy (Bovens, 2010).

While accountability as a mechanism is used to return to a state of normalcy, blame games have a different purpose. This political game revolves around the possibility to control and assign responsibility to political actors (Olson, 2000). This possibility to assign responsibility comes with the possibility to also assign blame. Political actors tend to focus more on avoiding blame than claiming credit because citizens do not respond symmetrically to gains and losses (Olson, 2000). To ensure that they avoid blame political actors use excuses to deflect blame of themselves or direct blame at political opponents (Olson, 2000). In this research blame games are represented by three factors: Blaming the event, blaming everyone and outside attribution of blame. Blaming the event uses the excuse that the event was impossible to anticipate on because it was too big, too unexpected or too intense and therefore the political actor should not be blamed (Olson, 2000). Blaming everyone does not absolve the political actors of the blame but aims to involve several other actors that also receive some of the blame. This way the initiating actor does not have to take the full responsibility (Olson, 2000). The factor of outside attribution of blame assumes that other actors can try to shift their part of the blame onto the project group as a way to avoid blame themselves (Boin et al., 2005).

To conclude this paragraph, the concept of accountability in this research is based on two sets of factors from the article by Bovens (2010) and the article by Olson (2000). The first group of factors consists of the presence of an accountability mechanism to evaluate the crisis management team—this mechanism should be present on the political, legal or social level. In addition to this mechanism the research uses the factor of using a public evaluation as a possibility for a “public catharsis”. The second group of factors focuses on the blame aspect of accountability. It consists of the factors of blaming the event, blaming everyone and outside attribution of blame. The expectation is that the accountability mechanism factors lead to a rapid de-escalation of the crisis if they are present in a case. For the blame game factors the expectation is that they also allow for de-escalation if they are used by the project groups. An exception to this expectation is the factor of outside attribution of blame. It is expected that the project group will experience a further escalation of the crisis if other political actors use the opportunity to absolve themselves of blame.

## **Methods**

### ***Research Design***

This study will use a co-variational multiple case study with three different cases. As mentioned above the cases will consist of similar protests in—relatively—similar municipalities in the Netherlands, however the difference between these cases are the decisions that led to the escalation of the incidents.

Ragin (1987) states that it is legitimate to select cases on their outcome—or as he calls it a case-oriented research strategy—if the goal of the research is to provide limited historical generalization for future cases. This method of case selection allows this research to both provide a causal analysis and a historical interpretation (Ragin, 1987). By selecting cases on a case-oriented basis it becomes possible for this research to analyze the cases through methods like Mill's indirect method of difference (Ragin, 1987). By creating a table with the cases and the overarching factors cross tabulated, it is possible to argue whether one—or more—of the five factors partially impacts the escalation of the crisis, however this method of analysis cannot provide conclusive results on the causation (Ragin, 1987). For this research it is not necessary to provide a conclusive answer to the question of causation, an indication that one factor has an influence on the escalation process is enough to answer the research question.

The choice to structure this research as a case study is based on the argument by Blatter and Haverland (2012)—who state that case studies are the best research design when trying to measure the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable in cases from the past. In addition, Yin (2003) states that a case study is an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. However a possible pitfall of this type of research is that the conclusions drawn from the research might not prove to be generalizable. This research aims to avoid this pitfall by ensuring that the cases in this research are selected to be representative of this type of incident (Yin, 2003).

### ***Case selection***

The incidents that will be used in this research are three protests against the establishment of refugee shelters in their respective municipalities. All three of the cases are relatively similar in their situation before the crisis and the outcomes of the crisis. The difference between the three cases lies in the crisis management activities of the municipalities. The choice is made to select three relatively small municipalities—with populations ranging from 23.000 to 29.000 inhabitants—in the south of the Netherlands. The first reason for the choice of size and location

is based on the impact of the incident as a municipality with a smaller population will feel the impact of 500 refugees to a larger degree than a municipality with a larger population. A second reason is the small cultural differences between these municipalities—the demographics of all three municipalities is quite similar. The dates of the protests range from October 21, 2015 to January 18, 2016. The fact that the protests did not happen simultaneously but in a consecutive order could have an impact on the validity of the research. During the analysis this will be taken into account. The protests chosen are: the October 2015 protest in Steenberg; the December 2015 protest in Geldermalsen; and the January 2016 protest in Heesch—in the municipality of Bernheze.

### **Research Methods**

The research methods that will be used to get the data needed for a proper analysis will consist of document analysis of evaluative reports and transcripts of council debates. The gaps that are left in the data collection are filled by expert interviews with a member of the crisis response team and relevant newspaper articles.

### **Operationalization**

The three cases are individually scored on all the factors of the framework. For each factor a set of underlying factors was established in the theory chapter of this thesis. The table below shows the evaluative questions that served as the original definition of the factors, the factors that combined form a complete definition of the evaluative questions and the indicators used to measure these factors. Below the table a short explanation is listed how the scores for each factor are created and used to create a final score for each of the three cases.

<b>Concepts/Evaluative questions</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Early recognition</b> Boin et al. (2013): Did leaders create conditions that facilitate early recognition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rigidities of belief and perception</li> <li>- presence of decoy phenomena</li> <li>- disregard of complaints from outsiders</li> <li>- minimizing of emergent danger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project group hold on to decisions they took even though the merits of the decision were questioned?</li> <li>- Did the project group focus on the main threat to the stability or were they focused at preventing relatively minor threats?</li> <li>- Did the project group listen to complaints by people outside of the group before presenting the proposal?</li> <li>- Did the project group take proportional precautions?</li> </ul>
<b>Critical decision making</b> Boin et al. (2013): Did leaders carefully deliberate which decisions they should make, and did they make	<b>Group dynamics conformity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- presence of new group syndrome</li> </ul>	<b>Group dynamics conformity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project group hold on to a course of decision making in spite of a member</li> </ul>



<p>the decision after some form of due process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- presence of bunker syndrome</li> </ul> <p><i>Conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Crisis team as political arena</li> </ul> <p><i>Positive group dynamics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared history of crisis management</li> <li>- Pre-existing relations between crisis managers</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision making</b> <i>Non-decision making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decisions not taken</li> <li>- Decisions not to decide</li> <li>- Decisions not to act</li> <li>- Strategic evasion of choice opportunities</li> </ul> <p><i>Improvisation from protocol</i></p>	<p>having information that indicated incorrectness of underlying assumptions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project team avoid discussing their decisions with people outside the project group?</li> </ul> <p><i>Conflict</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project group make decisions to avoid political backlash instead of focusing on the possible merits of the decision?</li> </ul> <p><i>Positive group dynamics</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project group have a shared experience with a similar incident?</li> <li>- Did members of the project group work together before this crisis?</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision making</b> <i>Non-decision making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project group miss an opportunity to make a de-escalating decision?</li> <li>- Did the project group delegate strategic decisions to operational actors in the crisis management?</li> <li>- Did the project group communicate that they would not to act when an opportunity to act presented itself?</li> <li>- Did the project group refrain from making decisions by disassociating themselves from the problem?</li> </ul> <p><i>Improvisation from protocol</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If present, did the project group follow the preset protocol completely?</li> <li>- If present, did the project group ignore the preset protocol completely?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meaning making</b> Boin et al. (2013): Did crisis leaders offer a clear interpretation of the crisis and explain how they intended to lead their community out of it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear and commonly accepted definition of problem</li> <li>- Clear and commonly accepted definition of needed actions</li> <li>- Presence of a shared enemy</li> <li>- De-politicization of the crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did the project group establish a definition of the problem and did the population accept this definition?</li> <li>- Did the project group establish a plan to resolve the crisis and was this plan supported by the population?</li> <li>- Did the project group frame the proposal to create a shared enemy?</li> <li>- Did the project group take out the political aspect of the</li> </ul>

		crisis by framing the proposal as a rational problem?
<p><b>Communication</b> Boin et al. (2013): Did crisis leaders actively cooperate with their communications professionals to ensure they had timely and correct information for dissemination to the public?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- process approaches and policy development</li> <li>- pre-event planning</li> <li>- partnerships with the public</li> <li>- listening to the public's concerns and understanding the audience</li> <li>- honesty, candor, and openness</li> <li>- collaboration and coordination with credible sources</li> <li>- meeting the needs of the media and remaining accessible</li> <li>- communicating with compassion, concern, and empathy</li> <li>- accepting uncertainty and ambiguity</li> <li>- providing messages of self-efficacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Was the communication strategy of the project group based on a strategic order of information provision?</li> <li>- Did the project group create a communication strategy protocol before or at the onset of the crisis?</li> <li>- Did the project group use communications by the public as a source of information?</li> <li>- Did the project group provide opportunities to listen to the public's concerns and did they communicate that they are actively trying to resolve the concerns?</li> <li>- Did the project group release only true and verified information to the public?</li> <li>- Did the project group actively collaborate and coordinate their decisions with the media to create a credible story?</li> <li>- Did the project group control the information flow to the press?</li> <li>- Did the project group send out messages of empathy alongside the technical updates?</li> <li>- Was the project group honest in their communication about uncertain topics?</li> <li>- Did the project group provide messages of self-efficacy to citizens to allow a return to normalcy?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rendering accountability</b> Boin et al. (2013): Did leaders make an effort to present a transparent and constructive account of their (in) actions before and during the crisis?</p>	<p><b>Accountability as a mechanism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence of accountability mechanism</li> <li>- Public catharsis to end the crisis</li> </ul> <p><b>Blame games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Blaming the event</li> <li>- Blaming everyone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is there an accountability mechanism present to evaluate the actions of the project group? (Either political, legal or social)</li> <li>- Does the project group use a public evaluation as a means to end the crisis?</li> <li>- Did the project group claim that the incident escalated because of reasons they could not influence?</li> <li>- Did the project group communicate to the public that the proposal was drafted</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outside attribution of blame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>with the agreement of the entire council?</li> <li>- Did political parties of the opposition state in the media that they do not approve of the proposal?</li> </ul>
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Table 1: Table of operationalization

### *Early recognition*

The indicators are scored as a dichotomy. If an indicator is present for a case it will score a point, if it is not present it will not. The indicator for rigidities of beliefs is scored differently because it is expected to have a negative effect on the de-escalation if this indicator is present. Therefore a point is scored if this indicator is not present in a case. For each case this will lead to a summarized score with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 4. In the summarizing table the score is translated into a conclusion on the factor. This score can be low (0-1), medium (2-3) or high (4).

### *Critical decision-making*

All of the indicators of the factor group dynamics are scored as a dichotomy. When combining the scores for the indicators for the summarizing table a distinction will be made between vulnerabilities and positive factors—indicators of vulnerabilities will score a point if the answer is no.

The indicators of non-decision making will also be scored as a dichotomy, however this group of indicators is scored slightly different. Because the presence of these indicators has a negative impact on overall decision making, an indicator scores a point for not fulfilling the requirements. The degree of improvisation will be scored slightly different than other indicators, as Boin et al. (2005) assumes that both the strict following of protocol and total improvisation should be avoided in critical decision-making. Therefore this factor only scores a point when both indicators are not present in a case.

When combining all these scores for the summarizing table all scores will be added to create a score between 0 and 10. In the table this will be represented as follows: a score ranging from 0 to 3 will be seen as low quality decision making, a score ranging from 4 to 8 will be seen as medium quality decision making and any score higher than 8 will be seen as a high quality decision making.

