

Environmental Interest Group Initiatives in the Netherlands  
- A Multiple Streams Framework Analysis

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## Introduction

The past decade has been the most remarkable in exhibiting the threat of global warming and climate change. The decade of 2010-2020 was noted as the warmest decade recorded thus far; a continuation of a long-term trend since the 1980s, where each decade has been observed to become warmer than the previous one (World Meteorological Organization, 2021). During the last decade, the years of 2016, 2019 and 2020 were recorded as the top three warmest years. Despite the temporary natural climate cooling phenomenon La Niña in the latter part of the year, 2020 was marked by exceptional heat that only confirm the damage done and the change our climate is susceptible to now face (World Meteorological Organization, 2021). In 2020 the median global temperature was 14.9 degrees Celsius, 1.2 degrees Celsius higher than that of pre-industrial levels (World Meteorological Organization, 2021). This points to a need for urgency to maintain and reach the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold of global temperatures above pre-industrial levels, as laid out in the Paris Agreement in 2015 (United Nations, 2020). The 2015 Paris Agreement, signed by almost every country globally, was a pinnacle on the climate mitigation policy continuum, as it encapsulated a willingness among nations to jointly halt dangerous climate change. The accord itself does not specify policies that ought to be ratified and implemented, rather it is a guiding framework that provides the impetus for governments to enact their own policies and measures, e.g. reduction in pollutants, to reach the objective of the agreement.

Human activity is by far the largest contributor to global warming; cultivation and development by means of exploiting natural resources, culminate in the release of pollutants in nature, that of greenhouse gases trapping heat in the atmosphere (World Meteorological Organization, 2021). Catastrophic events, such as natural disasters and extreme weather conditions to name a few, are consequences of a warmer climate. In particular the large-scale wildfires and hurricanes witnessed between 2010-2020 have led to vast population displacement while compromising food security for copious people (United Nations, 2020). The living conditions of millions of people have already been overwhelmed, creating an incentive for action. This is exemplified in the mobilization of world-wide climate protests, organized interest groups and lobby, as well as the symbolic rise of Greta Thunberg.

An essential role in democracies is played by the public; the public elects their policymakers periodically, engendering a representative government. Protests, initiatives and means of

coproduction in democracies allow and invite the public to engage in policymaking. Interest groups function as a further linkage between government and the public, as they possess the potential to intermediate and connect the citizens' concerns with the political elite and the policy agenda (Halpin, 2016, p. 215; Pralle, 2009, p. 786). Environmental interest groups maintain a pivotal role in raising salience for problems relating to pollution and climate change to policymakers through emphasizing local impacts, scientific knowledge and consequences on human health (Pralle, 2009, p.797-798). Generally, the objective by interest groups is to frame environmental issues in such a way that policymakers ought to alter existing statutes or produce and implement new policies to amend the discerned problematic conditions. In the Netherlands, within the scope of 2010-2020, three environmental interest groups, Urgenda, Milieudefensie and Meten=Weten mobilized around the issue of pollution in a quest to incite change.

The three Dutch environmental interest groups and their endeavors are the focus of this thesis. The problem of pollution, around which these interest groups organize, is an observable and salient topic on the public agenda in the Netherlands, but how can the issue receive the attention of policymakers and settle as an item on the policy agenda? Agenda-setting theory may ameliorate our understanding of how environmental issues become prominent on the policy agenda. The Multiple Streams Framework, coined by Kingdon in 1984, concentrate on the agenda-setting phase of the policy process, providing the theoretical backbone utilizing a stream metaphor for this research. Kingdon's original notions and concepts of the problem stream, policy stream, political stream, policy entrepreneur and policy window have enjoyed wide application and utilization to describe processes of political agenda-setting and decision-making (Herweg et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2016). While the Multiple Streams Framework has a priori been applied to cases examining climate change and environmental interest group campaigns, none of them have scrutinized contemporary Dutch environmental interest groups activities (Carter & Childs, 2018; Pralle, 2009). The relatively recent impetus for democratic governments to enact 'green' policy may suggest outside influence on the policy agenda. To thoroughly comprehend whether interest groups possess the ability to influence political agenda-setting in the realm of the environment, it is important to acquire a more complete picture of environmental interest groups' activities and affairs.

The objective of this thesis is to identify plausible factors that prompt interest group initiatives on the policy agenda through the application of central concepts in the Multiple Streams Framework. The research question guiding this thesis' exploration is 'How do environmental interest group initiatives extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda?'. The causality this research question insinuates, that of the extension from the public to the policy agenda, is the foundational cause-and-effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables that this study seeks to uncover. Three interest groups, Urgenda, Milieudéfensie and Meten=Weten and their respective initiatives will be compared in this comparative and qualitative case study. Concepts of the MSA will be operationalized as independent variables which potential effect on the dependent variable will be tested through a set of hypotheses. In order to observe, draw conclusions and to ultimately answer the posed research question, this study make use of a rich dataset comprising of Dutch newspaper articles, polls and interest group documentation.

The state of the art of this study is the combination of interest group activity and policy process theory, contributing to an understudied field within Public Administration literature. Moreover, the study depicts contemporary real-world phenomena, thus holding the ability to exhibit the policy process and actors in a new light. The cases of Urgenda and Milieudéfensie scrutinized in this thesis employed legal means in their respective initiatives, constituting this exploration to presume a unique position at the crossroads of law and policymaking.

Henceforth, the thesis will commence by reviewing the existing scholarship on the topic. After a theoretical framework will introduce the theory employed in this exploration, including the elucidation Kingdon's Multiple Streams Theory and the hypotheses guiding the study will be presented. Followingly, the research methods utilized for this investigation will be clarified, that of operationalization as well as evaluation, together with a statement regarding the manner of data collection. In the data analysis chapter, the findings in data will be sketched and the theory will be applied to the cases. The thesis will conclude with a comparison of cases and discuss the findings in the data analysis section. The conclusion entails the final remarks and reflections, while pointing to recommendations for future research.

## Literature Review

Comparable studies linking environmental public action to the Multiple Streams Approach are few; Carter & Childs (2018) analyzed Friends of the Earth's 'The Big Ask' campaign from a policy perspective, thus identifying the non-governmental environmental organizations role as a policy entrepreneur that was strategically able to utilize a window-of-opportunity in the mid-00s to shape the UK's climate policy. Carter and Childs' (2018) article exhibit the applicability of policy frameworks and the potential of analyzing environmental campaigns by stakeholders, as they are able to widen the methodological perspective, while providing a distinct interpretation of public action through an agenda-setting lens. In 2009, Pralle utilized MSA in her examination to identify mechanisms on how the salient and long-term issue of climate change can remain on the policy agenda and how it may travel upwards on the governments lists of policy priorities. Pralle's findings note several strategies for raising the salience of the problem of climate change, which incorporate various central facets that are present in the three streams of MSA, e.g. feedback about policies and progress, as well as focusing events and public opinion. The exploration of agenda-setting regarding climate change elucidate the plausible explanatory potential the MSA can possess in applications related to environmental issues.

As the Multiple Streams theory has been applied to several studies, the inclusion of interest groups in the framework has not been excluded. Rozbicka and Spohr (2016) infer that insofar interest groups have played a minor role in the theoretical and empirical studies making use of MSA. Their study sought to highlight the role and prominence of interest groups within the three streams – problem, policy, political – through connecting the theory with interest mediation literature. Rozbicka and Spohr (2016) conclude that interest groups can be active in all streams, thus illustrating the ability of interest groups to maintain an influential role throughout the agenda-setting.

Studies focusing on environmental interest group action within the Netherlands are scarce, hence further illustrating the present gap in literature. The Urgenda Foundation's climate case against the Dutch government is the most recognized manifestation of environmental public action in the Netherlands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In short, the Urgenda Foundation representing 886 concerned Dutch citizens initiated proceedings against the Dutch government in 2012 for

insufficient implementation of European Union's CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets, thus contributing to the acceleration of climate change that is both dangerous for human and natural health (Graaf & Jans, 2015, p.517). As a result, the Urgenda climate case opened doors and prompted the advancement of academic literature regarding climate justice, however these studies fail to communicate agenda-setting and the influence of public environmental action organizations on policymaking.

This study will further elaborate on the previously mentioned policy dimensions of environmental campaigns. Following in the footsteps of Carter and Childs (2018), I will attempt to contribute to the understudied aspect of agenda-setting taking into account non-governmental environmental organizations efforts in engendering policy change, as these cases have the potential to illustrate the democratic influence, i.e. public influence on the bureaucratic apparatus. Moreover, policy change in the field of environmental governance is interesting and contemporary, as changes in the natural world and climate are recurring.



## 1. Theoretical Framework

Interest group scholarship have aimed to clarify the role of interest groups in shaping policymaking. In western democracies interest groups are a part of the larger political arena, engaging with both the public and the government. The literature on interest groups have identified three distinctive concepts of policy engagement: involvement, access and prominence. These indicate the various avenues that interest groups may employ to become involved in policymaking. Involvement depict groups' distribution of written documentation to legislative committees and engagement in open consultations. In the Netherlands, letters to parliament by interest groups are an example of policy involvement (Halpin & Fraussen, 2017, p.725) Halpin and Fraussen (2017) define 'access' as the ability of a group managing to pass a certain threshold that is controlled by porters, comprising of civil servants, policymakers and etc., hence the interest group has entered the political arena. Interest groups obtain or win access by policymakers, signifying that access is not self-evident and attainable for all groups (Halpin & Fraussen, 2017, p. 726). Policy engagement referred to as 'prominence' stipulate the perception of the group among a particular audience (policymakers, journalists and etc.), and it embodies a manner of taken-for-grantedness (Halpin & Fraussen, 2017, p.726). To clarify, "prominence captures the idea that groups vary with respect to how preminent they are as voices for a particular constituency among political elites, and thus refers to the situation whereby some groups are simply assumed to be relevant to the issue at hand" (Halpin & Fraussen, 2017, p.726). Interest groups' policy engagement is at the center of attention in this examination, yet it approaches policy influence from the angle of agenda-setting.

The public activity of interest groups attempt to push an issue from the public agenda to the policy agenda. To shed light on some of the central terminology used in agenda-setting theory, following Pralle's (2009) definition, public agenda denote the set of issues that are the most crucial to voters and citizens. While the policy agenda consists of a narrower set of issues of which policymakers should decide upon (Pralle, 2009, p.782). In the absence of acknowledgement and wide usage of the term public action, it will refer to the collective effort of interest groups, that is inspired by notions of Olson and Ostrom's theory on collective action. The term public action is used interchangeably with initiative in this thesis.

Both terms also denote the recognized problem by interest groups that aim to capture the policymakers' attention.

Public action in the domain of environment, namely pollution affecting both human and natural health in the Netherlands, materializes in the groupings of stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, companies and individuals. Active stakeholders driving the cause of decreasing pollutants through environmental initiatives and public action in the Netherlands comprise of Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth), Fossilfree.org, Groenfront, Meten=Weten, Urgenda, Actionaid, among many more and of which three will be examined through the operationalization of the theoretical framework, ultimately proving or disproving the hypotheses and providing an answer to the posed research question.

