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Abstract

The literature on policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes has found that policymakers make use of evidence in national-specific ways, and that the administrative and institutional characteristics of countries influence this. These fields have however so far neglected to research whether different policy areas within one country also make different use of evidence. This study researches whether this is the case by comparing the policy areas of diversity policy and energy policy in the Netherlands with each other, and it analyses which types of evidence are used and how the character of the policy areas influences this. Four cases have been compared with each other; two cases that concern themselves with diversity policy and two cases that concern themselves with energy policy. Data was collected by conducting a citation analysis of letters to parliament, websites and other policy documents and by interviewing 11 policymakers. This study finds that the technical character of energy policy causes policymakers to make use of more complex and specialist evidence, and because of the substantial economic interests behind the energy transition, there are furthermore more evidence providers that play a role in the area of energy policy. Energy policy and diversity policy however also show great overlap with each other; they both attach great value to evidence that is provided by practitioners, because the policymakers working on both policy areas have a supporting and stimulating role.

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List of Abbreviations

BZK	Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties [Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations]
CBS	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Central Bureau for Statistics]
CPB	Centraal Planbureau [Central Planning Bureau]
EZK	Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate]
IenW	Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat [Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management]
IPO	Interprovinciaal Overleg [Association of Provinces of the Netherlands]
LNV	Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit [Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality]
OCW	Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap [Ministry of Education, Culture and Science]
NGB	Nederlands Genootschap van Burgemeesters [Dutch Association of Mayors]
NPRES	Nationaal Programma Regionale Energiestrategie [National Program Regional Energy Strategy]
NSOB	Nederlandse School voor Openbaar Bestuur [Dutch School for Public Administration]
NvvR	Nederlandse Vereniging voor Raadsleden [Dutch Association of Local Councilors]
NWO	Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek [Dutch Research Council]
PAW	Programma Aardgasvrije Wijken [Program Gas Free Neighbourhoods]
PBL	Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving [Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency]
SCP	Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau [Social-Cultural Planning Bureau]

SER	Sociaal-Economische Raad [Economic and Social Council]
SZW	Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid [Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment]
UvW	Unie van Waterschappen [Dutch Water Authorities]
VNG	Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten [Association of Dutch Municipalities]
VvG	Vereniging van Griffiers [Association of Municipal Secretaries]
VWS	Ministerie van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport [Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport]
WRR	Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid [Scientific Council for Government Policy]

1. Introduction

Scholars have written extensively about how evidence influences the policymaking process. The roots of this idea can be found in the scholarly field of evidence-based policymaking, which started receiving more attention during the 1990s. In this decade, governments all over the world sought to modernize their public services. There was a need for more effective and efficient solutions to problems that had become increasingly wicked, and there was a need for less government failures (Sanderson, 2002b; Howlett, 2009). To achieve this, as the literature on evidence-based policymaking argues, policies need to be well grounded in rigorous and objective research, and experts should therefore play an important role in the policymaking process (Radaelli, 1995).

As a result of the impact of the evidence-based policy making literature, governments now rely heavily on evidence when formulating public policies. The early literature on evidence-based policymaking did however not pay attention to how governments actually use evidence in practice and which kinds of evidence play an influential role during the policymaking process (Head, 2016). Halligan (1993) was one of the earlier academics who addressed this question when he introduced the concept of 'policy advisory systems'. This concept can help us characterize and analyse the multiple sources of policy advise that governments use in policymaking processes (Craft & Howlett, 2013). Through analysing policy advisory systems, we can trace back which types of policy advice and which types of advisors may have contributed to public policies. Scholars have furthermore shown that policy advisory systems are nationally specific, and which types of policy advice play a dominant role in a country depends on the national specific political, institutional and administrative dynamics, such as the policymaking regime that is in place (May & Jochim, 2013; Hustedt & Veit, 2017; Van den Berg, 2016; Pattyn et al., 2019).