### *Meaning making*

All four indicators will be scored as a dichotomy. For the score in the summarizing table these four indicators will be added up. The score that is created will range from 0 to 4, in the table this will be represented as follows: a score of either 0 or 1 counts as low quality meaning making, a score of either 2 or 3 counts as medium quality meaning making and a score of 4 counts as high quality meaning making.

### *Communication*

Similar to the other indicators all ten indicators of communication will be scored as a dichotomy. For the score in the summarizing table the points of the ten indicators will be added depending on the presence of the indicator. The score that is created as a result will range from 0 to 10, in the table this will be represented as follows: a score ranging from 0 to 3 will be seen as low quality communication, a score ranging from 4 to 7 will be seen as medium quality communication and any score higher than 7 will be seen as a high quality communication.

### *Rendering accountability*

The indicators for both groups of factors of rendering accountability will be scored as dichotomies similar to other indicators. The indicator of outside attribution of blame will be scored different than the other indicators as the presence of this indicator is expected to correspond with further escalation of the crisis. Therefore this indicator scores a point if it is not found in the case. For the summarizing table this leads to ranging from 0 to 5. A score between 0 and 2 translates in the table to a low quality accountability structure, a score between 3 and 4 into a medium quality accountability structure and a score of 5 into a high quality accountability structure.

### *Summarizing table*

The summarizing table will be filled with the scores as presented in the paragraphs above. This table will then be used to draw conclusions on a possible causation between one of the factors and the escalation of the protest. An example of what this table will look like in the analysis is shown below.

Cases/final scores of the factors	Early recognition	Critical decision-making	Meaning making	Communication	Rendering accountability
Steenbergen					
Geldermalsen					
Bernheze					

Table 2: Example of what the summarizing table will look like.

## **Case description**

Each of the case descriptions below will be built up in the same way. A short summary will be presented here, however the analysis will be based on the detailed timeline from the appendix. The sources used to create these summaries are named in the corresponding appendices

### ***Case 1: The municipality of Steenbergen***

On September 24, 2015 the Mayor and Executive Board of the municipality of Steenbergen plan a closed meeting with the municipal council to prepare a response to the request of the COA to provide shelter for refugees. The council does not want to state their opinion without a clear proposal by the Board, therefore the Board drafts a memo on September 28. In this memo the Board argues for a location that provides shelter for a maximum of 600 refugees—the minimum amount as requested by the COA—for a maximum time of 5 years. The Board has already determined a suitable location that would come at no additional expenses to the municipality. In this memo the Board also states that a shelter of this size could have a serious impact on the community and therefore it is not an easy decision to make.

The next day on September 29 the Board sends a second memo to the council detailing the decision making process that will be used to judge the proposal and present it to the public. The foundation for this process is that every discussion will be a public one from the start, as this is a situation that could possibly impact the community it is important to involve the population. However that same day the earlier memo accidentally gets published in the public archive by a civil servant and a newspaper reporter picks it up. This surprises the communications department. The journalist publishes an article which claimed with certainty that the municipality is going to establish a refugee shelter with a capacity of 600 for several years.

As a response to the attention by both the media and the population the council decides to publish the details regarding the proposal and announce that they will organize an orientation meeting where the citizens are invited to share their opinions. As this response is not foreseen in the communications plan drafted on the 29<sup>th</sup> it had to be improvised. This leads to confusion among the population as it seems like the proposal is already finished—it is a very detailed proposal, as requested by the council—and the announcement for the orientation meeting seems symbolical.

The announcement by the municipality and the newspaper article combined leads to unrest among the population and with it a division among the population between opponents and proponents of the proposal. This unrest builds up until October 15 when it escalates into a

physical confrontation that is broken up by the police. As a result of the built up unrest the Board decides to draft an extensive communication strategy to prevent further—possibly escalating—incidents as a result of necessary improvisation. The project group sends out a questionnaire to the population to assess the level of support for the proposal. This is one of the preparations for the orientation meeting.

On October 12 the council invites all citizens of the municipality to a public orientation meeting regarding the proposal on October 21.

On the day of the orientation meeting the Mayor decides after a meeting with the head of the police and the public prosecutor to issue an emergency warrant for the municipality. The warrant is designed to provide additional mandates for the police to keep the order as there are rumors that a group of hooligans will attempt to disturb the council meeting. The news of the emergency warrant gets picked up incorrectly by some media and quoted as the declaration of a State of Emergency.

Approximately 700 citizens attend the council meeting. The majority of the citizens that get to speak oppose the plans. The proponents of the proposal feel threatened by opponents who constantly interrupt and loudly disapprove of deviant opinions. The meeting does not focus on any possible alternatives to the proposal, but is merely a possibility for opponents to vent their anger. The Mayor states afterward that he believes some of the opponents to be from outside of the municipality.

As a response to the negative attention for the proposal and the results from the questionnaire of October 15, the Board decides to write a new proposal on November 3. The new proposal is the complete opposite of the first proposal in multiple ways. The new proposal does not name a single preferred option, but presents seven different possibilities and the decisions that go along with it. The possibilities presented in the new proposal range from not establishing a shelter to establishing a large shelter, this way every option is kept available. On November 9 the Board organizes an opinion-forming meeting to allow the population to name their preferred option out of the seven. On November 25 there is a second meeting in the council to decide on the preferred option. During this meeting the VVD party proposes an amendment to the proposal of November 3, this amendment specifies the new proposal as follows: If the COA asks the municipality to provide shelter the municipality is willing to provide shelter for a maximum of 100 refugees—only families with a residence permit, no single refugees—for a

period of six months on multiple locations throughout the municipality. The council accepts this amendment as well as the November 3 proposal.

### ***Case 2: The municipality of Geldermalsen***

On Wednesday September 30, 2015 the municipality of Geldermalsen receives a request from the Ministry of Safety and Justice to provide emergency shelter for refugees as there is a shortage of shelter in the country. The Mayor and Executive Board of the municipality decide that it is their responsibility to provide the shelter although they do not know how much support they can gather in the municipal council.

On December 1, the Mayor and Executive Board unanimously decide to draft a proposal to shelter 1500 refugees, the Board decides to only inform the presidium of this decision in the early stages and will later on inform the municipal council. The Board decides to postpone informing the public until they have decided what they exactly plan to do, only then the public will be consulted to shape the how part of the plan. The Board creates a timeline where they present the first complete plan before Christmas and aim to complete the plans by the first of February.

On December 3 the Board informs the presidium—the party leaders in the council—of their plans and announces that they will discuss the proposal with the municipal council on December 8 during a closed meeting. All of this is done on a confidential basis to prevent any information leaks to the public.

On December 8 the Mayor and Executive Board organize a closed session during which they inform the municipal council of the plans to establish a refugee shelter for 1500 refugees. The mayor informs the council of the Board's wish not to inform the public until later in the decision making process. The first circle of citizens—the citizens living or working in the area directly surrounding the location of the shelter—will be informed on December 11 and on December 16 there will be an open council meeting to inform the whole municipality. Several parties in the council voice their concerns regarding the proposal, but they agree to follow the plan as set out by the Board.

On December 10 the project group—that is created on December 8—sends a letter to the first circle of citizens to invite them for a meeting to discuss a development in their neighborhood and to allow them to ask questions and raise concerns. The day after on December 11 the press is invited to a press conference that evening, later that day the Mayor receives the news that the



political party leader of the VVD in the council has leaked the proposal to the press. This leads to an increase of media attention for the press conference of that evening. In the evening of December 11 the first circle of citizens is informed of the municipality's plans to establish a refugee shelter for 1500 refugees. Following this meeting the Mayor addresses the press and informs them of the proposal. The press conference is combined with the delivery of an information letter to all inhabitants of the municipality and the presentation of a website with additional information.

The executive board decides on December 12 to actively start monitoring social media until at least the council meeting on December 16 due to the increased—online and offline—discussion between the different sides of the debate.

On December 14, the mayor meets with the head of the police and the public prosecutor's office to discuss the possible scenarios and the need for police assistance during the council meeting.

During the council meeting on December 15, several political parties in the opposition present multiple requests and votes to either move, postpone or cancel the public council meeting of the following day. All of the requests are denied due to logistical or security concerns. Outside of the Town Hall a small group of citizens is present to show that they oppose the proposal.

On December 16 the citizens that signed up to speak at the council meeting enter the Town Hall to be present for the council meeting. As not all citizens are allowed into the Town Hall there is a large crowd in front of the Town Hall that follows the meeting on the official live stream. Shortly after the start of the council meeting the crowd grows louder and turns grim, within half an hour the situation outside the Town Hall escalates and the council meeting is ended early. The police requires the use of riot squads to restore the peace outside of the Town Hall to ensure the safety of the people inside. After midnight the people inside the Town Hall can leave as it is deemed safe enough outside.

On December 23 the municipal council decides unanimously to withdraw the proposal to establish a refugee shelter in the municipality and states during a press conference that they take responsibility for the escalation and the debate among the municipality's citizens.

### ***Case 3: The municipality of Bernheze***

On October 1, 2015 the municipal council of Bernheze requests the Mayor and Executive Board to draft a proposal for the establishment of a refugee shelter. The Board starts drafting a proposal in cooperation with the COA to ensure that the proposal meets the requirements as set by the COA. On Monday January 11 the Board presents the plans to establish a refugee shelter with a

maximum capacity of 500 for a maximum time of ten years to the presidium. The presidium and Board both agree to propose the plans to the council and start the procedure of decision making. Until this point the plans are confidential, but they will be published after the involved citizens and the council are informed on the next day. From this point on the procedure will follow the communication strategy created by the Board.

On January 12, the council is informed of the proposal and the procedure officially starts. After the council meeting the invited citizens are informed of the proposal and have the possibility to ask questions and express their concerns. During the meeting the proposal is published and sent to the media.

A day later on January 13 protest groups emerge and opponents leave two dead pigs at the location of the possible shelter. The national media also picks up on the unrest and this increases the attention for the proposal. The peaceful protest group starts a petition against the proposal, while online the protests turn grim. As a response the Board decides to hire a firm to monitor social media for them to be able to preemptively act on possible problems. The municipality also gets assistance in the communications department with one additional advisor from the Safety region and two advisors from the municipality of Tilburg as preparation on possible escalation. The following days multiple incidents against politicians and proponents of the plans occur. As a response the Board decides to meet with the head of the police and the public prosecutor to increase security.

On January 18 the protest group organizes a silent protest during a committee meeting at the Town Hall, the protest group announces this protest to the municipality. This protest gains a lot of traction and draws the attention of large groups of opponents with other intentions. The news that a group of hooligans will be present that evening urges the Mayor to prepare an emergency warrant and ask additional assistance from the police.

The protest starts as planned but soon the crowd grows in size and the peaceful aspect of the protest fades. The group that planned the protest asks the crowd to return home and keep the protest peaceful, but the group returns home after their request is ignored. The remaining protesters start a riot and the Mayor issues the pre-planned emergency warrant. The riot squad of the police clears the square of most of the protesters, with the exception of a small group of rioters who continue throwing fireworks and other objects at the police. By 9.30 PM the square is cleared and the council members return home.

The Board decides to not cancel the information meetings of January 19 and 21, but continue as planned with a lot of security. From the meetings and the protests that follow after them the council and Board draw the conclusion that the proposal has too little support. They decide on February 4 to cancel the proposal and look for other options to provide support for refugees. After a set of different proposals the municipality finally settles with building additional social housing—for families of refugees—as part of the social housing strategy of the municipality.