### 1.1 The Policy Process

Multiple frameworks have attempted to theorize about policymaking and its process, however often these frameworks represent the idealized or optimal way of conducting policy; its drafting, implementation and assessment. The policy process is considered to consist of stages, i.e. phases in which policy is advanced and reconfigured. The policy cycle is one of the oldest and most widely known analytical framework attempting to explain the phenomena of conducting policy (Howlett et al, 2016, p.67). For six decades the policy cycle has evolved from Lasswell's original notion of seven metaphorical cyclical phases to five main stages of the policy process: agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and evaluation (Howlett et al, 2016, p.67). The policy cycle has been criticized for being an overly simplistic analytical framework for explaining the policy process, as it is considered too rational, technocratic and linear to elucidate the complexity of policymakers' daily work (Howlett, 2019, p.413). However, the policy cycle remains an essential component of public policy studies due to its problem-solving and multiple task-oriented stages approach (Howlett, 2019, p.413). While the policy cycle framework centers on solving problems in all the different phases of the policymaking process, the multiple streams framework focus on a particular dimension of the policy process, that of the agenda-setting phase, resulting in it paying less attention to the stages of implementation and evaluation (Howlett, 2019, p.413).

The conceptual frameworks ameliorate our understanding of the main characteristics and dynamics of the policy process, yet fall short in explaining why certain salient issues among the public are or are not invited into the actual agenda-setting. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature by analyzing public environmental action efforts in the Netherlands through a conceptual policy process lens, exploring the possibilities and limitations of public action to influence agenda-setting. The study of interactive behavior of multiple sets of actors that are chasing certain visions of policy problems and solutions, or their encompassing political situation is necessary in answering the research question. The multiple streams framework is able to shed light on agenda-setting, bringing forth the various interactions between actors and situations that explain the policy process by taking into account crucial developments in political settings that prompt policy change. The concepts of the multiple streams approach possess the ability to further our knowledge regarding the transition of problems from the public to the policy agenda.

## 1.2 Multiple Streams Approach

The multiple stream approach (MSA) was coined by John Kingdon in his foundational *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies (1984)* in the mid-1980s. Kingdon employed his framework on multiple case studies in the US, attempting to explain policy in areas of transportation and public health in times of ambiguity (Jones et al., 2016, p.14). In the policy process ambiguity denote three things. First, according to Zahariadis, the partakers have vague aims, signifying that politicians are often constrained by deadlines, compelling them to make decisions without having formulated detailed preferences to the issues at stake. Second, officials moving from one decision arena to the other result in fluid participation (Zahariadis, 2008, p.517; Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.32). Lastly, ambiguity also implies blurry organizational technology, meaning that while participants are conscious of their own tasks and responsibilities, they indicate elementary knowledge of the complete policy process (Zahariadis, 2008, p.517; Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.32).

The multiple streams approach has since its emergence become a staple in the study of public policy, engendering significant contributions to policy theory and empirical literature (Jones et al., 2016, p.13). The MSA differentiates between three streams that flow independently

from one another: the problem stream, political stream, and the policy stream (Howlett et al., 2014, p.421).

### 1.3 The Problem Stream

The problem stream embraces all the conditions stakeholders and policymakers aspire to change politically and that are theoretically alterable (Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.31). These conditions appear and gain both stakeholders' and policymakers' attention through focusing events: a sudden, potentially harmful and relatively uncommon occurrence (Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.40; Birkland, 1997). The 9/11 terror attack in 2001 can be considered a focusing event, as it created a perceived problem, succeeding a new line of policies to be implemented regarding immigration and foreign policy in the US. In other words, in order for something to fall under the problem stream the issue at hand need to be considered a problem that necessitates a policy response. The problem stream as a concept in MSA includes subcomponents such as a focusing event, but also indicators, feedback and load, which also explain how an issue becomes prominent within the stream (Jones et al., 2016, p.15).

Indicators refers to how actors detect and track latent problems, e.g. by various means of measurement to demonstrate the austerity of the probable issue like unemployment rates (Jones et al., 2016, p.15). The ability of institutions to tackle problems is called load, meaning that policymakers are surrounded by all-consuming and countless problems, therefore the chances of a novel problem to tackle its way through to the policymakers' consciousness is slight. The final subcomponent of feedback, which is conceptually almost indistinguishable from indicators, refers to the information supplied by comparable projects connected to the present problem, such as policies implemented to mitigate air pollution may be utilized later in providing a framework for regulating vehicles (Jones et al., 2016, p.15). Feedback encompass existing knowledge and policies that may be of benefit in tackling the present problem. It suggests that policy problems that have a priori been on the policy agenda influence the present problem's likelihood of becoming visible in the problem stream. This portrays the causal relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable; the dependent variable being the transition from the public agenda to the policy agenda and the independent variable being feedback. The causal relationship is thus crystallized in H1, which will be examined in each environmental initiative case.

*H1. An earlier comparable environmental initiative increases the policy problem's potential to extend from the public agenda to policy agenda*

#### 1.4 The Political Stream

The political mood of a nation, the struggle of power through elections and party composition are essential features of the political stream (Shepard et al., 2019, p.3; Howlett et al., 2014, p.421). Thus, the political stream represents the larger climate and context in which policy is produced, while highlighting the responsiveness of the policymakers to a certain problem and the extent of consensus or dissent there is regarding a problem (Ackrill et al., 2013, p.873; Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.40). Fluctuations and changes in the political stream, such as institutional crises, electoral cycles and etc., may precipitate the opening of a window-of-opportunity, that increases the likelihood of an issue to gain prominence on the policy agenda if coupled with the other streams (Pralle, 2009, p.787). This embodies the notion of a political window, a key concept within MSA discussed further in the following sections.

The government, interest groups and the national mood are central features in Kingdon's original notion of the political stream (Herweg et al., 2015, p. 438). In addition, this stream involves election results, changes in the administrative or partisan composition, interest group pressure, including public opinion (Petridou & Mintrom, 2020, p. 8).

The national mood implies policymakers' interpretation of the general public's acceptance of a specific policy (Herweg et al., 2015, p. 440). A policy that is deemed popular among the public by policymakers, enhance the chance of policymakers to proceed with the proposal than when it is not endorsed by the population. Besides, when the national mood is highly in favor of a certain policy, the likelihood of policymakers to follow suit and place the policy on the agenda is higher (Herweg et al., 2015, p.440). Yet, agenda-setting is not fully dependent on the national mood as political parties may lift policy proposals in spite of a hesitant national mood and group opposition. This may be the case if the government consider the proposal as the most auspicious manner to attend to the perceived policy problem; or when voter and office orientation does not play a major role, meaning that presiding parties are confident of a win in the next elections, therefore they are undeterred by the national mood or interest group support (Herweg et al., 2015, p.440).

Interest groups may operate as a bridge between the government and the public. Organized interest formation often possess' a clearer perception of the public's preferences, hence they may contribute to policymakers' comprehension of a problem and solution feasibility, meaning how varied solutions will affect target groups (Pralle, 2009, p.786). On one hand, the diminishing nature of ideologies, in western democracies, guiding parliamentary parties' policy programmes signal that policymakers may be more susceptible to emphasize on the national mood. On the other hand, due to the changing interests and supporters between elections, parties cannot base their decisions on the interests of voters (Herweg et al., 2015, p.438). As a consequence, policymakers' preferences have become even more ambiguous, than what Kingdon nearly half a decade ago posited (Herweg et al., 2015, p.438).

The political stream can be considered ripe, when the policy problem is parallel to the national mood. The visibility in the political stream refer to a probable causal relationship between the policy agenda and the national mood; a policy problem that is in the interest of the general public is more likely to extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda. Therefore, the concept is the second independent variable of this study is scrutinizing environmental initiatives. The hypothesized effect of national mood on the dependent variable, depicting the extension from agenda to the other, will be tested through the following hypothesis:

*H2. In case there is a national mood regarding a problem, the problem is more likely to extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda*

### 1.5 The Policy Stream

In order for a policy problem to be solved, there need to be available policy solutions. The policy stream consists of policy communities; that of experts and specialists concerned with the prevalent problem, who actively produce solutions to policy problems (Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.33). There are a number of policy solutions floating around in a so-called policy primeval soup. It is a complex collection of ideas and possibilities of policy alternatives, yet these policies engage in an intense competition of winning acceptance in the pertinent policy community (Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.33). Policy alternatives that

satisfy the criteria of value acceptability, tolerable costs, technical feasibility, anticipated public consent, as well as receptivity among policymakers, according to Kingdon (1984), have a higher likelihood of being considered as feasible alternatives during the agenda-setting phase than the ones that do not satisfy them (Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.40; Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.33). In order to include the policy stream and assess whether or not the abovementioned phenomenon is applicable to the cases, the findings of the environmental initiatives will be tested against H3:

*H3. If a policy solution does exist to the mobilized problem of pollution, then it will result in the issue extending to the policy agenda.*

### 1.6 Policy Windows and Entrepreneurs

Despite the notion of the three streams operating independently of one another, yet at times they are coupled together during a so-called policy window (Petridou & Mintrom, 2020, p.8; Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.33; Howlett et al., 2014, p.421). Policy windows (windows-of-opportunity) become accessible due to changes in the problem or political stream and they narrate the specific context in which problems are disputed and policies are produced (Ackrill et al., 2013, p.873; Jones et al., 2006, p.16; Zahariadis, 2008, p.517). Here, one is able to discern the relationships between some of the central concepts within MSA, as the problem and politics stream are able to institute a policy window, thus revealing a parent-child relationship between these concepts. The coupling of the three streams during a policy window is orchestrated by a policy entrepreneur.

Policy entrepreneurs are actors who invest their resources and skills to promote certain policies, to mobilize opposition and support, as well as activating attention to certain issues. Furthermore, policy entrepreneurs possess the ability produce strategies combining problems and politics into appealing bundles that are then pitched to susceptible policymakers (Ackrill et al., 2013, p.873). Entrepreneurs may act strategically, thus prompting changes within the streams leading to opportunities for entrepreneurs to influence the policy process in their desired direction. The concept of the policy entrepreneur is major in MSA and in understanding the policy process, including its susceptibility in regard to time and interest. As a concept the policy entrepreneur is omnipresent, possessing the ability to, or to not shape the

development of the other four key concepts. These policy entrepreneurs occur in multiple arenas and varying levels; some may be prominent EU officials, NGO's, national policymakers and other spokespersons or actors who have resources and a stake in the issue (Ackrill et al., 2013, p.873).

Following this argument, policy entrepreneurs may be active on interest group level, namely in the three cases of environmental initiatives explored in this thesis. The described skills and resources of the policy entrepreneur refer to a causal relationship between the concept and the policy agenda, which could possibly provide answers to the posed research question. Therefore, I identify the policy entrepreneur as the fourth independent variable, which may influence the extension of a problem from the public agenda to the policy agenda. Thus, the hypothesis verifying or falsifying this causality states:

*H4. If a policy entrepreneur is present in the environmental public action effort, then the effort has a higher likelihood of settling on the policy agenda.*

### 1.7 Evolutionary Theory

The coupling of the three streams – problems, politics and policies – is a central element of the MSA, therefore various studies have scrutinized the role of the policy entrepreneur. Aviram et al., (2020) reviewed in their study 229 articles concerned with policy entrepreneurship across varying domains, the strategies these entrepreneurs employ and their traits. Moreover, Petridou and Mintrom (2020) discuss in their article about the policy entrepreneur as an agent for change. These articles elaborate further on Kingdon's original concept of the policy entrepreneur, highlighting the individual's role in policy change. The policy entrepreneur is not only a concept in the MSA, but also occupies a spot in the advocacy coalition framework, the network management approach and the punctuated equilibrium theory (Aviram et al., 2020, p. 612).