Related to the concept of 'policy advisory systems' is the concept of 'knowledge regimes', which was introduced by Campbell and Pedersen (2014). The concept of knowledge regimes builds upon the scholarly field of ideational analysis, which argues that the personal ideas of policymakers matter greatly in the policymaking process (Hall, 1993; Campbell, 2002; Schmidt, 2008). Campbell and Pedersen however argue that the field of ideational analysis has neglected to show where these ideas come from, and they propose that policy ideas are to a great extent influenced by the evidence that knowledge regimes produce. According to Campbell and Pedersen (2014, p. 3), "knowledge regimes are the organisational and institutional machinery that generates data, research, policy recommendations, and other ideas

that influence public debate and policy making". Through their analysis of knowledge regimes surrounding economic policy in the USA, France, Germany and Denmark, the authors thus provide an answer to the question of where the evidence on economic policy in these countries comes from. The authors find that the knowledge regimes in these four countries differ greatly from each other and that these differences are mainly caused by the different institutional and administrative arrangements in these countries. They argue that knowledge regimes are 'nationally specific constructions' whose structure and practices are to a great extent influenced by the specific policymaking regime and institutional features, and because of this, policy ideas and the evidence that produces these ideas are also nationally specific (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, p. 16). Campbell and Pedersen therefore encourage others to apply the concept of knowledge regimes to other countries as well, as knowledge regimes in other countries would probably look very different than the knowledge regimes in the countries that were studied by the authors. In their concluding chapter, Campbell and Pedersen furthermore ask the question of whether their findings would have been different if they had mapped out a knowledge regime of a different policy area. Just as countries have their own specific institutional and administrative characteristics, policy areas also have their own policymaking regimes and policy styles (May & Jochim, 2013; Richardson 1982). This is also a gap in the policy advisory literature. The literature on policy advisory systems agrees with the literature on knowledge regimes that evidence is used in national specific ways, but little attention has been paid to different policy areas within one country. Do the differences between policy areas also lead to a different use of evidence by policymakers, or is the national way in which evidence is used more dominant? The purpose of this study is therefore to fil up this gap in the literature, and to compare two different policy areas in the Netherlands with each other, namely diversity policy and energy policy. The research question is formulated as follows:

How do the characteristics of policy areas influence which evidence is used by Dutch policymakers?

There are many definitions of the concept of evidence, so it is important to make clear first what is meant by this term. The concept of evidence in this study refers to information, research or knowledge that is specifically used during the policymaking process, by policymakers, to help these policymakers with creating policy measures. This evidence can be actively supplied to or demanded by policymakers for their policy work (Pattyn et al., 2019, p. 4) and it can be supplied by a wide array of actors, namely academics, private research organisations, state

research organisations, think tanks and interest organisations. These different actors will be elaborated on in the Methodology section. For the evidence that is supplied by think thanks and interest groups it is furthermore important to acknowledge that this evidence may sometimes have a more scientific nature, and other times a more advocating one (Jochem, 2013; Fraussen & Halpin, 2016).

As mentioned before, this study fills up an empirical gap in the literature on knowledge regimes and policy advisory systems. It is however not only relevant to study the use of evidence by policymakers within different policy areas from an academic point of view; this study is also relevant from a democratic perspective. It is very important to research which evidence is used during the policymaking process, because evidence directly influences which problem definitions and which policy alternatives are adopted by policymakers, and evidence thus ultimately influences the content of the policies which will have an impact on the lives of citizens (Stone, 2012). Citizens therefore deserve to know how a public policy has been created and which kinds of evidence have played a role during the policymaking process, and this study will make a contribution to this.

Furthermore, the focus on the Netherlands is also interesting. Most of the studies on policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes have focused on the Anglophone countries (Craft & Halligan, 2017), but the Netherlands instead has a consensus-driven, neo-corporatist policy advisory system, which functions differently from policy advisory systems in Anglophone countries, as Van den Berg (2016) has shown. Pattyn et al. (2019) have furthermore analysed the policy-advisory systems in Belgium and Germany, two countries that can also be characterized as consensus-driven, neo-corporatist countries. Countries like the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany for example attach great value to 'authorized institutional representatives' (Strassheim & Kettunen, 2014, p. 270) such as the employer and employee organisations, while Anglophone countries tend to attribute greater value to the most-qualified external expert (Pattyn et al., 2019, p. 3). Van den Berg (2016) furthermore argues that a prominent source of evidence in the Netherlands are ad-hoc advisory committees and external consultants. However, still too little is known about what this exactly means for the way evidence is used by policymakers in practice, and whether the evidence that is used varies among different policy areas. This is therefore also a gap that this study will fill up, by showing which types of evidence are used concretely in a non-Anglophone country.