### ***Differences and similarities between the three cases***

The three cases show several similarities that could explain why all three escalated in the same way. All three cases started with a request by the central government to provide assistance in the sheltering of refugees. The proposals that were drafted as a response to this request were built on expert advice from both within the municipalities and outside—the COA, neighboring municipalities and the provincial government. However all three municipalities did not involve citizens directly into the early decisions. They drafted the proposals based on their assumption that the population of their municipalities shared their willingness to help with sheltering refugees. Although all three municipalities stated that they valued citizen participation in the decision making process, this did not correspond to the perceptions of the population. The media attention for the proposals was high in all three cases as well. This media attention did mostly focus on the controversial aspects of the situation and on the differences of opinion between proponents and opponents. Finally the municipalities in all three cases retracted their original proposals after the protests that occurred because of the proposals.

The main differences in the cases were the actions that were taken during the escalation of the events into an actual crisis, as well as the decisions made after the retraction of the original proposals.

The high number of similarities between the cases, specifically the onset of the crisis and the actual crisis, make the cases suitable to evaluate with the framework that this research creates. As the main differences between the cases seem to occur in the crisis management actions, the expectation is that the framework will show some factors to be present in all three cases. The presence of these factors could prove to be of importance in explaining a causation between crisis management actions by strategic leaders and the escalation of the events.

## **Analysis**

In this chapter the three cases are first analyzed to determine if the five main factors of good strategic crisis management—according to Boin et al. (2013)—are present. The analysis is conducted on the basis of the three timelines—Appendix A, B and C—and newspaper articles on the cases and will refer to them when creating the scores. This analysis is presented in a large table where all the indicators for the factors and their corresponding scores per case are listed. After the analyses of each factor a summarizing table is presented—containing only the final scores of each factor—that is the basis for the final analysis. The final analysis will compare the three cases using a method of comparing on similarities and differences. By looking at differences in the final scores for each factor between the cases it can be argued whether a factor has an influence on the escalation of the crisis. When a factor has a different score for the three cases it seems that it does not matter if the quality of crisis management is high or low, the crisis escalated anyway. If a factor has a low score in all three cases it can be seen as an indication that this factor had an impact on the escalation of the crisis. To a lesser extent the same can be said on factors that have average scores in all three cases. However if all three cases have a high score on a factor this can be seen as an indication that this concept either influenced the escalation process or only has a de-escalating effect outside the scope of the research. The results from this final analysis will be the core to answer to the main research question of this thesis.

Table 3: The individual scores of the three cases.

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Steenbergen</b>	<b>Geldermalsen</b>	<b>Bernheze</b>
Early recognition	Did the project group hold on to decisions they took even though the merits of the decision were questioned?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group focus on the main threat to the stability or were they focused at preventing relatively minor threats?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group listen to complaints by people outside of the group before presenting the proposal?	no	no	yes
	Did the project group take proportional precautions?	no	no	yes
	<b>Total amount of points for early recognition</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Final score: low/medium/high</b>	<b>low</b>	<b>low</b>	<b>high</b>
Critical decision making	Did the project group hold on to a course of decision making in spite of a member having information that indicated incorrectness of underlying assumptions?	no	no	no
	Did the project team avoid discussing their decisions with people outside the project group?	no	yes	no
	Did the project group make decisions to avoid political backlash instead of the focusing on the possible merits of the decision?	yes	no	no
	Did the project group have a shared experience with a similar incident?	no	no	no
	Did members of the project group work together before this crisis?	yes	yes	yes
	<b>Sub-total for group dynamics</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	Did the project group miss an opportunity to make a de-escalating decision?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group delegate strategic decisions to operational actors in the crisis management?	no	no	no
	Did the project group communicate that they would not to act when an opportunity to act presented itself?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group refrain from making decisions by disassociating themselves from the problem?	no	yes	no
	<b>Sub-total for non-decision making</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
	If present, did the project group follow the preset protocol completely?	no	yes	no
	If present, did the project group ignore the preset protocol completely?	no	no	no
	<b>Total amount of points for critical decision making</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>
	<b>Final score: low/medium/high</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>medium</b>
Meaning making	Did the project group establish a definition of the problem and did the population accept this definition?	no	no	no
	Did the project group establish a plan to resolve the crisis and was this plan supported by the population?	no	no	no
	Did the project group frame the proposal to create a shared enemy?	no	no	no
	Did the project group take out the political aspect of the crisis by framing the proposal as a rational problem?	no	no	no
	<b>Total amount of points for meaning making</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

	<b>Final score: low/medium/high</b>	<b>low</b>	<b>low</b>	<b>low</b>
Communication	Was the communication strategy of the project group based on a strategic order of information provision?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group create a communication strategy protocol before or at the onset of the crisis?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group use communications by the public as a source of information?	no	no	no
	Did the project group provide opportunities to listen to the public's concerns and did they communicate that they are actively trying to resolve the concerns?	yes	no	yes
	Did the project group release only true and verified information to the public?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group actively collaborate and coordinate their decisions with the media to create a credible story?	no	no	no
	Did the project group control the information flow to the press?	no	no	no
	Did the project group send out messages of empathy alongside the technical updates?	no	no	yes
	Was the project group honest in their communication about uncertain topics?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group provide messages of self-efficacy to citizens to allow a return to normalcy?	yes	yes	yes
	<b>Total amount of points for communication</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Final score: low/medium/high</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>medium</b>	
Rendering accountability	Are the three accountability mechanisms to evaluate the actions of the project group present? (political, legal and social)	yes	yes	yes
	Does the project group use a public evaluation as a means to end the crisis?	yes	yes	yes
	Did the project group claim that the incident escalated because of reasons they could not influence?	no	yes	yes
	Did the project group communicate to the public that the proposal was drafted with the agreement of the entire council?	yes	no	yes
	Did political parties of the opposition state in the media that they do not approve of the proposal?	no	yes	no
	<b>Total amount of points for rendering accountability</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Final score: low/medium/high</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>medium</b>	<b>high</b>	

## ***Early recognition of the possible escalation***

### *Rigidities of beliefs and perceptions*

The municipality of Steenbergen performs poorly on the factor of early recognition of the possible escalation. The first sign that the project group is willing to question their decisions on the proposal is three weeks after the first presentation of the proposal. This sign of willingness to accept other opinions takes the shape of the citizen research of October 16. This is already very late in the procedure and was not a built-in evaluation moment in to the process of drafting the proposal. The project group states that they want to involve the population early on in the process, however they fail to involve the population in the earliest stage—the decision to draft a proposal in the first place.

The municipality of Geldermalsen show a similar process, after the proposal is created on December 1 it takes 20 days before the project group is willing to publicly question their decision in drafting the proposal. This willingness to question the project group's decisions is shared with the municipal council on December 21 during a closed meeting. In this meeting the project team discusses further actions on the subject of refugee sheltering and acknowledges to the council that they may have overestimated the support for the proposal.

The municipality of Bernheze is the only one out of the three cases that expresses a willingness to question their decisions early on in the process. During the first presentation of the proposal to the council on January 12 the mayor states that the project group believes the proposal to be the best fit, but that they are open for changes to the proposal if they are well argued. This shows that the group is willing to question their beliefs and perceptions and are open to other options.

### *Presence of decoy phenomena*

All three municipalities show that they are aware of the risk of escalation as a result of citizen protests. The project group in Steenbergen show their awareness on September 28 when they present their proposal to the council. They acknowledge during this meeting that they see the possible risks of escalation, but believe that the merits of the proposal outweigh these risks.

In Geldermalsen this awareness presents itself in the actions of members of the project group. On November 30 the mayor already organizes a phone call with her colleague in Beuningen to discuss the possible risks. This awareness represents itself again when one of the Aldermen and the advisor to the mayor on public safety attend a meeting on the risks of refugee sheltering on December 2. The entire project group meets with a representative of the COA on December 3

to discuss the sensitive aspects of establishing a shelter and gathering the support of the population.

In Bernheze the focus on the risk of escalation is already present on the earliest occasion. When the Mayor and Executive Board meet with the COA in the first week of October to discuss the possibilities for a proposal, they already stress the risk of escalation if an unfinished proposal is shared with the population. Another example of this awareness is the way the project team of Bernheze sets up their communication strategy. This strategy is focused on slowly preparing the population for their proposal, this way they expected the proposal to not feel forced upon the population.

#### *Disregard of complaints from outsiders*

The municipality of Steenbergen did not show willingness to listen to the early protests of citizens against the proposal. A great example of this is the Nieuwsuur article written a year after the protest to recap the events. In this article Sander Booij—an inhabitant of Steenbergen—states that the project group was not willing to listen to regular complaints against the possible refugee shelter (Bakker, 2016). Therefore the citizens were forced to escalate the situation out of fear of being ignored (Bakker, 2016). The first moment where the municipality showed willingness to listen was on the council meeting of October 21.

The municipality of Geldermalsen shows a similar trend as Steenbergen when it comes to listening to complaints by outsiders. While the project group is more than willing to ask for advice from experts and colleagues, they seem to have no intention in actually involving the population in the actual process of drafting the proposal. The public meeting of December 16 was the first—and also last—possibility for citizens to express their opinions as the project group had a very strict time schedule. In the article by Vorn (2016) for Nieuwsuur the effect of this tight schedule on the inhabitants of Geldermalsen is presented by Mark Verzijl. Verzijl states that the inhabitants were not involved at all in the plans as the municipality rushed through the decision making process in three days (Vorn, 2016). This caused concerns among inhabitants and led them to believe their opinion was not needed (Vorn, 2016).

The project team in Bernheze shows that they have learned from the events in Steenbergen and Geldermalsen by preparing three opportunities for citizens to share their concerns with the municipal council—January 19, 21 and 25. The project team also announces that there will be a separate meeting on February 4 where the council will make a decision, this shows that they plan to take the concerns seriously as there is still time for changes before the decision is made.



### *Minimizing of emergent danger*

When it comes to taking precautions against the possibility of escalation, the project group in Steenbergen shows little effort. Although they state early on in the process that they are aware of the risk of escalation, they do not act to decrease this risk. Just by stating that they fear a lack of support, this lack of support does not disappear. By only planning one meeting for citizens to share their concerns, the project group allowed all of the fear, anger and concern to express itself in a single burst. If they were actually aware of the possible risk of escalation it would have made more sense to have two different meetings, one for opponents and one for proponents of the proposal. This way both groups had a chance to freely express their opinion.

The project group in Geldermalsen shows complete disrespect for the level of escalation that could happen. By only allowing citizens to voice their concerns only on the same day as the deciding vote on the proposal shows that they are not aware of the size of the opposition. The evening of December 16 was the first and last chance for opponents to make themselves heard and the fear that they would be ignored by the council encouraged a strong response (Vorn, 2016). If the municipality had taken the opposition serious, they would have not rushed through the decision making process in such a short period of time.

Similar to the previous factor it is easy to see that the project group in Bernheze learned from previous cases. The project group prepared for a lot of opposition both in their way of presenting the proposal to the council—open for changes—and in the way they asked for citizen feedback. By planning two information meetings and one opinion forming meeting, the project team provided the possibility for concerned citizens to make themselves heard. The fact that the protests escalated before these meetings, could not have been foreseen when drafting the proposal.

### ***Critical decision making***

#### *Presence of new group syndrome*

In the case of Steenbergen there is no sign that a member of the project group had information that showed the decisions to be incorrect. This can be seen from the fact that the individual project members did not receive outside information that questioned the decisions. The risk of suffering the negative effects of group syndrome only occur when a member of the project group decides not to share information that the decision making process is wrong. Therefore there is no risk of new group syndrome if none of the project members have reason to question the decisions. A possible moment where this syndrome could have presented itself was on October 21 when the mayor had a meeting with the head of the police and the public prosecutor.