Kingdon's MSA has been considered an evolutionary theory that has prompted the development of other theories regarding the policy process and policy change. Punctuated equilibrium theory shares the same tenets with Kingdon's theory of multiple streams, such as the bounded rational actor and junctures (Howlett et al, 2016). The bounded rational actor refers to the notion that policymakers possess faulty information and limited time, meaning



that they are unable to regard all problems round-the-clock. As a result, attention to issues is scarce and only very few of these reach the top of the political agenda. Baumgartner and Jones argue that the lack of attention to existing problems illustrate the static nature of relationships inside policy subsystems and how periods of fortified attention to certain issues undermine these static relations in the subsystems, engendering punctuations and in due course policy change (Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.42). The MSA embodies a longevity in the process of solution production and softening of policy, while changes in PET are preceded by periods of fervent action and attention (Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.42). This highlights MSA's theoretical contribution to the development of 'evolutionary theory', such as PET, that aim to elucidate "how and why particular environments operate to help produce specific kinds of policy change and stability, and how actors, such as 'policy entrepreneurs', adapt to or help shape their environment" (Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.41).

It is of common conception that policymaking is a linear process in which problems are first identified and solutions are then developed to address these issues. However, in the MSA the policy windows withhold the composition of the policy process, resulting often in the opposite of solutions seeking problems (Zahariadis, 2008, p.519). This paradox is common to occur when policy windows open in the politics stream for a number of reasons. Solutions to policy problems are few, while the problems are many, therefore it is more facile to scan for available solutions than the multitude of problems (Zahariadis, 2008, p.519). Also, an electoral victory is recognized by the incoming members as a justification for passing, or resisting certain policies, as realizing made promises is more beneficial politically than tackling problems. Similarly, focusing on solutions is more fulfilling for policymakers since it induces them with a spirit of action and awareness, as it allows them to control the framing of issues and the political agenda (Zahariadis, 2008, p.519). Moreover, an achievement in one policy area by utilizing an idea or instrument, justifies its spill-over to other areas (Zahariadis, 2008, p.520).

The MSA itself is widely considered universal, flexible and simple, as it brings forth a stream metaphor that is applicable to almost any case study. Furthermore, the approach facilitates a so-called easy entry for scholars to utilize the theory, as users do not need to master a detailed code, test hypotheses and further general policy theory (Cairney & Jones, 2016, p.38). However, Cairney and Jones (2016) point out that making MSA more systematic through comprehensive knowledge of key concepts within MSA and combining insights from other

theories concerned with the policy process can make the utilization of the framework more meaningful. Throughout the years the MSA has been refined through contributions by scholars, namely Zahariadis, who have navigated its application to EU public policy. Despite earlier attempts to apply MSA to EU policy processes, they have fallen short in exploiting the explanatory potential of the framework, as its original formulation of key elements are conceptualized as being interrelated (Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.34). Through Zahariadis systematic translation of the MSA framework to EU policymaking, the framework has been applied in a more comprehensive manner, allowing scholars to incorporate important variables like the European mood, EU partisanship and the European community. (Zahariadis & Herweg, 2018, p.34) To improve the quality of the application of the MSA to this study I will take into account the five main concepts of the MSA: policy stream, problem stream, political stream, policy window and policy entrepreneur, as well as scrutinize the concepts' subcomponents in the case studies. The usage of the Kingdon's original concepts has mainly been operationalized in U.S or European governance contexts with a domestic policy focus. Despite this study being a contributor to the domestic policy focus, it forwards and introduces the framework to both new areas of study (environmental public action) and new sources of influence in the policy stream.

The previous sections have attempted to elucidate Kingdon's MSA approach; its main elements, leading proponents, as well as its possibilities and limitations. As already mentioned, the MSA is suitable for explaining multiple case studies through its universal scope of application, thus allowing for further analysis of policy processes. Despite the MSA has been criticized by scholars for its flexibility and simplicity, it is suitable for this study for these very reasons as I am aiming to explain and uncover a specific phenomenon that has not been explained before by means of evolutionary theory. By inspecting the process of environmental public action through the main concepts of the multiple-streams framework, we are able to discern which factors may play a major role in pushing the issue on the policy agenda.

To be able to answer the posed research question, I am testing a whether or not a certain relationship exists between the concepts that could explain why certain environmental public actions extend to the policy agenda. In this chapter, I have identified the independent variables (feedback, national mood, policy entrepreneur, policy solutions) that are hoped to reveal phenomena explaining the research question. Thus, the hypotheses assume an impact

of the independent variable on the dependent variable; a causal relationship. Through testing the expectations laid out in the theory and hypotheses, I am hoping to discern a relational pattern between concepts.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Aims & Case Selection

This research views the political agenda-setting from an environmental standpoint. It will aim to discuss and analyze how considered environmental issues, pollution, move or do not move from the public agenda to the policy agenda through scrutinizing principal concepts of the Multiple Streams Framework. The aim is to examine which independent variables may have an effect on the extension of environmental initiatives from the public agenda to the policy agenda. It will attempt to test whether or not Kingdon's theories are applicable to the field of environmental agenda-setting in parliamentary systems and current real-world phenomena. The explorations conducted in this thesis is hoped to contribute to the empirical literature of MSA applications. Yet, it is important to note that this thesis cannot claim which independent variable has the most explanatory value as it is too complicated to determine by means of a small-n comparative case study. Therefore, concerning the control and limits of this research, I will focus on three environmental public interest groups, Urgenda, Milieudefensie and Meten=Weten, in the Netherlands and one case of each organization within the time frame 2010-2020.

The Urgenda foundation, established in 2007, is a Dutch organization that aims to accelerate the move to a circular economy and sustainable society based on renewable energy (Urgenda, n.d). Climate change is viewed as the largest challenge to overcome in our time, therefore Urgenda's vision is to find solutions to combat this and induce a rapid transition to a sustainable society, as laid out in their agenda 2030 (Urgenda, n.d). Agenda 2030 outlines the feasibility of the Netherlands to utilize only renewable energy by 2030, including that of housing, transport and food production. In line with the abovementioned, Urgenda takes on a variety of projects in different sectors to reach their aim (Urgenda, n.d). The climate case initiated in 2015 against the Dutch Government is one of them, but also thus far the most notable as Urgenda was able to win the case in the Dutch Supreme Court, hence fostering a new era of climate justice. Consequently, the Urgenda's climate case will be one of the three cases to be analyzed from a policy process perspective in this study.

Comparably, the air pollution case against the State of the Netherlands by Milieudefensie can be discerned as inspiration from Urgenda's climate case taking place a few years earlier. Milieudefensie is the Dutch branch of Friends of the Earth, which is the largest grassroots environmental network globally with over two million members world-wide (Friends of the Earth, 2020). The 73 national members groups work locally, nationally and globally to tackle present environmental and social issues, with an aim to promote solutions for a sustainable environment and socially just societies (Friends of the Earth, 2020). Milieudefensie has already been a part of the Dutch environmental sustainability conversation since the early 1970s and has established its position as one of the most influential interest groups in this area in the Netherlands (Milieudefensie, n.d.). Throughout the years Milieudefensie has undertaken a plethora of projects and events in the realm of the environment and currently they are active in areas of air traffic, nitrogen, and biomass to name a few. The air pollution case was initiated in 2016 by Milieudefensie along with active citizens as a result of research indicating that the Dutch nitrogen emissions exceed EU norms, thus posing a threat towards the health of Dutch citizens (Milieudefensie, n.d.). This case is interesting as it also entail judicial procedures, like Urgenda, combined with environmental interest group initiatives.

Scaling down, Meten=Weten is an interest group based in Westerweld, the Netherlands with an aim to reduce the use of harmful pesticides and halting the growing agro-industry that affect human, animal and natural health, in other words the biodiversity in the area. Meten=Weten wants to secure a robust environment and conservation of historical hotspots, therefore they try to influence decision-making on all levels: municipal, provincial and national (Meten=Weten, n.d.). This has been done by contacting Minister Schouten and the Dutch Tweede Kamer; presenting at the Dutch Health Council and collaborating with Milieudefensie, among other ventures of participatory activities (Meten=Weten, n.d.). Further, Meten=Weten is currently exploring the opportunities of initiating a legal process with points of departure in the European Convention of Human Rights Article 8 (Meten=Weten, n.d.).

As already touched upon, the three cases are comparable due to them all being concerned with environmental pollution and environmental interest group initiatives, that are hoped by the respective interest groups to extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda. Moreover, all of the cases have developed within the same time period (2010-2020) and country, hence they can be considered comparable. The mentioned comparable features

constitute the control variables of this study and they will be discussed further in the following sections.

Environmental degradation is a major contributor to climate change, which has become a trending subject in current media and politics (Verheggen, n.d.). Besides, the Netherlands as an EU member state is subject to the EU's tightening environmental and sustainability policies that induce an added strain on countries to adapt to the latest policies and respond to a demanding and educated public. Essential to the three abovementioned cases is pollution and public action, hence they have been selected for this study through their common attributes. In other words, the selection is based on preliminary knowledge and most similar systems design case selection strategy, including the presumed logic of them showing co-variation on the scores of the independent variable (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p. 42). This co-variational research implies a causal relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable, then selecting cases through the dependent variable is tempting but undesirable as it often presupposes selection bias (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p. 43). It is expected that the scores on the independent variables will differ between the cases.

## 2.2 Methods

Qualitative research methods, that of utilizing qualitative data in form of public or private documented evidence that includes interviews, questionnaires, observations or documents, will be the main source of evidence in this study to explain the causal relationship between the variables. The study of the role of the policy entrepreneur as Friends of the Earth in the Big Ask Campaign in the UK, conducted by Carter and Childs (2018), has the closest resemblance to this research. They studied a public environmental organization from an MSA perspective, identifying the main concepts and determining that the issue transcended from one agenda to the other by applying qualitative methods. Similarly, in MSA literature qualitative methods are widely employed to describe and analyze the agenda-setting. Pralle (2009) utilized qualitative methods in her examination on climate change, identifying factors that may aid in keeping the problem on the policy agenda and mechanisms on how it may elevate on the list of policy priorities. Cairney and Jones (2016) have examined the various applications of the MSA through in-depth qualitative analysis of 41 studies conducted in the field to arrive at their conclusions and recommendations to refine the framework, ultimately

to improve the subsequent MSA inspired literature. Further, qualitative comparative analysis can be considered commonplace within the agenda-setting literature as it is employed in a number of recent studies, ranging from making sense of the MSA in new political contexts that of international and local arenas, compared to Kingdon's original notion, to addressing implications of temporality and causality in application of theory in the policy process (Fischer & Maggetti, 2016; Shepard et al., 2019). Scholarship expanding on the original theory through qualitative research methods, in order to include interest groups and additional theory is ample, e.g. Herweg et al. (2015) and Rozbicka & Spohr (2016) used this method in their respective analyses. Therefore, I believe conducting deductive, qualitative research is the most suitable for this study and it is simultaneously appropriate for the development of hypotheses like I have done in the theoretical framework.

### 2.3 Operationalization

Operationalizing the abstract concepts into measurable observations allow for systematic data collection of processes and phenomena that would otherwise remain unnoticeable. In this part I will determine the variables of this research as well as shed light on how the pre-mentioned concepts of MSA will be operationalized.

In the interest of maintaining control of the study it is important to draw limits with control variables. The control variables applied to the cases are the geographical location of the Netherlands, the time frame of 2010-2020 and pollution, since the cases' score on these remain similar and fixed. The independent variables of national mood, policy entrepreneur, feedback and policy solutions are known, yet their score on the values of the dependent variable concerning the extension from one agenda to the other remain unknown, thus validating the purpose of the following research. Additionally, the four independent variables have values that are necessary to take into account: national mood (acknowledged/oblivious), feedback (yes/no ), policy entrepreneur (yes/no), policy solutions (present/absent).