As aforementioned, to research whether different policy areas use evidence in a different way, the policy areas of diversity policy and energy policy in the Netherlands will be compared with each other. Both these policy areas are very salient and politically disputed; in both the

public and in the political debates on diversity policy and energy policy do people disagree with each other on problem definitions and on the feasibility of proposed solutions. The two cases however also differ from each other, because energy policy has a more technical nature, and is thus expected to be based on very technical and specialist knowledge, while diversity policy is more morally loaded. To study which evidence policymakers working on diversity policy and energy policy in the Netherlands make use of, the methods have been twofold. First of all, a citation analysis of letters to parliament, policy documents and websites has been conducted through which we can get an overview of which experts are cited, and thus which evidence plays a role during the policymaking process. Secondly, semi-structured interviews with policymakers have been conducted. During these interviews, policymakers were questioned on the types of evidence they encounter, because not all the evidence that plays a role during the policymaking process may be cited in policy documents. The interviews furthermore have helped us understand better why certain types of evidence play a role and not others, and this has helped us understand how the specific characteristics of policy areas influence which evidence is used by policymakers.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows: in the next section the theoretical framework for this study will be laid out. After that, the methodology of this study will be discussed, in which the research design is explained more elaborately. After that the results of the citation analysis and interviews will be presented. Finally, this study ends with a conclusion and discussion section, in which the research question will be answered, the findings will be discussed with the help of the literature, the limitations of the study are discussed and possible directions for future research are presented.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the scholarly fields of evidence-based policymaking, policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes that were introduced in the introduction will be elaborated on further, and the chapter ends with some expectations for the analysis.

2.1 Evidence-based policymaking

The topic of evidence-based policymaking first started receiving attention in the 1970s, and then again in the 1990s as part of the commitment of the UK's Labour government under Tony Blair to modernize the public service (Sanderson, 2002a; Head, 2016, Newman, 2017). The growth of the literature on evidence-based policymaking is linked to the need for less

government failures and more effective and efficient solutions to problems that have become increasingly wicked (Sanderson, 2002b; Howlett, 2009). The rationale behind evidence-based policy making is that policy alternatives should be backed up by evidence and rigorous, objective academic research and that experts should rigorously assess the effectiveness and impact of policy options, so that policymakers know precisely what the impact of each policy option will be and which policy option will be the most successful (Radaelli, 1995; Head, 2016). The literature on evidence-based policymaking is however not entirely clear on what counts as evidence. There is no consensus on whether only scientific studies that conduct randomized controlled trials count, or whether other non-scientific types of evidence count as well, such as more advocating evidence coming from interest groups and think tanks (Strück, 2013; Fraussen & Halpin, 2016). Besides the lack of a clear definition of what counts as evidence, more constructivist scholars (Sanderson, 2002a; 2002b; Head, 2016; Strassheim, 2015), have started to challenge the early literature on evidence-based policy making for several other reasons as well, of which the three main ones will be highlighted below.

First of all, the early literature on evidence-based policymaking is based on a rational perspective of the policy-making process; there is a strong belief that policymakers are looking for the 'best', that is, most effective policy option, and evidence and research can help policymakers with their search for this best policy option. The reality of policymaking is however much more complex; policymakers often disagree with each other on problem definitions and the effectiveness of possible solutions (Stone, 2012). The policy-making process is characterized by persuasion, negotiation and compromise, because policymakers often have different ideas about how the world works (Lindblom, 1979; Majone, 1989; Cairney et al., 2016, Stoker & Evans, 2016). This can prevent policymakers from finding the objectively 'best' policy option, because policymakers often have very different opinions on what the best policy option is (Campbell, 2002). The literature on evidence-based policymaking furthermore assumes that there is a linkage between 'good information' and 'good policies', and that high quality evidence will thus lead to effective policies (Head, 2016). Policies may however still fail for various reasons, even when they are backed up by high-quality evidence. Policymakers may for example inadequately apply the evidence to their policies (Howlett, 2009), deliberately ignore the evidence (Parkhurst, 2017), or, since evidence is one of the many factors in the policy-making process, policies may fail because policymakers make other mistakes during the formulation and implementation phases of the policy cycle (Cook, 2000; Howlett, 2009; Bovens & 't Hart, 2011).