However during the meeting there was no sign that any of the conversation partners withheld information.

Similar to the case of Steenbergen there are no visible signs of new group syndrome in the case of Geldermalsen. Several members of the project group had meetings with experts outside of the group—November 30, December 2 and 3—but during these meetings there were no doubts on the decision making. The information gathered in these meetings was shared within the project group during internal meetings on December 1 and 3.

The case of Bernheze does also not show signs of new group syndrome. The information that indicated that there was a possibility of escalation on January 18 was shared rapidly among the project group and allowed the group to adjust their plans on January 19. If the group suffered from new group syndrome there would have been a delay in the presentation of this information.

The argumentation for the absence of the vulnerability indicators is fairly straightforward. From the interview there are no signs of either new group syndrome—fear of expressing a different opinion in a new group—or bunker syndrome—the shutting down of communications with people outside of the project group. There are also no signs of political opportunism in the actions of the project group. The project group's actions and decisions seems to be based on the honest intention to provide shelter to the refugees in need of housing.

#### *Presence of bunker syndrome*

There are no signs of a bunker syndrome in the case of Steenbergen. If there were signs of this syndrome the project group would have stopped communicating with the population to avoid criticism. The opposite of this is what happened in Steenbergen. When the meeting of October 21 was disrupted by the loud opposition the project group had the chance to retract the proposal and avoid the discussion. The fact that the group proceeded to organize a second information meeting shows that the project group was not afraid of criticism from outside the group.

The project team of Geldermalsen however does show symptoms of bunker syndrome, although they frame it differently. After the situation in Geldermalsen escalated on December 16 the project group—with as its leader the mayor—had the possibility to discuss their intentions with either the population or the media. The fact that the response to the escalation was to completely stop communicating with the media—on December 19—and to prevent outsiders in the council meetings—on December 21—shows that the group does not intend to enter a discussion. This is a clear indication that the group suffered from bunker syndrome.

In the case of Bernheze there is once again no sign of bunker syndrome. On January 19—the day after the protest—the project team scheduled an information meeting in the original strategy. It would have been acceptable to postpone or cancel this meeting as a response to the earlier escalation. The fact that the project group decided not to cancel shows that they are not afraid to discuss their decisions with people outside of the project group.

#### *Crisis team as a political arena*

The project group in Steenbergen showed that they used their actions to employ some political opportunism. When citizen protests increased—with as peak the protest of October 21—the Board retracted every single decision they made and created a new proposal. This proposal left everything up for debate and therefore absolved the project group of the responsibility to decide. This ensured that there would be less political pressure on the Board as they were no longer responsible for the decision. The fact that the proposal did not actually propose anything, but merely listed possibilities is another sign of the project group avoiding the decision. The proposal could only become an actual proposal by the VVD—an opposition party—taking a risk and suggesting an amendment.

In the case of Geldermalsen there were no signs of the project group turning into a political arena and there are no real tell-tale signs of political opportunism in that sense either. The decisions by the project group were aimed to provide shelter for refugees as soon as possible. The fact that most political discussions were kept indoors by the project group shows that there is no reason to believe that the project group focused on the political effects of their proposal.

The same can be said for the project group in Bernheze. The actions of the group were aimed to help the central government and refugees without considering the possible political benefits or risks. By discussing the proposal with the party leaders of all the parties in the council, the project group shows that they preferred a strong support for the plans over claiming political credit for their decisions.

#### *Shared history of crisis management*

None of the three cases shows signs that the teams have experience in dealing with a crisis of this magnitude. In all of the three cases the project groups expressed that they were surprised by the timeframe in which the situation escalated as well as the intensity of the protests. The most striking example of the surprising magnitude of these protests for the municipalities come from the interview with Kees Hendriks in Heesch: “[The events of January 13 and 14] had such a gigantic impact, someone discovers it in the afternoon and it already shows up on the evening

news, especially on social media it escalates so fast. There is no anticipation possible, it just happens to you and you try to act to the best of your capabilities (Appendix D, lines 81-84).”

#### *Pre-existing relationships between crisis managers*

As the municipalities are relatively small, so are the organizations. Because there is a relatively small amount of employees for each department, the members of the project group already have pre-existing relationships with each other. In addition to this, the three main members of the project groups are the mayor, the responsible alderman and the advisor for public safety who work together on a daily basis. These pre-existing relationships made decision making in the project groups easier as the members were already acquainted. This was the case in all three of the municipalities.

#### *Non-decision making*

In all three of the cases there are instances where the project groups failed to recognize possibilities to de-escalate the situation. For Steenbergen this critical point was on September 29 when the project group chose which decision making procedure suited the proposal. The project group stated that they believed that the procedure required an open discussion with the population to create support. The procedure that best suited this idea was the regular procedure, however this meant that the population would only have one information meeting to present their concerns to the council. The missed opportunity here was that the project group could have added an additional meeting for citizens to express their opinion early on in the procedure. Because the meeting was scheduled late in the decision making process citizens assumed that they had no opportunity to change the proposal (Bakker, 2016).

The project group in Geldermalsen missed a relatively similar opportunity to act. The moment occurred when the Mayor and Executive Board decided that they would honor the request by the provincial government on November 24. At this point the Board decided to start the procedure to establish a refugee shelter, however the Board did not communicate this to the population. In the perception of the population the procedure started on December 11 when the mayor announced the proposal and it therefore looked like the municipality tried to force the decision (Vorn, 2016). If the project group had communicated their intentions to establish a shelter earlier on in the process, it would not have looked like a forced decision. This could prevent a lot of the outrage as most citizens were not opposed to the plans but to the speed of the procedure (Vorn, 2016).

In the case of Bernheze the project team missed an opportunity to act before drafting the proposal. In the interview Kees Hendriks states that the project team unanimously believed that

they had the responsibility to establish a refugee shelter. He bases this claim on the fact that the media coverage on the refugee crisis was in favor of helping refugees. If the mayor would have communicated to the population at that point in time that the project group had the intention to help, the response from the population would—most likely—match the group’s beliefs (Appendix D, lines 3-9). The main failure here was that the project group did not realize that public opinion could change faster than their proposal could.

None of the three project groups used the possibility to delegate strategic decisions to operational leaders. The operational leaders in these three crises were the civil servants of the communication department of the municipalities. The roles the civil servants took in the three cases was to advise and execute the decisions taken by the project groups. Although all three project teams asked the civil servants—and the externally hired advisors—for advice, they did not delegate decisions regarding the communication strategy to the communication department. This division between the strategic and the operational decisions is most visible in the case of Geldermalsen. The evaluation report shows that while the operational leader of the communication department was present during meetings, he did not make the decisions.

The project group in Steenbergem showed one clear example of a decision not to act in their reaction to the protest of October 21. The project group had the opportunity to retract the proposal entirely or to continue with the procedure to establish a shelter. However they stated clearly in the media that they would not decide on this, but would let the council decide.

In the case of Geldermalsen the decision not to act was when they communicated during the press conference of December 17 that they would not decide to retract the proposal. Even though it meant that the situation would not de-escalate yet, they decided to wait until the next council meeting before making a decision.

The project team in Bernheze showed the most pronounced decision not to act of the three cases. In the interview with Kees Hendriks, he states that even though it became clear that there was criticism to the size of the proposed refugee shelter the project team would not make changes (Appendix D, lines 133-144). As the normal procedure of decision making does not allow the Board to make adjustments, the project group trusted the council to make the adjustments. However as this was not a normal procedure with regards to the exposure by the media it would have sent a clear message if the Board showed they were willing to make adjustments.

The project group in Steenbergen shows no signs of disassociation from the problem as an attempt not to decide. Several newspaper articles show quotes from the mayor, but in none of the articles the mayor—as head of the project group—tries to disassociate himself from the problem (Holtrop, 2015; NOS, 2015a, 2015b).

In Geldermalsen there was one moment where the project group disassociated themselves from the problem to avoid a decision. When the proposal was being drafted the project group had to decide on the maximum number of refugees for the shelter, they had the possibility to decide on any number between 500 and 1500 refugees (Gemeente Geldermalsen, 2015). However the project group stated that they believed that the decision on the number of refugees should be made by the COA (Gemeente Geldermalsen, 2015). If compared to other cases this looks like the project group tries to avoid the decision, as in the other cases the COA only gives an indication. The project groups are the ones that have to decide on a final number based on the advice by COA.

For Bernheze there are once again no indicators that the project group disassociated themselves from the problem to avoid making a decision. The interview with Kees Hendriks shows that the project group felt and still feels responsible for the process of escalation and the decisions they made (Appendix D, lines 14-28).

#### *Improvisation from protocol*

From the quick scan by the Gemeente Steenbergen (2016) it becomes clear that there was a preset communication protocol in place to guide the project team in their decisions. When looking at the decisions that were taken, it is visible that the general idea of the protocol was followed by the project group. However there was also a moment of improvisation. When the mayor issued a possible emergency warrant on October 21 the communication department received several requests for interviews with the mayor. The protocol was to organize a press conference to address all the reporters in one meeting, however the project group stated that they wanted to prevent escalation. The project group believed that a press conference would make the possible emergency warrant seem as an extreme attempt to control the situation and thus cause further escalation (Gemeente Steenbergen, 2016). Therefore the project group improvised and decided to plan separate interviews with the mayor for all the reporters to create the idea that there was no crisis situation (Gemeente Steenbergen, 2016).

The project team in Geldermalsen also had a preset communication protocol when the proposal was created (Gemeente Geldermalsen, 2015). If this protocol is compared to the actions by the

project group there is no visible improvisation from the protocol. Therefore there was no improvisation from the protocol even though it could have benefitted the situation as stated in the final press conference (Gemeente Geldermalsen, 2015).

In the case of Bernheze there also was a clear communication protocol set up to guide the proposal through the decision making process (Appendix D, lines 37-57). With one exception the actions of the project group correspond with the communication protocol. The exception were the actions taken on the day of the protest—January 18. As this day was not planned for in the communication protocol—it had nothing to do with the proposal—there was no strategy set out to guide the decisions (Appendix D, lines 110-115). The project group had to improvise in their attempt to prepare for the possibility of escalation of a regular commission meeting based on situation reports by the police (Appendix D, lines 181-190).

### ***Meaning making***

When it came to the creation of a common definition of the problem in the case of Steenbergen it is interesting to see that there was a problem that the project group was not aware of. Part of the population believed that the main problem was not the question whether or not refugees should be welcomed in the municipality (Bakker, 2016). There was a group of citizens that felt that the municipality did not follow the correct procedure with the attempt to cut out the population (Bakker, 2016). This changed part of the debate steered away from the refugee question and towards the questioned legitimacy of the municipal government. This caused two different problems to be created of which one was not addressed by the municipality. In turn this meant that it was also impossible to establish a common definition on how to resolve the problem.

Quite similar to the case of Steenbergen there was also an underlying problem in Geldermalsen concerning the procedure of decision making. Citizens believed that the municipal government did not actually care about their opinions, but tried to complete the procedure with minimum citizen involvement (Vorn, 2016). There was a second alternative definition of the problem at hand presented by the right-populist side of the media. In this definition of the problem the main problem was that the municipality had debts that they wanted to pay off with the money they would receive from the COA for establishing the shelter (Nijman, 2015). The failure to impose a dominant frame on the problem definition is similar in the definition of the solution. The project team in Geldermalsen was not able to convince the population of the fact that their solution was the right one. This can be seen by the protest that occurred when the municipal council tried to inform the population of their proposed solution on December 16.