In the MSA the policy entrepreneur is often considered a central force in the policy process. The independent variable of the policy entrepreneur is conceptualized as a person or organization who steers strategically the interests of the policy issue at stake. The policy issue

may be encouraged by the entrepreneur and therefore he aims to mobilize support for specific policy issues to land on the policy agenda, where the issue will be decided upon by policymakers. However, entrepreneurs may also act against certain policy issues and employ strategies to discourage stakeholders and policymakers to jump on the issue. In essence, the concept of the policy entrepreneur can be paralleled with an investor, who devotes their time and resources for a specific cause. In order to measure the variable of the policy entrepreneur has to be translated into an indicator.

**Figure 1: Summary of Variables**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Data Source(s)</b>
<b>X(1): Policy entrepreneur</b>	Actors who invest their time and resources to strategically couple the three streams (problem, politics & policy)	The level of visibility of the actor and the frequency in which he appears	Newspaper articles and interest group documentation
<b>X(2): National Mood</b>	The general public's recognition of a policy problem, as viewed by policymakers	The public display support or opposition to a problem	Polls, Newspaper articles and political documents.
<b>X(3): Feedback</b>	The existence of knowledge regarding an issue due to the earlier comparable projects	Number of comparable undertakings	Newspaper articles, and interest group documentation
<b>X(4): Policy Solutions</b>	Available policy solutions to a policy problem; solutions exist in a policy primeval soup	Number of proposed policies to a policy problem	Newspaper articles and interest group documentation
<b>Y: Extension from the public agenda to the political agenda</b>	The issue moving from the public to the policymakers, who will make decisions	Political agenda-setting, engendering decisions and policies	Newspaper articles and policy documents



Observing a policy entrepreneur can be puzzling; how do we determine who is a policy entrepreneur when multiple stakeholders are involved in the present policy issue that the public are driving to the policy agenda? Through measuring the visibility and frequency of observations of the entrepreneur in similar contexts one can be able to determine his role and existence in the public action case. Thus, the indicator of the policy entrepreneur is the visibility of an advocate with notable resources and the frequency in which he appears. The data sources where visibility and frequency of the policy entrepreneur is principally discernable are that of printed news articles, as well as in documents by the respective public environmental action organizations.

As earlier determined the independent variable of national mood may produce great insight in this research, as environmental pollution is an issue involving many stakeholders from a variety of sectors. The national mood symbolizes the general public's support for the policy problem of pollution in the Netherlands. In particular, national mood denotes that the citizens acknowledge that there is an issue, which in turn may be perceptible to policymakers and evoke them to place it on the policy agenda. The national mood may also be in opposition of a problem or policy, with an aim to avert agenda-setting, or the public simply does not perceive a problem, meaning a problem is obscure within the political stream. To perceive and understand what the national mood is in the environmental pollution issue, the public's plausible endorsement in the topic need to be assessed. The overall mood and interest in environmental issues is the indicator through which the variable can be scrutinized. Further, the data source that is believed to yield the most accurate descriptions of the phenomena includes polls along with public news.

The third independent variable of this exploration is feedback, which is conceptualized as a component within the problem stream of the MSA that illustrate the existence of knowledge regarding particular problems owing to comparable undertakings. Hence, the policy problem of environmental pollution has a higher likelihood of getting picked up by policymakers if analogous issues have already been considered previously. Through operationalizing the concept by evaluating the number of comparable environmental pollution projects that have been reviewed by policymakers I am able to explore if it shapes the transition of the problem from the public agenda to the policy agenda. To limit the amount of analogous environmental projects that have been a priori considered by decision-makers, the projects must have occurred within the same temporal and geographical setting as the principal case studies

examined in this thesis. What is more, all comparable projects within the a priori mentioned limits, they have to also be considered to have had some impact and visibility, e.g. in media, as smaller activities are less detectable and do not always concern the Dutch environmental policy as a whole. The data sources utilized for discovering related projects within the field of pollution incorporates printed news articles, as well as documents from public environmental organizations.

The final independent variable in this research is policy solutions. Policy solutions are a central facet in the MSA and it may be vital in determining whether a policy problem extends from the public agenda to the policy agenda. Problems with available solutions are both undemanding and relatively swift to implement, which can be considered salient to policymakers as they have short time horizons. The indicator for measurement for this independent variable is the number of proposed policy solutions, which can be identified through newspaper articles and interest group documentation.

#### 2.4 Selection of documents

Essential to conduct this study and to observe as well as measure the phenomenon, reliable sources are necessary. Qualitative research methods vary, inductive/ deductive, and can be utilized for many purposes. The following analysis utilizes deductive, qualitative research techniques and the main sources chosen for this exploration comprise of a number of documents. As already touched upon, these documents encompass interest group documentation, polls, printed news articles and political documents.

Interest group documentation refers to the documents and written text produced by the groups centered in this study: Urgenda, Milieudefensie and Meten=Weten. This interest group documentation takes the form of public letters, proceedings, information leaflets and news.

When gathering data for this research I am attempting to use as objective information as possible from news articles. To avoid pitfalls and false information the data will mainly be collected from recognized, public and historical organizations in Dutch society.

These include the national newspapers de Volkskrant, het Parool, as well as Trouw.

Polls may provide insight into public opinion, political positions and the state of the environment. The principal source of polls is Ipsos – a global research organization curious about society, markets, people and brands. Ipsos' reliability as a source is reflected in its participation of the UN Global Compact, ensuring that human rights and the environment are respected in their work, as well as combatting corruption to name a few (Ipsos, n.d.).

The sources listed above are widely considered legitimate and publicly accessible, therefore they are deemed as suitable and of quality. The discovered data will be scrutinized through qualitative data analysis, namely content analysis. Content analysis entail that the data will be approached through concept-driven coding, meaning the content of the source will be categorized and thematically analyzed. As I am utilizing a deductive manner of coding, there will be a predefined set of codes: policy entrepreneur, feedback, national mood, policy, process and problem. Once the codes and findings have been thoroughly extracted from the data sources they will be organized in a flat coding frame (Figure 3) that paves the way for the data analysis and discussion in the following chapters.

## 2.5 Evaluation

Among the literature concerned with analyzing the agenda-setting and the MSA, qualitative research methods have been employed in the quest to explain real world phenomena, therefore it remains reasonable that this study occupies a place within this plethora. However, qualitative studies, like this one, have a higher likelihood of being biased as the main source of data is often produced by someone else. The producer of the source writes from their experience of reality, incorporating their morals and values. To avoid bias or to see beyond biased primary sources the researcher himself need to critically evaluate the context and reliability of the source when utilizing it in his own study. When evaluating sources, e.g. news articles and other documents, in this study the context, time and place of the source will be evaluated in order to provide an objective standing point to the study.

Consequently, cases are often subject to bias by the researcher, especially when choosing cases through the dependent variable. By choosing cases for a research purpose via the dependent variable, the researcher finds cases based on relationships and correlation, when

there in fact is none. In other words, the researcher scrutinizes case A and B, while ignoring CDEFG which may disapprove this correlation. This study has carefully handpicked already existing notions of MSA, of which the effect on the dependent variable is only presumed.

The generalizability of the conducted study is debatable. On one hand, the findings of a qualitative studies may be true for a wider population of cases, e.g. the national mood that move pollution issues from the public agenda to the policy agenda is applicable to most public environmental action efforts. On the other hand, the study conducted is a case study, therefore the findings are of in-depth nature and poses a generalizability issue as the attempt to prove that the study is a representative sample of the wider population of cases. This research is an extension of central facets found within MSA literature and belongs to the novel field of its applications in environmental public contexts, similarly to Carter & Childs study of Friends of the Earth (2018).

As this study belongs to the category of small-n research its validity rests on two main concerns; there is a higher likelihood of measurement error in small case studies and often the replicability of the study is low. Therefore, I have attempted in this section to clarify the reasoning and methods that are the foundation of this research. The operationalization in itself provide some strength to the general structure, as it transforms abstracts concepts to measurable and observable findings that are key in scientific research. Moreover, it provides a framework for data collection, thus leaving little room for subjective and biased interpretations of the examination, as well as operational structure that can be utilized by other researchers to arrive at the similar findings. Contrariwise, operationalization may sometimes be fuzzy due to the translation of definitions to concepts. Concepts are bound to the temporal and social settings; what is understood as national mood in the Netherlands, may be considered as something else in the Global East.

## 2.6 Data Collection

The sources that will determine the outcome of this research range from news items to political agendas. The newspaper articles account for the largest source of data from which the research questions and hypotheses will be scrutinized. For this study three major Dutch news outlets were selected, Trouw, De Volkskrant and Het Parool, and relevant data was

collected from these sources utilizing the Nexis Uni database available through Leiden University. The database comprises of contemporary articles in regional and national Dutch newspapers, thus suitable for the temporal and regional limitations set for this research. The interest group's names were utilized as the principal key words in the search for data from the database (Urgenda, Milieudedefensie, Meten=Weten), as their public actions were central to their activities and the possibility of relevant information being excluded was limited. This resulted in a high number of results, yet these were further refined through the limited time span of 2010-2020 and selection of newspaper in the database. The time period of 2010-2020 was chosen on the basis of conducting relatively contemporary research that aims to interpret present affairs within this realm. What is more, all interest groups have been plain during this time; they have commenced their activities and/or they have been operative. An exception regarding the limitations was made in the search of relevant data for Meten=Weten, as it implies a common Dutch saying 'Meten is Weten' (to measure is to know) which has been employed in various settings and ways in the Dutch media throughout the years, culminating in an enormous amount of keyword results. Therefore, the original limitations of time were replaced with 2018-2020 due to the novelty of the interest group, as well as additional sectoral limits (Agriculture, Forestry, Hunting & Fisheries) were imposed while conducting a keyword search in the newspaper Trouw.

In total the keyword searches yielded 1997 articles, of which 238 were deemed relevant through content analysis, hence coded for use in the following data analysis. The findings per keyword and newspaper are presented in further detail in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Results of Keyword Search through Nexis Uni**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Urgenda</b>	<b>Milieudedefensie</b>	<b>Meten=Weten</b>
<b>Total</b>	1.997	810	1.149	38
<b>Trouw</b>	1016	474	523	19
<b>De Volkskrant</b>	630	227	400	3
<b>Het Parool</b>	351	109	226	16
<b>Total coded articles</b>	238	118	103	15

Through content analysis I was able to limit the number of relevant newspaper articles to themes, as well as categorize and code the data for the analysis. This deductive manner of coding implied a predefined set of codes that indicated the content: Policy entrepreneur, National Mood, Feedback, Problem, Policy, Process. The purpose for utilizing these codes was to make the rich dataset of newspaper articles more user friendly and clear for the analysis. In other words, each of the codes contain and display key information on the independent variables or the studied case as whole, e.g. articles that exhibit policy entrepreneurship are coded as ‘Policy Entrepreneur’, making it easier to locate the relevant information while conducting the data analysis, as well as simplifying the measurement of visible policy entrepreneurship that is laid out in the indicator for this independent variable. The codes of ‘National Mood’ and ‘Feedback’ follow a similar logic of coding and measurement. Articles that are given the code ‘Process’ involve data on the so-called journey of the environmental interest group initiative, implying events, activities and developments that elucidate the case as a whole, hence allowing for an overview and timeline to be produced. The ‘Policy’ and ‘Problem’ codes are rather self-explanatory; news items mentioning policies have been given the code ‘Policy’ and items that have demonstrated and discussed the environmental problem related to the environmental initiative by interest groups obtained the code of ‘Problem’. This content analysis and coding is visualized in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Categorization of News Articles**

(News articles can be placed in more than one category based on the results of the content analysis)

<b>Cases</b>	<b>Policy Entrepreneur</b>	<b>National Mood</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Process</b>
<b>Urgenda</b>	31	49	0	46	10	44
<b>Milieudefensie</b>	0	35	10	33	28	46
<b>Meten=Weten</b>	0	9	1	5	9	2

Other sources of data were collected through the interest groups' own networks, which includes website information, letters, as well as documents on proceedings. Moreover, the data that indicated aggregate interests, such as polls and political agendas of Dutch parties were accessed and reviewed through keywords search through Ipsos and Parlement.com.

This chapter has aimed to clarify and justify the research methods used for this thesis. The reasoning for conducting qualitative research methods, including the elucidation of the manner of analysis in the coming chapter should be sufficient in exhibiting it as a replicable study. The following chapter will discuss and analyze the collected data through hypotheses laid out in the theoretical framework.

### 3. Data Analysis

In this chapter I will summarize and analyze the collected data through the various variables. I will commence by discussing each variable and the findings in the three cases, as well as provide an answer on the hypotheses developed in the theoretical framework.

#### 3.1 Dependent variable

The dependent variable of this research is the extension from the public agenda to the policy agenda. It embodies the transition of a noted policy problem in society into the policy process itself, where the issue is then discussed and decided upon by policymakers. In the three case studies it denotes that the issue has been debated and discussed in government, and in due course policy is implemented in order to address the perceived issue.

The case of Urgenda can be considered unique, as it was the first issue influencing agenda-setting through legal means and procedures against the State of the Netherlands. After Urgenda's first victory in the case at the District Court of the Hague in 2015, the Dutch government commenced on conducting policy in line with the court's ruling, yet this was done hesitantly, as the case would turn into a long process due to the government's repeated pleas to the conducted rulings. Within the time after the first ruling and the last in 2019 that posed an obligation the Dutch government to lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 25%, in contrast to the 1990 benchmark by the end of 2020, the government introduced a number of updated policies. In 2016 it was decided that seven out of ten coal-fueled powerplants in the country would be closed, however due to the change in government and shifting opinions, four of ten powerplants have remained in use (De Boer, 2016; Trouw 2020; Besselink 2018; Zuidervaart 2019; Markus, 2019). The climate agreement (Klimaatakkoord) was introduced in June 2019, entailing a number of policies and measures to reduce Dutch CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 49% in 2030 compared to the levels in 1990 (Zuidervaart, 2019). After the Supreme Court ruling in the Urgenda case in December 2019, further measures to reach the obligations set by the court are expected to be implemented, some of which have been lifted from Urgenda's 54 Climate Solutions Plan (Urgenda, 2020; Trouw, 2020). The case of Urgenda, namely the issue of reducing Dutch CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have indisputably become an issue on the policy agenda and will be likely to remain there in the future, due to global warming posing one of the greatest threats to our planet in the coming century.



Similarly to Urgenda, Milieudéfensie aimed to force political agenda-setting along with citizens regarding air pollution through legal means, starting in 2016 (Milieudéfensie, n.d.; Havermans & Verlouw, 2016; Trommelen, 2016). The issue of air pollution and nitrogen emissions had been debated earlier in the Dutch government due to Minister Melania Schultz's decisions to increase maximum speed on certain highways in the junctures of major Dutch cities, therefore it already existed on the policy agenda, yet Milieudéfensie demanded stricter policies as the level of emissions in the air exceeded EU norms. In 2017 the court ruled on Milieudéfensie's short proceeding (kort geding/spoedprocedure) that the government is obligated to present a plan for tackling air pollution and implement policies on that matter as soon as possible (Het Parool, 2017). This led to the making of the new air quality plan that was included in the Nationale Samenwerking Programma Luchtkwaliteit 2018 (SNEP), that included both regional and national policies, e.g. the introduction of electric buses on specific 'bottleneck' routes in Amsterdam, to engender 'a positive effect' around streets like Prins Hendrikkade and the southern end of the Ij-tunnel (Bouma 2017; Giebels, 2018; Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat, 2018, p.1). Further, throughout the past years the two parallel cases by Milieudéfensie vs The State of the Netherlands were pleaded by both parties, but in the final ruling in 2019, the court determined that the Dutch government have enough plans regarding policies (NSPL) to ensure better air quality for their citizens (Milieudéfensie, n.d.; Dirks, 2018; Van Zoelen, 2019). Hence, the issue of air pollution and nitrogen emissions extended to the policy agenda, stimulating policymaking in order to guarantee cleaner air for the Dutch population.

As opposed to the cases of Urgenda and Milieudéfensie, Meten=Weten's public action effort has not attempted to force policy by judicial means, at least yet. However, the interest group has not excluded this option and are currently examining the possibility of proceeding on EU level in order for pesticide spray free zones to be placed on the European Commission's agenda (Meten=Weten, n.d.; Bouma, 2019). The policy problem regarding the use of pesticides in bulb cultivation in Drenthe, has received little attention in the Hague. The House of Representatives debated the outcome of a study regarding the use of pesticides in Drenthe in June 2020, but the issue has not acquired further attention in politics (Trouw, 2020). As a result, Meten=Weten's initiative remains on the public agenda.

The independent variables are hoped to reveal the decisive factors of how these initiatives became a topic of policy. The following sections will review the findings on each of the four variables case by case, concluding with falsifying or verifying the hypotheses prescribed in the theoretical framework.

### 3.2 Feedback

Feedback in MSA literature depicts that if similar projects, i.e. policy issues, have been present on the policy agenda before, the impetus for a problem to extend onto the policy agenda is more probable. The initiative by Urgenda can be considered the first of its kind, in which citizens recognized that the government has a legal duty to prevent dangerous climate change (Urgenda, n.d.). Consequently, no comparable public action efforts have been suggested by the data. Yet, the climate case by Urgenda can be recognized of having a so-called domino-effect as it has inspired many interest groups to force policy on the agenda through similar, legal means. The examined effort of Milieudefensie and Meten=Weten in this research is an example of Urgenda's legacy (Van Houten, 2017; Trommelen, 2016; Bouma, 2019).

Milieudefensie's public action case against air pollution, initiated in 2016, has two comparable projects. The first one is Urgenda, which has been named as a source of inspiration on several occasions in media publications scrutinized for this study (Van Houten, 2017; Trommelen, 2016; Van Mersbergen, 2016). The second implies a legal procedure of which Milieudefensie participated regarding the maximum speed limit at A13 by Rotterdam-Overschie in which Rotterdam District Court overturned Minister Schultz decision to increase the speed limit to 100 km/h (Van der Ploeg, 2014; Van der Aa, 2014). This created a momentum for Milieudefensie to sue the state of the Netherlands two years later. In Meten=Weten's public action effort only Urgenda was referenced once as a source of inspiration, however it remains questionable to what extent it can be considered a comparable project, as they differ in size and procedure (Bouma, 2019).

In other words, Meten=Weten has not initiated legal proceedings yet to force policymaking on their problem, implying that the cases are dissimilar from each other, as much as they are similar to one another. This is due to both initiatives being concerned with pollution. Despite the dataset not indicating a relationship of feedback between the cases of Milieudefensie and

Meten=Weten, this is very likely as they both are organized, metaphorically, under the same umbrella, that of Urgenda. Hence, the correlation between Urgenda and the two other cases can be identified as a parent-child relationship.

As already mentioned, in the case of Urgenda no feedback was detected, yet the case score on the dependent variable, that of the transition to the policy agenda. Furthermore, in Milieudefensie's case feedback was observed along with a transition to the policy agenda. In contrast Meten=Weten did not extend to the policy agenda, but the collected data indicate that there was feedback.

*H1. An earlier comparable environmental initiative increase the policy problem's potential to extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda*

The three cases illustrate covariation in regard to the posed hypothesis, thus exhibiting mixed results on the variable of feedback.

### 3.3 National Mood

The national mood signals the general public's acceptance of a policy problem, in this case pollution, brought forth by an interest group and its endorsement of policymakers (Rozbicka & Spohr, 2016, p.60). Depending on the national mood regarding an initiative, policymakers may be more or less susceptible to put it on the policy agenda.

Urgenda's climate case was initiated by the foundation itself, along with nearly 900 Dutch citizens, thus pointing to a demand from the public to implement policies fighting emissions and reducing pollutants in the Netherlands (Trommelen, 2015; Urgenda, n.d). The data suggested that also policy communities, comprising of scientists and lawyers supported the public action. The judicial document of the Oslo Principles was produced by Spiers and Pogges in 2015, which outlines the legal basis of the moral duty of countries to combat dangerous climate change (Bouma & Franssen, 2015). This document was a notable advancement as it would impact traditional policymaking by means of civil rights procedures; a growing trend that is showcased in the cases of this thesis as well.

In 2015 a group of 29 scientists sent a letter to Prime Minister Rutte, urging the government to not appeal the ruling of the Hague District Court in the Urgenda climate case made earlier

that year (Trommelen 2015; Bouma & Zuidervaart, 2015). The scientists pointed out that a 25% reduction in emissions by 2020 would be achievable if the next step of the policy process could be initiated shortly (Bouma & Zuidervaart, 2015). Similarly, the environmental interest organization Mobilisation started a petition in July 2015 that called the government to not appeal the court's ruling, as it would significantly delay the implementation of effective climate policy (Trouw, 2015).

As a result of Minnesma's letter in 2012, the Labor Party (PvdA) and Green Left (Groenlinks) had displayed their interest in conducting climate policy. Consequently, after the ruling of the Hague District Court in 2015 multiple politicians expressed their support for more rounded climate policy, including Liesbeth van Tongeren (Groenlinks), Carla Dik-Faber (ChristenUnie) and Jan Vos (PvdA) (Bijlo, 2015). Other policymakers from the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), D66 and the Socialist Party (SP) were less enthusiastic in their statements regarding the ruling, and highlighted matters of economic concerns in regard to climate policy, including taxes and the need for a strengthened energy deal among other affairs (Bijlo, 2015). Opposition to the Urgenda case did also exist, as an interest group was advocating against wind energy at Goeree-Overflakkee in the Netherlands (Bouma, 2014). The group claimed that the parties in government and Urgenda frighten people and mobilize them towards climate policy that would benefit the wind lobby, who is seeking to utilize their island for large-scale wind energy production (Bouma, 2014).