For the case of Bernheze the difference in the definition was more subtle than in the other cases. For the project group in Bernheze the main problem was of a technical nature—there was no doubt that a shelter should be established—they just needed to find a suitable place and plan (Appendix D, lines 242-244). The main problem for the population was that they felt that they were not involved in the decision to help—the council just assumed that the population shared their opinion (Appendix D, lines 3-4). This also led to a disparity in the perceived solution of the problem as the project group organized the public meetings to allow the population to share their opinions on how the plans should be worked out. The population was most focused on a question earlier in the thought process—do we actually want to help—and the public meetings did not provide the possibility to discuss this question.

As all three project groups failed to impose their frame of the problem as the dominating frame, they were not in the position to create the idea of a shared and common enemy. Because the right-wing media owned the dominant frame, they framed the project group as the enemy of the population. The most prominent example of this is the article by Nijman (2015). Similarly none of the project groups was able to turn the question of refugee sheltering into a technical discussion. Internally they had the perception that it was merely a technical problem concerning the size and location of the shelter, but this opinion was not shared outside of the project groups (Gemeente Geldermalsen, 2015; Gemeente Steenberg, 2016). Kees Hendriks stated that the project group believed everybody wanted to help and therefore it was just a technical problem (Appendix D, lines 3-4). The protests that occurred in all three cases showed that the population did not perceive it as a technical problem, but as a political and emotional problem.

### ***Communication***

The three cases score mixed on the factor of communication. All three project groups had a clear communication strategy that was translated into a communication protocol to guide their proposals—as already seen in the analysis of improvisation.

Furthermore the communication departments show no indication of releasing untrue information. None of the cases show moments where the project groups have to retract statements or information due to the statements being technically wrong—not in newspaper articles nor in the evaluations.

On the factor of listening to the public's concerns both Steenberg and Bernheze perform well. Both project groups in these cases planned several information meetings for citizens to express



their opinions and concerns and use these meetings as an invitation for their citizens to participate in the local politics. The outlier here is Geldermalsen, the project team there planned only a single public meeting where citizens could express their concerns. As this meeting was planned late in the decision making process it did not show that there was an actual intention to change the plans based on the citizen feedback (Vorn, 2016).

The weakest point of the communication of all three cases concerns the interactive part of communication. In all three cases the communication department did not actively try to involve the media and the public in a dialogue that benefitted both sides. By entering a dialogue with citizens, the citizens can be used as a part of the communication strategy. The argumentation for this is that citizens that had the opportunity to directly discuss the situation with the project team will share this with other citizens. This creates an alternate stream of information that does not directly come from the communication department and can strengthen the message. Similarly the press was not actively involved in the communication strategy of the project groups. As journalists are involved with framing and meaning making on a daily basis, they could be invited to discuss the information flow to the public. If the project group in Steenbergen invited the journalist that found the leaked memo to discuss this information with the group, they had a possibility to influence what was published the next day. By not doing this, the project group was surprised by the article and could not react appropriately.

In Geldermalsen a similar situation occurred after the protest of December 16. The mayor stopped all communication with the media and decided to no longer share information. This forced the media to get information from other sources to write articles. This led to the problem that the municipality was no longer in control of the information flow and had to move from a pro-active to reactive position. Opponents of the proposal could take the upper-hand and force the municipality to react.

In Bernheze the project group decided to keep their intentions confidential at a time where the media reacted positive to people helping refugees (Appendix D, lines 3-4). By the time the project group published their intentions the tide had already turned and general opinion was against helping refugees. Had the project group involved local media early on in the process, they could have presented their plans in a positive frame.

Similarly the three project groups were mainly technocratic in their messages to the public—the main focus was communicating the procedure. Although it is good that they were clear in the way they structured the procedure, there were no signs of empathy for and

acknowledgement of the concerns of citizens. When looking at the communication strategy of all three cases there is not a single planned mention of a message of empathy towards the public. After the three proposals have escalated, the mayors of the municipalities do send out a message of empathy. This is however too late to de-escalate the decision making process. The three project groups do provide messages of self-efficacy to the public as they urge citizens to be present at the information meetings. By focusing on the information meetings as the ideal way for citizens to express their concerns, these meetings change from simple information meetings to organized ways to show opposition to the plans.

### ***Rendering accountability***

The factors regarding the presence of formal mechanisms of accountability are similar in all three cases. This is to be expected as they are all bound by the same rules. The presence of these mechanisms means that all three cases had a release valve for all the pressure that was built up as a result of the proposals.

All three cases show some sign of a public catharsis—a process, most commonly a public meeting, where leaders share their regrets on their decisions during the crisis—after the protests in their municipalities. For Steenbergen this catharsis took the shape of a council meeting where the original proposal was retracted and a new one was presented on November 3. In Geldermalsen the public catharsis was the press conference on December 23 where the mayor announced that they would withdraw the proposal. The project group in Bernheze uses the council meeting—and press statement—of February 4 as a public catharsis.

Out of the three cases, only the project team in Steenbergen did not use the argumentation that the situation escalated due to reasons outside their control. The project group of Steenbergen state that they believe their decision to organize one big information meeting allowed the situation to escalate and therefore take the blame (Bakker, 2016). The project groups of Geldermalsen and Bernheze did state that the situation escalated because of reasons outside of their control. To quote the mayor of Geldermalsen: *“Dit soort dossiers zijn bijzonder ingewikkeld, we proberen voor een immens probleem een oplossing te vinden. Dat is heel erg lastig, zeker met deze spanningen. Soms vraag je je af of het probleem een tikje te groot en te ingewikkeld voor ons is. We hebben er goed naar gekeken en van geleerd. Het voorstel bestaat niet meer, we hebben het teruggetrokken (Algemeen Dagblad, 2015).”* In the interview in Bernheze a similar reasoning is utilized, Kees Hendriks states that because of the effects of social media situations like this can escalate faster than municipalities can respond to the developments (Appendix D, lines 81-84).

Both the project teams in Steenbergen and Bernheze communicated to the media and the public that their proposal was built on the agreement of the entire council. By communicating this they showed that it was not just the coalition that supported the proposal. In Steenbergen this message was delivered by the council on September 29, when the council stated that they supported the proposal under the condition that there would be an open procedure. In Bernheze there were two occasions where it is visible that there was a unanimous support for the idea of establishing a refugee shelter. The first occasion was on October 1 when the municipal council unanimously gave the Board the task to draft a proposal for a refugee shelter. The second occasion occurred when the Board ensured a broad coalition for the proposal by involving all the party leaders in the council in the first draft of the proposal. By discussing the proposal with the party leaders before presenting it to the full council the Board ensured the support for the proposal. Geldermalsen did not ensure the support of the full council before presenting the proposal. The Board presented the proposal to the council on December 8, but proceeded with the proposal even though several parties have serious concerns on the proposal.

The lack of council support in Geldermalsen shows up once again when looking at the media actions of the opposition. The leak of the original proposal by the political party leader of the VVD in the council—who strongly opposed the proposal—on December 11, can be seen as a sign of preventive blame shifting. A second sign of blame shifting by the VVD is visible on December 15, when the party preemptively calls for a motion of distrust in the council meeting. As the VVD has no support for this motion, it serves no other purpose than a message to the public and the coalition that the VVD does not support the proposal. A third sign of blame shifting in the case of is the press release by the Dorpsbelangen party on December 15. It is not normal procedure to request postponements of council meetings through the media, but Dorpsbelangen tries to anyway. A plausible reason for this action by Dorpsbelangen would be to try and avoid blame for the—expected—fallout of the proposal. The cases of Steenbergen and Bernheze do not have signs of blame shifting, this can partially be attributed to the fact that the entire council had publicly committed to the proposals. Because they already stated that they would support the proposal it became politically risky to change their opinion later. Changing their opinion once the proposals were criticized would seem dishonest.

### *Analysis of the three cases*

Cases/final scores of the factors	Early recognition	Critical decision-making	Meaning making	Communication	Rendering accountability
Steenbergen	Low(1)	Medium(6)	Low(0)	Medium(6)	Medium(4)
Geldermalsen	Low(1)	Medium(4)	Low(0)	Medium(5)	Medium(3)
Bernheze	High(3)	Medium(7)	Low(0)	Medium(7)	High(5)

Table 4: Summarizing table.

To start an analysis between the cases it is important to first state the similarities and the differences between the cases. As already mentioned in the case selection, the municipalities are all of relatively similar sizes and the proposals that led to the crises are all of relatively similar impact. The municipalities are also all located in the south of the Netherlands and in the periphery of the country.

The differences between the cases is visible in the table above. The overall scores of the cases are relatively similar for all but two factors—early recognition and rendering accountability. The fact that all three cases scored different on some factors and still had similar outcomes—large scale protests of citizens that led to the withdrawal of the original proposal—seems to indicate that early recognition and rendering accountability are not crucial factors in de-escalating a crisis. However this does not mean that they are not relevant factors in crisis management.

All three cases score average on the level of critical decision making, this corresponds with the perception of the crises in the individual cases. None of the crisis management teams were flawless in their decision making, but at the same time none of the teams showed signs of rapid escalation as a result of their decisions. The analysis that can be constructed out of this is that this factor could possibly have some effect on the escalation of the crisis, but to a lesser amount.

All three cases score low on the factor of meaning making, this corresponds with the facts from the timeline. It seems that the project teams in all three of the cases had major difficulties in controlling the framing of the problem and the effects of (social) media. Therefore it can be argued that the factor of meaning making can partially explain for the escalation process of the proposals.

The final score for the factor of communication shows that all three of the cases score average. This might seem surprising if this is compared to the timelines as all three project groups show

serious gaps in their communication. The score however does make sense if the factor is looked at with more detail. All three municipalities perform well in the preparation of their communication protocols and the thought process early on in the proposal. The factors where the project teams score poorly is in the adaptation of their communication protocols to the crisis that developed. They all missed the opportunity to change their monologue style of communication into a dialogue with the population. As a large part of the escalation stemmed from the fact that the population felt ignored, creating a dialogue would have improved the communication greatly. Especially with the rise of social media it is important to make the involvement of the population part of the communication strategy.

The fact that all three cases scored well on the mechanism for rendering accountability corresponds with the situation in the timelines that shows a rapid de-escalation after the protests. This is what the mechanism are designed to do and it makes sense to see this development. The factors of blaming show a difference between the three cases. The project team in Bernheze tried to alleviate the pressure on their group by ensuring the support of the council before presenting the proposal and communicating that they were not prepared for this level of escalation. Steenbergen acted similarly with the exception of not blaming the size of the event for the escalation. The project group in Geldermalsen shows the least signs of blame avoidance as they just blame the escalation on the unexpected magnitude of the opposition. This seems to indicate that the blame games seem to have no direct impact on the actual escalation of the crisis, as was already hinted at in the start of this paragraph.

## **Conclusions and discussion**

This research was conducted to be able to answer the research question: “Which type of strategic decisions by project groups in relatively similar municipalities have an impact on the degree of escalation of protests against refugee shelters?” and with it the sub-question: “In what way did crisis management actions taken by the project groups of Steenbergen, Geldermalsen and Bernheze contribute to the escalation of their proposals and how can these actions be objectively evaluated?”

Before drawing a conclusion on the main research question it is interesting to look at possible answers to the sub-question first. This research aimed to create an evaluative framework based on a set of factors taken from the work of Boin et al. (2013). The five selected factors from the theory were enhanced by using other articles to divide the factors into their different aspects. For each of the aspects of every factor measurable indicators were created to allow the evaluation of the cases. This research has shown that the evaluative framework has its merits in assessing the differences and similarities in crisis management actions between different cases. It therefore serves its purpose as a way of determining factors that could possibly have an impact on the escalation of crises.