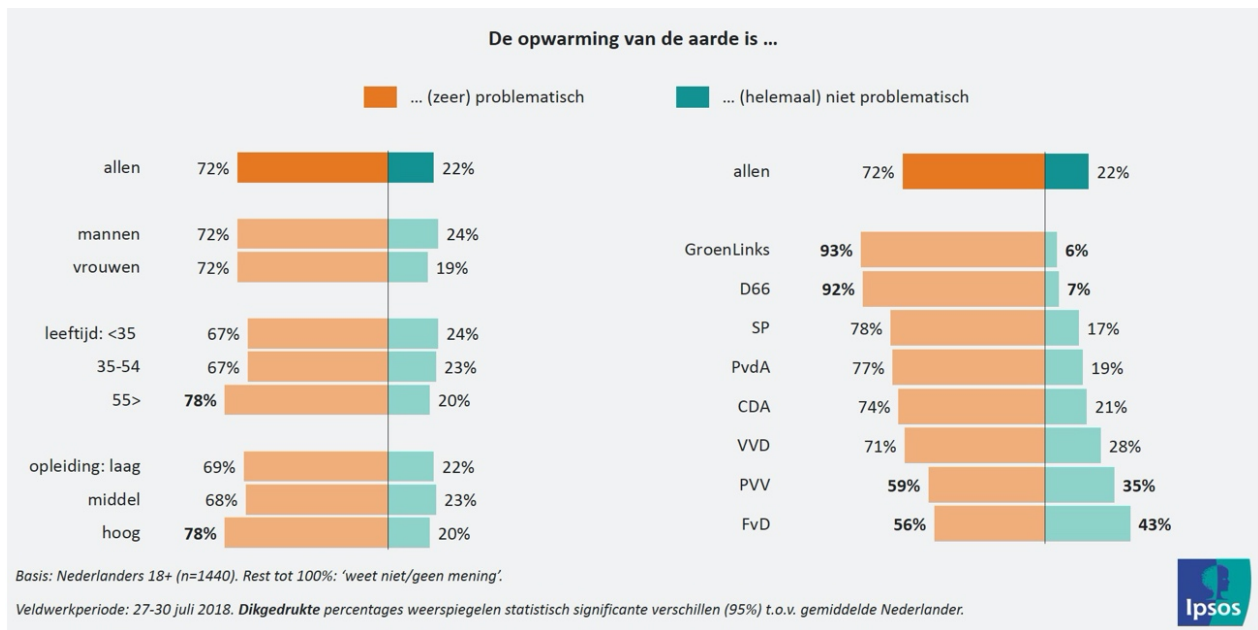
Throughout the years of the Urgenda procedures, the Dutch parties have softened to the idea of enacting efficient climate policy. A prolonged political quarrel between the coalition parties was the closing of coal fueled powerplants and maximum speed on highways which interfered with Urgenda's initiative (Reijn, 2017; Markus, 2019). The inability to take decisions on traffic and energy were largely dependent on the differing views of the Labor Party and VVD (Zuidervaart 2016). One could say the economic repercussions of closing down powerplants were more important to VVD than getting climate policy on the agenda. In parallel, maintaining and increasing the speed limit to 130 km/h on highways was essential to VVD; a key item in their 2012 election program (Zuidervaart, 2015, Giebels, 2018).

The VVD's stance in the 130 km/h was not limited to only Urgenda, instead it played a major role in Milieudefensie's public action effort in combatting pollution. The major issue within the limits of the timeline (2010-2020) has been increased pollution, that of nitrogen

emissions, partly caused by VVD's political interest to raise speed limits on roads orchestrated by Minister Schultz (VVD). Through Milieudefensie's calculations, the amount of nitrogen in the air exceeded EU norms, stating that it would pose a threat to citizen's health. Therefore the matter became an item in the House of Representatives, by the initiative of D66 along with the support of the Green Left as well as the Christian Union (Trouw, 2013; Trouw, 2012). The exceeding nitrogen emissions were centered in the largest Dutch cities; The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Maastricht (Trouw, 2013). The regional authorities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht protested the decision of the increase of maximum speed in December 2011, thus siding with Milieudefensie (Het Parool, 2012). Moreover, the state secretary of environment, Wilma Mansveld (Labor Party), expressed her desire to implement stricter policies to limit nitrogen emissions than the current EU norms in place, during a debate in the House of Representatives in February 2013 (Trouw, 2013). The Green Left party along with D66 supported her statement (Trouw, 2013).

Public interest and support in decreasing speed limits and traffic was wide, including widespread concern regarding the health hazards these pose. To illustrate, increased worry circulated among parents of children attending 7<sup>th</sup> Montessorischool in Amsterdam. Located next to the highway A10, increased air pollution and nitrogen emissions sparked concerns about the health of children, resulting in the school supporting Milieudefensie in their endeavor. Consequently, Dutch citizens began mobilizing nationally to measure air quality in their respective neighborhoods (Het Parool, 2012; Lange, 2013). Likewise, recognized institutions and organizations, such as the Gezondheidsraad and Adem, estimated that the levels of pollution were an existing health concern to citizens, underpinning that the reduction of certain speed limits would improve air quality and the well-being of target groups (ANP, 2018; De Zwaan, 2018; Straver, 2018).

**Figure 5: Depiction of attitudes towards global warming in the Netherlands**



Note: Reprinted from *Nederlanders over klimaatbeleid: Rapport voor De Telegraaf*, by Ipsos, retrieved from <https://www.ipsos.com/nl-nl/hoe-denken-wij-nederlanders-over-klimaatverandering-en-het-klimaatbeleid> Copyright 2019 by Ipsos.

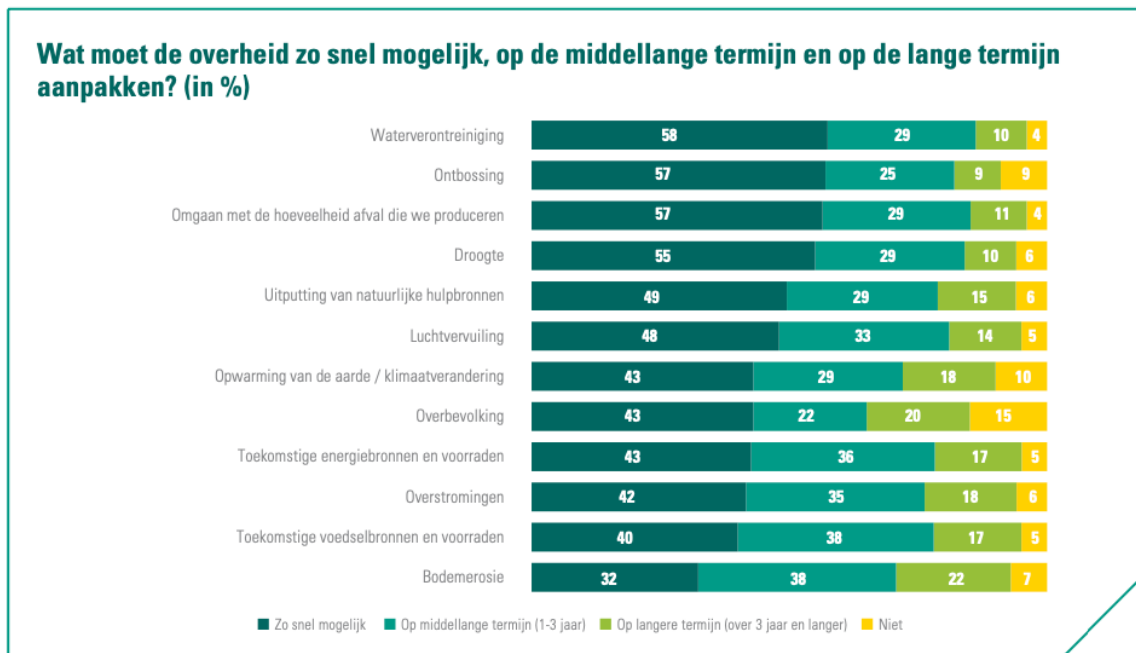
The latter Rotterdam based organization commenced proceedings against the Dutch government together with Milieudefensie and 57 citizens in 2016 (Havermans, 2016).

In order to grasp the overall mood of the nation in relation to pollution, I inspected a number of polls. A poll by I&O Research in 2015 concluded, on the basis of 1999 Dutch nationals, that seven out of ten citizens are worried about the climate (Trouw, 2015). Moreover, half of the respondents find that Prime Minister Rutte’s cabinet should do more to reduce CO2 emissions and six out of ten citizens want a 40% decrease in CO2 emissions compared to the levels of 1990. Similarly, polls conducted by Ipsos indicate that issues related to pollution and climate change are of high interest and concern among the Dutch nation (See Figure 5; Figure 6).

As displayed (Figure 6), Dutch citizens consider air pollution and climate change as nearly equally pressing issues as 48% and 43% of respondents deem that policies should be implemented at the earliest opportunity. However, it is important to notice that the polls have

been conducted later than the processes I have concentrated on. Yet, these polls illustrate the wider trend of a citizens wanting policies implemented that concern emissions. At the time, the climate case of Urgenda vs. The State of the Netherlands indicated that despite a largely recognized issue of pollution and climate change, available policy solutions and the public's support in the issue, there seemed to be a reluctance by the government to insert the matter on the policy agenda.

**Figure 6: Public opinion on Dutch Policies**



Note: Reprinted from *Klimaatverandering heft meer urgentie gekregen door Corona*, by ABN AMRO, retrieved from <https://www.ipsos.com/nl-nl/klimaatverandering-heeft-meer-urgentie-gekregen-door-corona> Copyright 2020, by ABN AMRO

When Meten=Weten commenced their activity, they invited local dwellers to participate monetarily to their project, to enable further investigations into the problem – the use of pesticides, its effects and the stacking effect in the soil (Bouma, 2019). The locals participated with 7400 euros when 1500 euro would have been sufficient in covering the expenses. This observable attentiveness of locals in Westerveld revealed that the case was encouraged (Bouma, 2019). Consequently, the local VVD party council in Westerweld, Drenthe brought about a motion to end the discussion regarding the use of pesticides in bulb cultivation (Bouma, 2019). The motion was radically amended under pressure of angry citizens, which in due course resulted in the abandonment of the motion (Bouma, 2019).

In January 2019, Meten=Weten among other public action groups, such as Bollenboos, joined the newly established Dutch branch of International Pesticide Network, PAN-NL. PAN-NL operates as an umbrella organization uniting environmental interest groups in a joint venture to campaign against the use of pesticides in agriculture (Bouma, 2020). The aim of this undertaking is to stimulate the debate regarding the use of pesticides and mobilize the perceived problems within this field (Bouma, 2020). Further, Milieudefensie, Meten=Weten as well as Bollenboos appealed in February against a zoning plan concerning the outside areas of the municipality of Westerveld asking the council of state to block the implementation of the plan, which is pending a decision in the appeal procedure (Bouma, 2020). As a consequence of the several research projects conducted in the area of Westerveld and the high concentrations of pesticides found in soil engendered worry among environmental organizations, which eventually led to the issue becoming debated in the House of Representatives in June 2020 (Trouw, 2020; Bouma, 2020).

Public interest in Meten=Weten's initiative is comparable to the two other cases, however its publicity and impact is smaller in size in the observed data. Both cases, Urgenda and Milieudefensie, sparked lengthy debates in the government, which culminated in the majority of policymakers to support the cases. Despite the evident disinterest of the VVD, the support can be considered to outweigh the apathy regarding the issue. The data in the sections above suggest that the general public believed that there was a distinguished problem in the cases of Urgenda and Milieudefensie. This belief can also be discerned in the case of Meten=Weten, although the initiative is deemed to be more of local importance than of national. The initiative sparked low interest among policymakers and the general Dutch citizenry, thus I may refer to the case as having an alleged 'local mood', rather than a national mood. The hypothesis for the variable of national mood presented in the theory section reasoned that the national mood play a role in extending issues from the public agenda to the policy agenda:

*H2. In the case there is a national mood regarding a problem, the problem is more likely to extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda*

This hypothesis is verified through the cases of Urgenda and Milieudefensie, as both of these public action problems have been accepted as distinguished problems by the national mood and their initiatives have extended into items on the policy agenda. This also signals that public environmental action initiatives that are not supported or judged relevant by the



national mood are less likely to extend from one agenda to the other, as was showcased in the case of Meten=Weten. Hence, the initiative regarding the use of pesticides in agriculture did not manage to acquire an extension from an agenda to the other.

### 3.4 Policy solutions

The variable of policy solutions is an essential feature of agenda-setting, as it holds the ability to shed light on the other features of this study, e.g. the policy entrepreneur. Policy solutions are central to the policy stream, which affects the temporality (length) of the policy process and determine whether a problem is worthwhile to decide upon or not by policymakers. Policy solutions existing in the ‘policy primeval soup’ are considered to be preferred by policymakers as they are deemed ‘cost-efficient’, meaning that available policy alternatives have already been generated by the respective policy communities. On the contrary, new policy solutions take time to develop in the communities and policymakers’ time horizons are relatively short; efficient policymaking may be favored by the public in re-elections than inefficient policymaking.

The available policy solutions for countering pollution, namely reducing Dutch CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, are many ranging from infrastructure to energy. During the lengthened procedures of Urgenda vs. The State of the Netherlands, the closing of Dutch coal power plants sparked a heated debate, yet it would account for a notable reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that would be achievable by the end of 2020. As the Urgenda case was already ruled for in the District Court of the Hague in 2015 and the Hague Court of Appeal in 2018, thus awaiting the final ruling of the Supreme Court, the state was already obligated to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 25% by 2020 (Markus, 2019). However, due to the ongoing proceedings this effort could be considered as a careful preparation for an alternative, rejected, ruling instead of effective policymaking with 2020 in the horizon; a so-called policy evaluation phase. Awaiting the ruling from the Supreme Court, Urgenda presented the state a roadmap with 54 benchmarks for swift emission reduction in June 2019 to provide a helping hand to the government and encourage agenda-setting (Urgenda, n.d.; Straver, 2020). Urgenda’s 54 climate solutions roadmap was developed with the aid of 800 Dutch organizations; the solutions are considered affordable and supported by a great extent of the Dutch citizenry (Urgenda, n.d.). The climate solutions include making 100.000 rental houses energy neutral, transforming 10% of Dutch

roofs into green roofs, stopping recreational use of laughing gas and etc. (Urgenda, n.d.; Van Zoelen, 2019). The Dutch Supreme Court ruled in December 2019 in the Urgenda climate case that the Dutch government has obligations to significantly and swiftly reduce its emissions (Markus, 2019; Van Zoelen, 2019). This prompted agenda-setting and in April 2020 the government announced its plan to comply with the court orders (Van Zoelen, 2020). The endless debate on coal powerplants reached its finale with a decision by government to reduce their capacities, as well as decisions on a number of smaller implementations that would decrease emissions and promote cleaner air and biodiversity (Trouw, 2020; Urgenda, n.d.; Van Zoelen, 2019). Various measures have been lifted from Urgenda's 54 climate solutions plan, already in the policy evaluation phase in 2019. In the aftermath of the climate case, over 30 of 54 climate solutions provided by Urgenda are being or awaiting implementation on the Dutch policy agenda. (Straver, 2020; Urgenda, n.d.)

Difficulties in public initiatives to extend to the policy agenda is not limited to only the Urgenda case. Similarly, Milieudefensie efforts to influence the government to reduce nitrogen emissions proved to be an even tougher nut to crack despite existing policy solutions to the problem. To achieve a reduction in nitrogen and thus improve air quality in major cities and around highways, the newly increased speed limits on multiple roads could be decreased (ANP, 2012; Van Der Ploeg, 2014). Similarly, the amount of nitrogen around several busy junctions in the cities could be limited through lower speed limits and by introducing environmental zones that would pose limits on old vehicles (Trouw, 2015). The nitrogen case by Milieudefensie to improve air quality got midst in a political quarrel between coalitions (VVD & PvdA), and eventually their case was defeated in court. Yet, problems that would influence the air quality positively were picked up on national and regional policy agendas, hence similar policies were eventually implemented (Giebels, 2018).

A policy solution for ensuring the safety and health of lily farmers and local residents neighboring lily fields in Drenthe, the Netherlands, is the creation of a 100meter margin of spray-free zones of agricultural pesticides by the fields (Bouma, 2019). This policy solution was brought forth by Meten=Weten (Bouma, 2019). However, due to the novelty of the interest group it will be interesting to see how this case will continue to develop and whether or not a local, smaller issue will be lifted to the national agenda.

*H3. If a policy solution does exist to the mobilized problem of pollution, then it will result in the extending to the policy agenda.*

The likelihood of an issue advancing to the policy agenda when a policy solution is present can be considered higher, as it is easier to implement, thus confirming the hypothesis. Nevertheless, issues that hinder the advancement are notable in all of the cases, from locality to topic. It is therefore reasonable to question whether this is an issue for the pollution domain as a whole, and whether similar restraints in advancement from one agenda to the other exist in other areas of policy, e.g. in the field of health. On one hand, policies regarding pollution have economical and infrastructural repercussions, but on the other hand in other policy domains one can notice a similar chain of cause and effect in policymaking. Therefore, another question to ponder is whether the advancement from an agenda to the other is a political preference; in other words, is it a question of ideology and interest?

### 3.5 Policy entrepreneur

Rewinding to earlier mentions in the theoretical and conceptual framework for this research, the three streams (problem, policy, political) are essential in the MSA. Despite the common consensus of the political, policy and problem stream flowing independently of one another, they may be coupled together during windows-of-opportunity by the aid of a policy entrepreneur. A policy entrepreneur is conceptualized as a figure who invest their skills and resources for a policy problem, thus employing strategies to couple the three streams and formulating them to attractive policy bundles for policymakers to possibly engage in. The policy entrepreneur is a key figure within policy process literature and its role in extending a problem from the public agenda to the policy agenda in this study cannot be left unexplored.

In the climate case by Urgenda this coupling of the streams is evident in multiple instances. The policy window for Urgenda emerged via changes in the problem and political stream; the problem of global warming being voiced and implemented to the global agenda via international organizations, as well as the Dutch political interest and disinterest in taking responsibility to enact climate policy.

In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that the rise in global temperatures is for the most part due to increased greenhouse gases in the atmosphere,

induced by carbon emissions of human activities (IPCC, 2007). Moreover, it was concluded that global warming could not be avoided, however dangerous climate change could still be circumvented if the average rise of temperature would remain below 2 degrees Celsius of pre-industrial levels. In order to achieve this goal, worldwide emissions need to be reduced by 50% of the global emission in the year 1990 (Minnesma, 2012). The report by the IPCC can be considered as an indicator in the problem stream as it paved the way for conclusion of a plethora of international agreements and treaties. During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> United Nations Climate Change Conferences, in Copenhagen and Cancun, the UN Climate Treaty of 1992 of solidified from abstract terms to agreements between participating states to prevent dangerous climate change, thus ensure a global rise of temperature to below 2 degrees Celsius (Minnesma, 2012). It was agreed that developed countries, including the Netherlands, would have to reduce their carbon emissions by 25-40% by 2020 and 80-95% compared to the levels in 1990 (Minnesma, 2012). The issue of pollution, namely CO<sub>2</sub> emissions gained more ground, leading to the ripening of the problem stream.

The rising problem of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was voiced by the director of Urgenda, Marjan Minnesma, in a letter to the state of the Netherlands and the Dutch government in November 2012. Minnesma's letter brought about a motion by the Animal Party (Partij voor de Dieren) in the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) in 2012, yet it was turned down with 6 votes for (Green Left, Animal Party) and 138 against (Bouma, 2013; Trommelen, 2015). This displayed an opportunity and a threat in the political stream; opportunity as political interest was exhibited, a threat as it portrayed that the majority of policymakers in the House of Representatives did not deem the issue urgent and worthy of a place on the agenda. As a consequence, Minnesma and Urgenda began to develop further strategies to attempt in maintaining the policy problem on the Dutch policy agenda within this window-of-opportunity.

The director of Urgenda, Marjan Minnesma, may be regarded as a policy entrepreneur in this case. When attempting to observe a policy entrepreneur, the indicator for measurement was set on frequency and visibility; Minnesma was recorded in 31 times in the dataset comprising of newspaper articles. On account of the Urgenda climate case process Minnesma has emerged as a highly public figure in the field of environmental issues and pollution globally. To illustrate her policy entrepreneurship, she has been selected in three consecutive years as the most sustainable Dutch citizen by the newspaper Trouw's annual listing of the sustainable

100 (Bezemer, 2013). Her work and advocacy extend over national borders, as she has been lecturing and sharing her insights, as well as strategies in combatting climate change, globally, e.g. in Australia (Bouma, 2013; Bouma, 2015).

The policy entrepreneur is conceptualized as an actor that invest resources and skills to promote certain policies, while mobilizing opposition and support, including the activation of attention to certain issues. The strategy employed by Urgenda took into account this valuable aspect of mobilization and attention through a form of crowdfunding, namely crowd pleading (crowd pleiten) (Trouw, 2012). This undertaking would incorporate the Dutch public into the effort and interested citizens could showcase their support and knowledge for the cause through a newly established website ([wijwillenactie.nl](http://wijwillenactie.nl)) (Trouw, 2012). This strategy can be considered a part of a larger campaign by Urgenda to share knowledge, induce interest and mobilize support for their climate case, which was initiated in 2015 along with 886 Dutch citizens (Trouw, 2012; Trommelen, 2015).

The resources and skills a policy entrepreneur possess may range from an entrepreneur to another. The director of Urgenda has a large pool of connections and experience which are and have been beneficial in the climate case venture. Prior to Urgenda, Minnesma worked as a campaign leader at Greenpeace, where she also was the boss of Diedrik Samson, the former Labor Party leader (PvdA). Other influential connections of Minnesma include Jan Rotmans, the renowned other half of Urgenda as well as Roger Cox, a lawyer from Maastricht who wrote a book called 'Revolutie met Recht' in 2011 depicting climate policy through judicial proceedings. Roger Cox also represented Urgenda in the case against the State of the Netherlands and has since then undertaken similar projects worldwide. The aggregate of information extracted from the dataset evidence that Minnesma's broad network, combined with her multidisciplinary education and experience, as well as the passion for a sustainable future make her an eligible figure for the concept of the policy entrepreneur.

The data suggests that no observable policy entrepreneur has been present in the cases of Milieudéfensie and Meten=Weten. At the time of Milieudéfensie vs. the State of the Netherlands, Anne Knol acted as the campaign leader for Milieudéfensie (Van de Weijer, 2016; ANP, 2016). Knol held a leading position throughout the process; she could be considered as the representant of the case for the media, however the dataset did not specify Knol's connections, strategies nor resources. The MSA theory define policy entrepreneurship

as a role that may be performed by an organization, hence it is not tied to a person.

Milieudefensie itself can be considered as a policy entrepreneur, yet the other sections of this study indicate that the merging of the three streams in this case was unsuccessful as their efforts extended to the policy agenda only partially.

Comparably, no patterns were distinguished in the Meten=Weten case in regard to the policy entrepreneur. The protagonists, leading the public action, were Alok van Loon and Rob Chrispijn, both citizens of the Westerveld municipality (Bouma, 2019). Van Loon and Chrispijn acknowledge the municipality, for legal reasons, cannot forbid the use of pesticides in bulb cultivation, however they are attempting to make agreements with farmers and citizens (Bouma, 2019).