The second part of the sub-question regards the specific effects of the factors on the escalation in the individual cases. From the analysis it can be seen that all three cases did not act successful when it came to the factor of meaning making—and with it also communication. This leads to the conclusion that municipal crisis management teams need to pay more attention to the possible risks of negative framing. There is a lot of room for improvement on meaning making as a crisis management task. Project teams should communicate more pro-active about their intentions. Proposals that have a drastic impact on the daily life of most citizens should be discussed with the population first. A first meeting to present the intentions and reasoning of the municipality can be used to either create goodwill for a future proposal or can be used as a sign that a proposal will not be supported. A second effect of pro-active communication is that citizens do not have to base their initial concerns on “information” from social media. This can prevent misunderstandings in an early stage as these three cases have shown that it is impossible to correct misconceptions in the escalation process.

If we translate the previous findings to the main research question it can be concluded that this research shows that there is a strong indication that three of the factors in the framework should be investigated more in-depth. The three factors critical decision making, meaning making and communication each scored poorly in the framework for all cases. If this is combined with the

fact that all three cases showed a strong escalation it leads to the conclusion that these factors could present a possible causal connection to the escalation. The other two factors in the framework did not show such a strong indication. However it is interesting to see that all three cases showed a rapid de-escalation process once the accountability mechanism were used. This is a sign that the mechanism work well in a municipal setting. It is difficult to conclude anything on the effect of early recognition on the escalation of the events as all three cases showed different scores for this factor, but still had similar escalation patterns. Therefore it would be needed to study cases that did not show escalation with the created framework, this could provide more definite conclusions on the effects of these factors.

Another interesting conclusion would be to look at the chronological order of the cases. The case of Steenbergen was one of the first protests against refugee shelters in the Netherlands, it seems likely that citizens in later cases have also learned and adapted from this case. The case of Steenbergen showed that loud and violent protests caused the municipal government to listen to their opinions. It is likely that protesters in Geldermalsen and Bernheze tried to replicate what happened in Steenbergen to enforce their opinion.

The conclusions drawn in this research are however not conclusive. The research design allowed for an explorative investigation into the factors that can possibly affect escalation of crises. Furthermore as this was only a master thesis research, the scope and size of the research was very limited. These limitations prevented a more in-depth investigation of the factors and the inclusion of cases that did not show escalation.

Although the three cases used have been carefully selected it might not prove possible to apply the generalizations of the research as best practices to other cases—a pitfall of most qualitative research. The fact that this study only used three cases that all showed an escalation process as the result of a proposal is also a possible weakness. To improve the study it would have been necessary to also include cases that did not show an escalation process, this would allow for more specific conclusions on the effects of the factors. Another possible improvement is regarding the possibility of spuriousness. As this study only uses 5 factors to draw conclusions on the crises in the three cases it is possible that there are spurious relations present. It is impossible to exclude any spurious relation in case studies, but by studying more factors it would be possible to prevent missing a possible causation. Finally it would be highly interesting to conduct individual studies on the three factors that show the strongest connection to the

escalation process. These studies could provide more definite conclusions on the actual effect of the factors on escalation as well as provide possible best practices.



## **Recommendations**

The recommendations for local strategic leaders are linked to the answer to the research question. The final conclusions of the research show that there is a lot of improvement possible on three of the concepts of the framework. According to the law of diminishing returns it would be the most efficient to first improve the concepts that score the worst as they are the easiest to improve. A concrete way to improve the crisis management capabilities is to read up on the effect of meaning making on the framing of problems. By studying the possible ways to impose a dominant frame—or hiring someone with experience on this field of crisis management—it should be easily achievable to score better on this concept. A second recommendation would be to actively involve the local media in possibly volatile decisions. By controlling the information they receive and making them a part of your communication strategy there could possibly be a decrease in the creation of negative frames of local policy creation.

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## **Appendix A: Timeline of the case of Steenbergen**

This timeline is written based on the information provided by the quick scan of the communication department of Steenbergen. A link to this evaluative report is provided in the bibliography.

### ***The incentive for and preparation of the council proposal***

*Thursday September 24, 2015*

As a response to a request sent by the Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers (COA) to municipalities in the Netherlands to provide emergency shelter for refugees the Mayor and Executive Board of the municipality of Steenbergen plan a closed meeting with the municipal council. The main reason for this closed meeting is that the Board wants to assess what the council's opinions are on the establishment of a refugee shelter in their municipality, as they expect to receive specific request in the near future. To prevent possible rushed decisions due to time constraints the Board wants to create a clear list of the possibilities. During the council meeting of September 24 the council does not cooperate with the Board, they first request a possible proposal to be discussed in an open meeting.

*Monday September 28, 2015*

On September 28 the Board informs the municipal council in a memo of their ideas for a possible refugee shelter in the municipality. The main points in this memo are: A maximum of 600 refugees—the municipality preferred 300, but COA accepts only a minimum of 600—for a maximum time of 5 years; there will be no additional costs for the municipality; the employees for the refugee shelter will be recruited locally; the shelter will be located in an area already appointed as future residential area; the refugees in need of education will not be mixed with regular students. The Board also states that the establishment of the refugee shelter could have a significant impact on the population, they are not sure on how to deal with this impact at this point. However they argue that there is also a positive effect and a social responsibility towards the refugees.

*Tuesday September 29, 2015*

A second memo as preparation for an informal meeting is shared in the council on September 29. This memo focuses on the decision making process that will be followed for the plans of the establishment of a refugee shelter. The main point is the fact that the discussion regarding the sheltering of refugees should be an open discussion with the population from the start, this will allow the population to feel like they are heard in the decision making of the council. The council deems it important to have the open discussion to create support among the population.

Therefore the council decides to follow the normal process of decision making with public meetings.

Later that day a local newspaper journalist called to ask for additional information on the memo of September 28. The journalist had access to the memo because a civil servant accidentally uploaded the memo to a freely accessible part of the municipality's website. The communications department was not aware of this memo and did not have an adequate response to the questions. Following the phone call the journalist publishes an article that states that the municipality of Steenbergen will establish a refugee shelter for 600 refugees for several years.

## **The publication of the proposal and the preparations for the council meeting**

*Wednesday September 30, 2015*

The newspaper article from September 29 generates a lot of attention and therefore on September 30 the Board decides to announce an orientation meeting on the subject of the establishment of a refugee shelter—on October 21. This is a response to the information leak and results from internal discussion within the Board and council. The announcement by the municipality is very detailed on the procedure and the contents of the proposal, the high amount of details leads to confusion among the population. Because there is a clear proposal this early in the procedure the question rises among citizens whether the decision has already been made or if it is still possible to influence this.

*Thursday October 1, 2015*

Following the announcement of September 30 the Board and council start working on an extensive communication strategy regarding the proposal. At the same time citizen protests grow in number both online and offline as a result of the confusion caused by the press statement.

*Monday October 12, 2015*

The first press release according to the communication strategy of October 1 is released on October 12. In this press release the municipality informs the population of the location and structure of the public council meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup>. The municipality decides to invite all citizens and encourage active participation, they deliberately do not ask citizens to sign up for the meeting and put no maximum capacity on the evening.

*Thursday October 15, 2015*

The divide among the population erupts on October 15 during a protest demonstration. On the market opponents of the proposal become extremely vocal and the discussion turns heated as

opponents start throwing eggs at proponents of the proposal. The police breaks up the argument as the proponents leave the market to de-escalate the situation.

#### *Friday October 16, 2015*

On October 16 the municipal council announces that they will conduct a citizen research on the support for the Board's plans. The idea to conduct a research among the population was created in the beginning of October as an addition to the input by the population given during the public council meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup>. Several citizens question the questionnaires that they have to fill in, it seems that earlier answers influences which questions you will receive and this can lead to a skewed result. Due to this skeptical reactions a list of frequently asked questions is compiled to answer the questions that arise.

### ***The council meeting***

#### *Wednesday October 21, 2015*

Even though the municipality had already increased their internal capacity, they predict that there will be a lack of communication employees on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> of October. Early that day the municipality sends a request to the Safety region for additional support, the Safety region cannot provide the support therefore the municipality hires a private corporation to provide the necessary assistance. For the meetings after the 21<sup>st</sup> there will be an additional communications advisor from the Safety region.

During the day of October 21 the Mayor decides—after a meeting with the head of the police and the public prosecutor—to issue an emergency warrant for Steenbergen. This decision is based on information that the police receives during the day, one of the elements that leads to the issuing of the emergency warrant is the news that a group of hooligans from Rotterdam plans to disrupt the council meeting. The Mayor does not want to create a panic with the emergency warrant, however the head of the police voices the expectation that there will not be a lot of attention for the warrant.

Shortly after the announcement of the emergency warrant the attention for it erupts into chaos. Several media state that the municipality has issued the State of Emergency instead of an emergency warrant which leads to the panic the municipality want to avoid. Several television crews request interviews with the Mayor as a response to the emergency warrant. The Mayor and the communication team—who are aware of the risk of escalation—plan several one on one interviews instead of arranging a large press conference. They belief a press conference would have an escalating effect instead of the de-escalation they want to achieve. This response

was not mentioned in the communication plan from October 1 and was an act of improvisation to deal with the possible escalation.

During the open council meeting of that evening approximately 700 citizens are present, 19 citizens have the opportunity to voice their opinions on the proposal—of which the majority is opposing the plans. There is almost no focus on other possible options for a refugee shelter—either a lower number of refugees, a shorter timeframe or a 72 hour crisis shelter—so there is little information gained for future proposals. There was a threatening atmosphere during the meeting because opponents were extremely vocal and did not allow for a free and open discussion. Several proponents state after the meeting that they felt intimidated by opponents, this is in stark contrast with the plan for the meeting where both pro and opponents would have equal time to speak and share their opinions. The Mayor believes that several of the opponents that were present do not live in the municipality.

### ***The withdrawal of first proposal and the creation of the second proposal***

*Tuesday October 27, 2015*

On October 27 the Board and project group regarding the refugee shelter create an hour-by-hour walkthrough for an opinion-forming meeting on November 9. Due to the problems that arose during the meeting of October 21 the Mayor decides to make a very strict schedule with a high amount of detailed planning, this would limit the amount of improvisation needed during the day. The structure of the meeting also changes, instead of allowing everyone to participate the Board decides to allow a maximum of 120 pre-registered citizens to be present. They will have to provide a print of the confirmation email before accessing the venue.

*Monday November 2, 2015*

On November 2 the research on the community support is presented to the council, this research shows that the support for a refugee shelter is almost fifty-fifty. Because the Board feels that the support will increase if they create a new proposal with more options, the council writes a new proposal.

*Tuesday November 3, 2015*

The municipal council publishes the new proposal in which they leave everything open for debate. They present seven different options ranging from no refugee shelter to a shelter for 600 refugees. By providing a large range of possible options the debate can differentiate more and possibly bring together the opponents. The proposal is unclear in its contents as there is not a single part decided upon.

At the same time the Board invites the municipality's citizens to enroll for the opinion-forming meeting of November 9, they announce that there will be a maximum of 120 spots for citizens to enroll in.

*Monday November 9, 2015*

The opinion-forming meeting on November 9 goes according to the plans created on October 27 and there are only a few interruptions of the meeting—similar to a regular council meeting. The options presented by the council are discussed and a first indication is made of the support for each option.