In the case of Urgenda the policy entrepreneur was a highly visible figure, appearing the most consistently in the dataset. This points out a stark difference between the three cases; a very active and visible policy entrepreneur versus no observable entrepreneur. The Urgenda case highlights the multiple strategies a policy entrepreneur can employ, from mobilizing support to producing policy solutions, thus creating attractive policy packages for policymakers to collect (Straver, 2020; Bouma, 2015). However, the unobserved policy entrepreneur in the cases of Milieudefensie and Meten=Weten does not mean that no strategies were in place. The collected data mediates that both public action efforts seem to have an arranged strategy, that of conducting research and presenting data, mobilizing support and uniting with other organizations for a common cause (Adem & Bollenboos), as well as introducing available policy solutions to their respective policy problems (Van Lieshout, 2015; Bouma, 2020; Havermans, 2016; Bouma, 2020, Heijne, 2013). In the theoretical framework I hypothesized the following:

*H4. If a policy entrepreneur is present in the environmental public action effort, then the effort has a higher likelihood of settling on the policy agenda.*

As proved and discussed in the previous sections, a policy entrepreneur can be deemed beneficial in advancing the cause to the policy agenda through utilizing a number of strategies and resources. Nevertheless, the strategies are not only dependent on the policy entrepreneur itself but the interest group as a whole, like the case of Milieudefensie has

displayed. Milieudefensie's public action extended to the policy agenda despite having an observable policy entrepreneur, hence deeming the hypothesis inconclusive.

#### 4. Discussion

Through the hypotheses I have aimed to uncover the causes of effects. The objective of this study was to determine which factors influence the extension from the public agenda to the policy agenda, which was crystallized in the research question: How do environmental interest group initiatives extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda? The research question thus encompassed the dependent variable of the transition of an issue from one agenda to the other. By analysis of the collected data, I was able to determine that the public action effort by Urgenda and Milieudefensie have extended from the public agenda to the policy agenda. It was concluded that interest group Meten=Weten's policy problem remains on the public agenda, as a result of the scant attention it has received in national politics, when contrasted with the public action efforts of Urgenda and Milieudefensie.

In order to determine the factors that have caused the extension from the public agenda to the policy agenda, I utilized four central concepts of the Multiple Streams Approach; a theory aimed to shed light on agenda-setting by means of a three-stream metaphor. The four concepts scrutinized in this study was the policy entrepreneur, national mood, feedback and policy solutions. The latter three demonstrate the political stream and the policy stream in the MSA, as well as the three case studies flow within the problem stream. In the previous chapter, I analyzed the four concepts in each of the case studies; the findings, that of the scores on the independent variables are organized in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Covariational table based on findings**

<b>Cases</b>	<b>X(1): Policy Entrepreneur  (Yes/No)</b>	<b>X(2): National Mood  Acknowledged/Oblivious)</b>	<b>X(3): Feedback  (Yes/No)</b>	<b>X(4): Policy Solutions  (Present /Absent)</b>	<b>C(1): 2010 - 2020  (Yes/No)</b>	<b>C(2): The Netherlands  (Yes/No)</b>	<b>C(3): Pollution  (Yes/No)</b>	<b>Y: Extension from public agenda to policy agenda  (Yes/No)</b>
<b>Urgenda</b>	Yes	Acknowledged	No	Present	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Milieudefensie</b>	No	Acknowledged	Yes	Present	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Meten=Weten</b>	No	Oblivious	Yes	Present	Yes	Yes	Yes	No



The presence of a policy entrepreneur was only observed in the case of Urgenda. Urgenda, being the most impactful of all three cases exhibit that a policy entrepreneur is essential when attempting to thoroughly influence policymaking swiftly. The case by Milieudéfensie made similar scores to Urgenda, however their attempts did fall short as no policy was conducted nor implemented during their probable window-of-opportunity. Perhaps in the presence of a policy entrepreneur, Milieudéfensie's case may have resulted in tighter policy regarding nitrogen emissions and air pollution, than the current ratification of European norms, as the political and public acceptance in the issue already existed together with policy solutions. Another case in point may be that a policy entrepreneur was not successful in merging the three streams, or the collected dataset failed to diagnose its presence. What is more, the interest group itself may have played the role of the policy entrepreneur, as it was able to couple policy solutions, mobilize support and identify the problem through indicators.

Neither was policy entrepreneurship perceived in Meten=Weten's public activity. There could be a number of reasons for this: the issue may be considered too much of a local problem of pesticide use in agriculture or the novelty of the public action, meaning a policy entrepreneur may not have found this endeavor yet. Hence, only the public effort of Urgenda scored on this independent variable (Figure 7).

It is important to note that this study does not reflect the complete opinion of the Dutch society, but has made use of parts of it, provided in the information presented in the dataset and polls. In general, national mood can be considered too complex and diverse to define for the purpose of empirical exploration, including Kingdon's original theory discouraging the use of opinion polls to conclude the concept. However, Herweg et al., (2015) point out that due to the contemporary professionalization of political parties in parliamentary systems, utilizing opinion polls as empirical representation of national mood is acceptable, taken that current politics also rely on the systematic use of this data.

The climate case by Urgenda proved to have the public's acceptance and interest, as already noted in the data analysis section. Data implied that the public and some of the policymakers shared a concern of climate change, and therefore the issue reached the policy agenda, prompting a plethora of climate policy.

In parallel to Urgenda, the case of Milieudefensie was widely debated and opinions regarding the issue of air pollution shifted. Despite Milieudefensie losing its court case in 2019, the perceived problem had become an item on the policy agenda, resulting in the implementation of policies that would improve air quality in the Netherlands. It was concluded that in both cases, Urgenda and Milieudefensie, there was a national mood regarding the problem (Figure 7).

What is interesting in the cases of Urgenda and Milieudefensie was the hesitance by government to address the issue. In the theory section I laid out that political parties may be unbothered by national mood and interest group pressure if they perceive a win in the next elections as certain or if the governing parties believe their manner to address the issue is the most favorable. It seems that the increasing and decreasing of speed limits, that was central in Milieudefensie's air pollution problem, did not significantly bother VVD as they were convinced about their political standing in the next elections, which in hindsight can be considered accurate. Further, the disinclination for the Urgenda case seemed to be the other reason; the governing parties appeared to want to enact climate policy in their own pace and manner, which is exemplified in the court appeals and the hassle regarding the climate and energy deals in government.

In contrast the public and policymakers were quite oblivious to the public action effort of Meten=Weten and the use of pesticides in agriculture, implying that there was no sense of a national mood towards the problem. The question worth reflecting over in this case is whether this public action effort was too new, small-scaled or local to spark interest among the larger public and policymakers. Also, the case of Meten=Weten has been contrasted with two significantly larger cases, therefore it is important to question the relation and gaze. If Meten=Weten would have been compared to public action efforts of the same magnitude, would the findings remain the same as in this research? The policy problem of Meten=Weten did not extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda nor did the data indicate a national mood (general public acceptance) in the issue. Hence, as concluded in the section discussing the independent variable of the national mood, public action efforts with the general public's acceptance of a problem are more likely to extend from the public agenda than the public action efforts with an oblivious national mood.

The hypothesis related to the independent variable of feedback displayed mixed results. It showcases that comparable projects are not necessary in the move from an agenda to the other, as illustrated by the case of Urgenda. As earlier noted, the public action concerning CO2 emissions became an issue on the policy agenda, however it did not have any comparable projects within the set timeline and geographical location of the Netherlands. On the contrary, I was able to discern to instances of feedback related to the case of Milieudéfensie, which in turn verified the hypothesis. Owing to this, one could conclude that comparable projects are of benefit in the absence of a policy entrepreneur. Meten=Weten scored alike on this independent variable, however the main difference remain that an extension was not detected from the public agenda to the policy agenda.

Through assessing the scores on the independent variables in all of the cases (Figure 7), I am able to discern a pattern suggesting that three scores on the independent variables influence public action's move from the public agenda to the policy agenda. The results imply that the combination of three observed independent variables, the existence of a policy entrepreneur, policy solutions and national mood; or the existence of feedback combined with a national mood and available policy solutions hold the ability to extend the problem from the public agenda to policy agenda. In other words, the outcome signifies that a policy entrepreneur is not necessary for an issue to become an item on the policy agenda if feedback, national mood and policy solutions exist. Likewise, a comparable project is not a requisite for the extension to the policy agenda when the national mood, available solutions and a policy entrepreneur are detectable in the case. The case of Meten=Weten reinforces this theory as the environmental public action exhibited only two of the studied independent variables, that of feedback and policy solutions, and thus, did not extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda. So, how do environmental interest group initiatives extend from the public agenda to the policy agenda?' This case study has shown that environmental interest group initiatives may become an item on the policy agenda if at least three key concepts of the MSA are present in the case.

## Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to recognize the factors that are able to move public concerns, by means of interest group action from the public agenda to the policy agenda. The theoretical backbone of this research is Kingdon's original Multiple Streams Framework, and its essential concepts have been discussed and adopted into the analysis. Further, Jones et al.'s (2016) update and refinement of these concepts, such as Feedback, were utilized as it seems only reasonable to include the development of a theory, to modernize theory to fit modern processes and policy better. This thesis has shown that the Multiple Streams Approach is still applicable to depict modern day policy processes and events in the political and public sphere. Moving forth, the research conducted in this study is fit for further modification and change; more concepts of Jones et al.'s (2016) contribution could be included and the policy area could be any. In order to further test and develop the conclusions of this research, namely the pattern of two independent variables influencing the transition from the public agenda to the policy agenda, I would suggest the inclusion of more concepts, e.g. load and ideology, to test whether the theory holds.

As mentioned earlier, the MSA depicts a plethora of universal concepts and the framework is considered to have a low-barrier-to-entry. The universality of the theory is as much of an opportunity as a threat. The universal concepts are applicable to almost every case within public policy and through the operationalization one is able to make sense of political agenda-setting. However, in regard to conceptual development of MSA and new research utilizing the original notions may create implications, as the theory is applied to new problems, areas of study and periods of time that were not considered in the making of the framework (Herweg et al, 2015, p.436). The original theory by Kingdon was based on presidential systems, namely the USA, and not contemporary parliamentary systems in Europe. The limitations and implications of the application of Kingdon's notions did occur in this thesis as well, as the studied policy problems extended from the public agenda to the policy agenda through legal means. This could have been avoided by selecting cases more intuitively, however it would have enhanced the risk of selection bias. Moreover, the replicability and generalizability of this thesis remain rather low; partly due to it being a case study analyzing in-depth information, but more importantly the case of Meten=Weten proving to be quite different from the others, in terms of size, influence, setting and target group. Another case to replace Meten=Weten, that is more comparable to the two other cases

in this study could have resulted in different, perhaps more fruitful findings, nevertheless it does pose a considerable threat to maintaining an unbiased case selection.

The research conducted in this thesis continues in the relatively novel path of studying public environmental organizations through MSA, like Carter and Child's study of the role of the policy entrepreneur. I support Rozbicka and Fraussen (2017), as well as Herweg et al., (2015) statement that interest groups maintain a key position in political agenda-setting and MSA theory, consequently extending an invite for future studies to explore this aspect and advancing the application of MSA to new situations. In various ways the examination found in this thesis is distinguishable from interest group applications of MSA, since its cases incorporate interesting notions of policymaking through law and civil rights in an age of global warming. The mentioned notions could prove to be interesting and fruitful avenues for research in the future, indicating the fusion of public policy and justice that may indicate how policy is made in the future and how democracy may change over time. Political agenda-setting has evidently transformed and become more modernized since Kingdon's time. As a result, agenda-setting and policy processes may be more ambiguous than Kingdon initially supposed, which can undermine the concepts explanatory value, thus I am questioning how can we attempt to explain affairs that are obscure. Future scholarship applying the MSA should consider this and take into account the refinements proposed by scholars such as Herweg and Zahariadis when seeking to explain contemporary events through the agenda-setting lens.

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