*Tuesday November 17, 2015*

On November 17 the Board sends out a press release to announce a final meeting to decide on the proposal for refugee sheltering in Steenbergen.

*Wednesday November 25, 2015*

The final council meeting of November 25 is used to discuss the proposal of November 3. During the meeting the VVD party proposes an amendment to the proposal of November 3 to specify the guidelines for the shelter. The council agrees with the amendment and the proposal is specified as follows: If the COA asks the municipality to provide shelter the municipality is willing to provide shelter for a maximum of 100 refugees—only families with a residence permit, no single refugees—for a period of six months on multiple locations throughout the municipality. The final proposal therefore has little in common with the original idea of the Mayor and Executive Board to provide emergency shelter.



## **Appendix B: Timeline of the case of Geldermalsen**

This timeline is written based on the information provided by the evaluative report written by the municipality of Geldermalsen. A link to this evaluative report can be found in the bibliography, but is not included in this research as an appendix.

### ***The pre-history***

*Wednesday September 30, 2015*

The ministry of Safety and Justice sends a letter to all the municipalities in the Netherlands with a request to provide emergency shelter for refugees. The municipality of Geldermalsen takes action on the basis of this letter to find a suitable location. The Mayor and Executive Board of the municipality decide that there is only one suitable location within their municipal borders, de Randhorst—a sports hall. Preparations and plans are made to create emergency shelter here, but the high monetary compensation demanded by the owner make this option unviable.

*Thursday October 22, 2015*

The municipality of Geldermalsen receives a letter for the Provincial government containing the request to participate in the sheltering of refugees. Because the establishment of the emergency shelter did not prove to be viable the Mayor and Executive Board decided to make an attempt to provide shelter for a small number of refugees. The proposal was presented to the municipal council and unanimously accepted on November 12

### ***The incentive for and preparation of the council proposal***

*Monday November 23, 2015*

The mayor receives a phone call by Josan Meijers from the Provincial government with a request to shelter a larger amount of refugees than agreed on earlier that month. Due to the high amount of refugees that need shelter on an urgent basis there is not enough shelter in existing buildings. The provincial government is searching for large patches of land to build large scale refugee shelters and the municipality of Geldermalsen has a suitable location for this type of shelter. The request to the municipality is to provide an area where a refugee shelter can be established to accommodate 300 to 1500 refugees. The mayor shares this request with the clerk and the municipal secretary.

*Tuesday November 24, 2015*

The mayor informs the Executive Board of the request that she received the day before. The Executive Board is surprised by the request but decides to take it seriously and work together with the Provincial government to find a suitable location. The board acknowledges that they have the obligation to help the central government with the problem of finding suitable shelter

for refugees. However as they are not yet certain of the political and societal support for their intention to shelter refugees the board decides to keep the request and their efforts to fulfill the request confidential until actual plans are made.

*Monday November 30, 2015*

The mayor contacts the mayor of Beuningen to discuss how the municipality of Beuningen is facilitating the establishment of a refugee shelter in their municipality.

*Tuesday December 1, 2015*

The Mayor and Executive Board discuss the plans of establishing shelter for refugees, they decide that they will draft a proposal to establish a shelter with the capacity to accommodate 1500 refugees. The decision is based on the considerations that there is an urgent and significant problem in the society to shelter refugees which requires swift and proportional action. The municipality has a suitable location to shelter refugees and the suitable area is large enough to provide all the facilities needed for 1500 refugees.

The criteria for the choice of the location are: a sufficiently large area to shelter 1500 refugees; the shelter should be built on the edge or outside of residential areas; the shelter cannot be established in an area that already has a low socio-economic status; the location needs to be well connected to the city's infrastructure; the shelter has to be built on a plot of land owned by the municipality; and the shelter has to be sustainable.

The Mayor and Executive board decide to take the following steps to realize their plans of establishing a refugee shelter in their municipality:

- 1) Inform the parliamentary party leaders—presidium—of the plans on a confidential basis.
- 2) Inform the municipal council of the plans, either publicly or confidential.
- 3) Inform the public of the plans.

Based on the events in other municipalities like Steenberg and Ede the board decides that they will be responsible for the “what” question and when they have decided on that they will consult the population on answering the “how” question. The timeframe that is set up for the proposal of a suitable plan is limited by the provincial request. The municipality needs a concrete plan by the first of February, therefore the plans will have to be decided upon before Christmas to ensure everything will be finished in time.

Later that day the board meets with the provincial government to inform them of their plans to establish a refugee shelter in the municipality of Geldermalsen. The provincial government agrees on the plans.

#### *Wednesday December 2, 2015*

A project group is established within the municipal government to work on the practical matters of the establishment of the refugee shelter. The mayor informs the Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers (COA) of the plans made in Geldermalsen, while the municipal secretary looks into the procedure that has to be followed before the shelter can be established.

#### *Thursday December 3, 2015*

The mayor, several members of the Executive Board and members of the project group meet with the COA to discuss the practicalities of the establishment of a refugee shelter. As the COA is responsible for the sheltering of refugees on a national level they have the expertise to advise the municipal government. The COA requests a “Programma van Eisen” to be able to further investigate the viability of the plans and the location as proposed by the municipality.

The mayor informs the presidium—on a confidential basis—of the provincial request and the plans that the Executive Board made on the basis of that request. During this meeting the mayor tells the presidium that the Executive Board will be meeting on December 8 to discuss the proposal to the municipal council. This proposal would then be discussed with the council during a closed meeting instead of a regular public meeting.

#### *Monday December 7, 2015*

The Mayor and Executive Board visit a similar refugee shelter in Leersum with a member of the COA to see what their plans could look like once completed. The same day the mayor is informed by a member of the municipal council that classified information on the proposal has been leaked the day before.

#### *Tuesday December 8, 2015*

The Mayor and Executive Board decides on their proposal to the municipal council to establish a refugee shelter for 1500 refugees near an industrial area south of the town of Geldermalsen. Later that they there is a closed council meeting during which the municipal council is informed of the plans created by the Board. During the council meeting the decision is made to not inform the public of the plans until December 11. On December 11 a meeting will be scheduled with the citizens that will be confronted the most with the refugee shelter—the first circle—afterwards the council will inform the press. On December 16 an additional council meeting will be scheduled to allow all the citizens of the municipality to voice their opinion on the plans.

During the council meeting several political parties voice their concerns. The concerns range from disagreeing with the complete proposal, the confidentiality and the timeframe of the proposal.

*The publication of the proposal and the preparations for the council meeting*  
*Wednesday December 9, 2015*

Three members of the project group—the municipal clerk and the civil servants in charge of public safety and communications—meet to discuss changes to the proposal and the ongoing plans to inform the population. This is done as preparation for the meeting between the mayor, the project leader and the council clerk.

*Thursday December 10, 2015*

The mayor meets with the project group to discuss several points, the main point however is the way the attendance for the December 16 council meeting is handled. As there is a capacity of 200 it is decided that there will be a separate room for the press to ensure a maximum amount of seats for citizens. Furthermore to prevent chaos during the meeting interested citizens will have to enroll by getting in contact with the council clerk. On the evening of December 16 only enrolled citizens with a valid id-card are allowed to enter.

The same day a letter is sent to the first circle of citizens to notify them of the fact that there is an important development in their vicinity and to invite them to a meeting the next day where they will be informed on the matter and are allowed to ask questions and voice concerns.

*Friday December 11, 2015*

In the morning the press is invited to a press conference at 8 PM that evening. The announcement does not specify the contents of the press conference, several members of the council and Board are approached by the media with a request for additional information. In the afternoon the project group meets to prepare for the citizen meeting and the press conference of that evening.

At 4 PM the mayor receives a message from the parliamentary party leader of the VVD that he has leaked the proposal. The mayor soon after informs the council of this news and shortly after the media attention increases significantly.

At 6.30 PM the mayor, a member of the Executive Board, the municipal clerk and a communications advisor inform the citizens in the first circle of the proposal to establish a refugee shelter in their neighborhood.

At 8 PM a letter is delivered in a broad circle around the potential location of the refugee shelter to announce the proposal, at the same time a special webpage is put online with additional information on the proposal. While the information is being shared to the citizens the mayor is leading the press conference to announce the proposal to establish a refugee shelter with a capacity of 1500 refugees.

#### *Saturday December 12, 2015*

The final proposal is sent to the municipal council and the project group answers both emails and phone calls of concerned citizens. That same day the municipality starts actively monitoring social media, this will continue until the council meeting on December 16.

#### *The weekend of Saturday December 12 and Sunday December 13, 2015*

Both online and offline a discussion sparks between proponents and opponents of the establishment of a refugee shelter. On Facebook pages opposing the shelter, harsh comments appear frequently. In the municipality the discussion is visible through the creation of banners and flyers, both in favor and against the shelter. The project group is working the entire weekend to answer as many questions as possible.

#### *Monday December 14, 2015*

Several journalists approach the mayor for interviews on the proposal, however none of the requests are acknowledged before the council meeting of December 16.

Due to the high number of citizens enrolling for the council meeting the municipal triangle—mayor municipal clerk and council clerk—has to decide who is allowed to be present and who will be allowed to speak during the meeting. They decide that a total of 60 citizens will be allowed to voice their opinions during the meeting and all first circle citizens will be present in the Town Hall. The council clerk notifies any citizen that wants to be present but is not yet enrolled that the maximum capacity has been reached. The email account of the municipality receives too many questions to be answered by the project group members. Therefore the decision is made to ask for assistance of a neighboring municipality.

Later that day the mayor meets with the head of the police and the public prosecutor's office to discuss the possible scenarios and the need for police assistance during the council meeting. The need for police assistance is built on the following set of assumptions: The primary goal is to ensure an open and safe democratic process; if there is a need for additional assistance there is an emergency warrant that allows additional security personnel to be deployed; there will be online and offline monitoring to determine the risk level; for every different possible escalation scenario there is a different response plan.

*Tuesday December 15, 2015*

The council members of the Dorpsbelangen party submit a request to ask for postponement of the council meeting through a press release. The Mayor and Executive Board do not believe this to be possible and decide to hold off on this—unofficial—request and wait to see if an official request is submitted. This leads to an increase in phone calls by the press.

At 3 PM an external company arrives at the Town Hall to discuss where to place fences to ensure proper crowd control during the council meeting. The main purpose of the fences is to ensure a safe and organized entrance and exit for the enrolled citizens as well as creating a space to check for IDs. The police is consulted to make sure that the fences are placed correctly.

During the regular council meeting that evening—which originally was not related to the proposal—the VVD council members issue a vote of no confidence towards the entire Executive Board and the Mayor due to the proposal to establish a refugee shelter. Only the VVD council member are in favor of this vote and therefore it is refuted. Later on during the council meeting the group of Leefbaar Geldermalsen council members request that the council meeting of December 16 is moved to an alternative location. This request is denied due to the logistical and security issues the move to the alternative location would create.

After the vote of no confidence is rejected the VVD council members organize a protest march for the next day during which citizens can show that they oppose the proposal.

Outside of the Town Hall a small group of citizens is present to show their opposition to the proposal of the next day. A group of community police officers calms this group of citizens and the council meeting continues undisturbed.

The public prosecutor's office informs the municipal government that they have received violent threats against individuals on the Board. The public prosecutor starts an investigation and the decision is made to raise the number of security staff from six to ten.

### ***The council meeting***

*Wednesday December 16, 2015*

During the morning the fences are placed as discussed the day before. The—mostly national—press voices their disagreement with the fact that there is no room for them in the Town Hall during the council meeting. It is communicated to them that the choice is made to offer as many spots as possible to local citizens and that as a result of that there is only room for some local media outlets. The entire council meeting will be livestreamed to accommodate the press and citizens that could not be present.

At 7 PM the enrolled citizens are allowed to enter the Town Hall, inside they are shown to their seats by employees of the municipality. All the possible points of entry to the Town Hall are secured by security personnel and the Mayor and Executive Board enter the Town Hall through the back entrance. This is done to avoid the large—and still growing—crowd in front of the Town Hall.

At 8 PM the council meeting officially starts and the first four speakers are allowed to voice their opinion. The livestream fails almost instantly after the start of the meeting due to an extreme amount of viewers. Outside of the Town Hall there is an increasing amount of unrest due to the large number of protesters present, the noise and unrest increases until at 8.08 PM the protesters break through the fences and the crowd becomes too loud to continue the council meeting. Two minutes later at 8.10 PM the police has managed to get the protesters back behind the fences and fixed the gap. The meeting inside resumes after the police have restored the situation.

At 8.18 PM the riot escalates to such a degree that the mayor executes an emergency warrant to allow the use of additional police forces and the creation of a security risk area around the Town Hall that has to be cleared of protesters. At 8.21 PM the protesters storm the fences again and manage to break through a second time, this time the police is not capable of restoring the order and the—already present—riot squad has to interfere to protect the people inside of the Town Hall against the protesters.

At 8.30 PM the decision is made to end the council meeting due to the protests outside and the present citizens are escorted to the nearby police station or to the second floor of the Town Hall. At 8.44 PM the security risk area is officially established and the public prosecutor allows the police forces to start with preventive body searches in the determined area. A minute later at 8.45 PM all the present police forces and riot squads are deployed to clear the area of protesters and arrest anyone that shows criminal behavior.

Finally at 11.30 PM the police is able to clear the area and the riots end. However a possible explosive device is spotted in front of the Town Hall which first has to be removed before the citizens inside the Town Hall are allowed to leave. The people present inside the Town Hall have been updated on the events outside twice by the mayor and at 1 AM it is deemed safe enough for the citizens to go home.

After the citizens have left the project group meets with the Mayor and Executive Board to discuss the events of that night and draft a press statement. At 2.30 PM everybody has left the Town Hall.

### ***The withdrawal of the proposal***

#### *Thursday December 17, 2015*

At 8.30 AM on December 17 the municipal triangle addresses all the employees of the municipality to explain what happened the night before. At 11 AM the Mayor, chief of the police and public prosecutor give a combined press conference on the events of the night before. The chief of police informs the press of the fact that there is a lot of camera footage of the events and that 14 people have been arrested. The citizens that were present in the Town Hall the day before are also informed of the information that is shared during the press conference by email.

#### *Saturday December 19, 2015*

The Executive Board meets with the communication advisors of the project group to discuss how to proceed after the events of December 16. They decide to stop all communications with the press so they have more time for the citizens of Geldermalsen. Later that day the website of the municipality is hacked.

#### *Monday December 21, 2015*

On December 21 an informal and closed meeting is organized for the municipal council to discuss the events of December 16 and create a plan on how to proceed. The council decides to organize a press conference on December 23 in which they will announce that they will revoke the proposal to establish a refugee shelter for 1500 refugees.

#### *Tuesday December 22, 2015*

The Mayor and press secretary write a concept statement for the press conference of December 23, this concept is later discussed in the presidium to ensure that all party leaders in the municipal council agree on the contents.

#### *Wednesday December 23, 2015*

During the press conference the Mayor announces to the public that the municipality will not continue with the plans to establish a refugee shelter for 1500 refugees. The Mayor states that they have made mistakes in estimating the support for the refugee shelter and were wrong to rush through the decision making process. They now want to focus on regaining the trust of the citizens and restoring the situation back to normal. To help this process the Mayor announces an evaluation in the council during the council meeting of January 26.



## **Appendix C: Timeline of the case of Bernheze**

This timeline is written based on the information provided during the interview with Kees Hendriks on Thursday May 11, 2017. Additional information regarding the dates and small gaps in the data from the interview is provided by the communication strategy—available on request, but not added as appendix—and the timeline created a year after the events by Omroep Brabant—a link to the article can be found in the bibliography.

### ***The incentive for and preparation of the council proposal***

*Thursday October 1, 2015*

On October 1 the municipal council of Bernheze discusses during a council meeting the possibility of establishing a refugee shelter. The idea for this shelter stems from the fact that the council sees the urgent need for refugee housing in the Netherlands and wants to take responsibility for the solution of a part of this problem. The council therefore requests the Mayor and Executive Board to discuss the possible ways of assistance they can provide with the COA. The meeting with the COA leads to a first proposal of shelter with a maximum capacity of 500 refugees for a minimum of five and a maximum of ten years. The Board decides to share this concept proposal with the presidium on a confidential basis, the Board wants to keep the plans confidential until a complete proposal can be presented to the council. They believe that revealing the plans in an earlier stadium might lead to a lot of unrest even if the plans turn out not to be viable.

*Monday January 11, 2016*

On Monday January 11 the presidium has a final meeting with the Board to decide whether or not to start the official decision making procedure for the proposal. They decide that the proposal is reasonable and that they will present it to the council the following day. They also decide on the definitive location of the shelter and start drafting a communication strategy for the proposal. In an earlier plan the Board already decided to invite the first circle of citizens for an information meeting on Tuesday January 12, the invites for this meeting were sent on Saturday January 9. This information meeting will follow after the closed council meeting where the proposal will be presented.

### ***The publication of the proposal and the preparations for the information meetings***

### *Tuesday January 12, 2016*

The following day on January 12 the council meets with the Board and is notified of the proposal for a refugee shelter with a capacity of 500 for a maximum time of ten years. The Board informs the council on the meetings they had with the COA and argue that this is a suitable option for the municipality. The Board states that they support the proposal and do not want to create a proposal with several different options, but the proposal is open to changes if the council votes on possible amendments. The Board presents the communication strategy they drafted and informs the council of the information meeting with the first circle of citizens later that evening. The second circle of citizens—who are only indirectly impacted by the proposal—will receive a letter that same evening to inform them of the proposal. When both the first and second circle—the citizens closest to the possible location—are informed the Board will release a press statement to inform the whole municipality on the proposal. The following day a letter will be sent to all the citizens in the municipality with additional details. The Board plans two information meetings on January 19 and 21 to allow citizens to ask questions and express their concerns. On January 25 there will then be a final public hearing in the council and on February 4 the council will come to a final decision on the proposal.

### *Wednesday January 13, 2016*

The news of the proposal presented on January 12 spreads through the community and a first protest group gets established. This group is not opposed to a refugee shelter in the broadest sense, but feels that this proposal is out of proportion for the municipality. The group starts a petition in the municipality to collect autographs against the proposal, they plan to present this to the council at a later date to show that there is no support for the proposal.

During the morning of January 13 two dead pigs are discovered on the plot of land designated for the refugee shelter. This incident gains a lot of attention from local and national media and articles and news items are quickly created and published. In these articles the nuance of the proposal gets lost, the media state that the council has decided to establish a refugee shelter—while in fact they have only drafted a first proposal. Both online and offline the protests gain in power and the Board decides to hire a firm to monitor the (social) media and provide bi-daily updates to the Board. As the Board now realizes the proposal gets more attention than expected they request additional support from the Safety region for the communications department. The Mayor asks her colleague in Tilburg to provide additional support for the communications department. The level of attention for the proposal is higher than originally expected by the

Board and council, therefore they decide to meet again with the head of the police to re-evaluate the security for the information meetings.

*Thursday January 14, 2016*

A day after the incidents with the pigs the Mayor gets targeted directly by opponents of the proposal. The fence around her house is destroyed and protesters blockade her driveway with a pile of sand. This is not the only incident aimed at intimidating proponents and politicians as some council members receive threats through social media and the house of a proponent is attacked with eggs. The protest group against the proposal grows in number and the nuanced original message slowly fades away in online discussions. As a response to this the Mayor and Executive Board decide to raise the security levels for the information meetings of January 19 and 21.

### ***The evening of the committee meeting***

*Monday January 18, 2016*

On January 18 there is a meeting of the social affairs committee of the council at the Town Hall, this was a regular meeting that did not involve the refugee shelter proposal. However as the protest group believes that most council members will be present that evening they announce that they will come to the Town Hall to present their petition and show their disapproval. This action is planned in cooperation with the municipality who are willing to allow this short and peaceful protest. However on social media a large group of people announce that they will also join the protest of that evening. As a result of the high attention for the protests the Mayor meets with the head of the police and the public prosecutor to discuss the security of the meeting of that evening. Originally there would just be a normal security detail, but the expected protest could demand additional personnel.

In the afternoon of January 18 the social media report shows that a large group of youngsters plan to join the protest with the intent to start a riot. A second report shows that a group of hooligans from FC Oss also plan to join the protests. This leads to an emergency response in the Board and during the meeting with the head of the police and the public prosecutor the decision is made to prepare an emergency warrant in case the protest escalates. When it is signed, this warrant would allow the police to deploy riot squads to restore the peace and clear the town square of protesters. In addition to the emergency warrant the Mayor also requests riot squads from the police to deploy in Heesch, to prevent possibly aggravating effects from visible riot squads they are garrisoned behind the Town Hall.

On the evening of January 18 the commission meeting starts as planned and a small group of protesters is present to show their disapproval of the proposal. This group grows in size as the meeting progresses until at the peak there are 1000 protesters present on the square. The protest slowly starts turning grim and the protesters start chanting and growing restless, the leaders of the original protest address the crowd and asks them to go home. They have succeeded in their protest and have shown that there is a lot of opposition to the plans, however half of the crowd does not respect the wishes of the leaders. On 7.15 PM the original protest group leaves the square and returns home. After the leaders leave the protests turn grim and some protesters start throwing fireworks, eggs and logs against the Town Hall. This is the reason for the Mayor to officially issue the emergency warrant and deploy the riot squads. The riot squads try to clear the square and the peaceful protesters quickly leave the square and return home. A group of rioters continue to throw fireworks, beer bottles and anything else they can find at the riot squads. By 9.30 PM the police has cleared the square and the council members can leave the Town Hall.

### ***The aftermath of the protest and the withdrawal of the proposal***

*Tuesday January 19, 2016*

The following day the municipality—both Board and council—express their disappointment in the protesters that participated in the riot of the night before. The Board however decides to not cancel the information meeting of that evening. The security measures of the day before are still in effect and are used to ensure a secure and organized information meeting.

*Thursday January 21, 2016*

On January 21 the second information meeting is organized and afterwards the council decides to withdraw the proposal. However they feel like they still need to do something for the refugees. Therefore the council decides to double the amount of refugees with residence permits in the municipality. This is not disclosed to the public and the protests continue, during the meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> there is once again a large group of protesters outside of the Town Hall. The municipality receives once again a death threat when a letter containing a bullet is delivered at the Town Hall.

*Thursday February 4, 2016*

During the council meeting determined to decide on the proposal the council announces that they will not continue with the proposal to build a refugee shelter for 500 refugees. They also present their plan to provide additional housing for refugees with a residence permit.

### *Events after February 4, 2016*

The demand for refugee shelter changes from individuals to family housing and the additional housing in Bernheze is never filled. By the end of February 2016 the Commissary of the King requests the municipality to provide housing for refugee families based on the size of the municipality. Later on this request also becomes obsolete and the municipality decides to incorporate refugee housing within the normal housing plans.

### **Appendix D: Interview transcript Bernheze**

The transcript of the interview is not publicly available.