The second assumption in the early literature on evidence-based policymaking that is challenged is the assumption that policymakers use evidence objectively, while in reality policymakers can also use evidence politically and selectively to justify and legitimize a predetermined position (Cairney et al., 2016; Schlaufer et al., 2018, p. 645). Because the policymaking process is characterized by persuasion, negotiation and compromise, the stories and narratives that politicians tell to persuade others of their point of view matter greatly, and the political use of evidence can strengthen these stories (Stone, 2012). Evidence can be framed by policymakers so that it fits their story well, and policymakers may selectively look for evidence that supports their story. This can also be called "policy-based evidence": policymakers can commission research that will prove their narrative (Torriti, 2010; Head, 2013; Parkhurst, 2017, pp. 66-67). Policymakers might furthermore also disagree with each other on the quality of evidence. The early literature on evidence-based policymaking assumes that policymakers agree with each other on what 'good' evidence is, but in reality policymakers can question the strength of the evidence in order to weaken the position of other policymakers (Stone, 2012).

The early literature on evidence-based policymaking not only does not recognize that politicians can use evidence politically; it also does not recognize that the experts who produce evidence can have political aims themselves. In reality, experts are not always neutral (Head, 2013; Strassheim, 2015) and just like politicians they can use evidence as a tool for the promotion of political interests (Mably, 2006; Parkhurst, 2017, p. 72). This may be clear for experts that are attached to interest groups or think tanks, because we expect them to advocate the goals of their organisation, but more objective scientists can also have political aims, or their studies may be politically biased (Ashcroft, 2017).

Following the critiques on the early evidence-based policymaking literature, the assumed strict separation between the two spheres of science and policymakers is thus not realistic. Policymakers are not rational actors who seek the objectively 'best' policy option, and experts who produce evidence can have political aims as well. More authors therefore have started to adopt the less stricter term evidence-informed policymaking (Howlett, 2009; Head, 2016). By using this term authors recognize that policymakers still have a need for practical knowledge and guidelines to improve policies (Sanderson, 2002b), but that reality is much more complex than is assumed by the literature on evidence-based policymaking.

2.2 Policy advisory systems

The literature on evidence-based policymaking argues that evidence should play an important role in the policymaking process, but it is still not entirely clear how evidence is used by policymakers in practice. The concept of 'policy advisory systems', which was introduced by Halligan in 1995, tries to shed light on this, and it characterizes and analyses the multiple sources of policy advice, or evidence, used by governments in policy-making processes (Halligan, 1995; Halligan, 1998; Craft & Howlett, 2012; Craft & Howlett, 2013). These evidence providers can be academia, think tanks, advisory committees, advocacy groups, government research agencies, consultants and policymakers themselves (Van den Berg, 2016; Christensen, 2018). Because these actors are often governed differently in different countries, and different countries attach different values to actors like academia, consultants and think tanks, the policy advisory literature argues that the use of evidence by policymakers is nationally specific, and there are therefore types of evidence that can exert a greater influence on the policymaking process in some countries than in other countries (Craft & Halligan, 2017; Pattyn et al., 2019). Also relevant here is that countries have their own specific policy styles (Richardson, 1982; Richardson, 2018; Howlett & Tosun, 2019). The concept of policy styles refers to the distinctive ways in which countries establish long-term patterns of policymaking, such as the policy instruments that are used and the way policy decisions are made. This can also impact the types of evidence that are able to be included in the policymaking process, and the policy style of a country is thus related to the policy advisory system that is in place.

Recently, scholars who analyse policy advisory systems have started to focus on three phenomena that have changed the landscape of policy advice and the use of evidence by policymakers. First of all, scholars have argued that the process of externalisation is changing which actors generate evidence. The externalisation of evidence denotes a shift away from using in-house evidence as a source for policies to a stronger reliance on external evidence providers like consultants and think tanks. The influence of evidence providers outside of government has thus increased in the last few years (Howlett & Migone, 2013; Diamond, 2020). This change has especially occurred in the Anglophone countries (Britain, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand) (Halligan, 1995; Craft & Halligan, 2017), but less so in the continental European countries. The latter have a stronger corporate tradition and are less centralized, and non-governmental knowledge providers and external advisory councils have already had a great influence on the policymaking process for decades in these countries (Van den Berg, 2016).

Secondly, the politicisation of evidence has also changed the nature of policy advisory systems, and this also brings us back to the earlier section on evidence-based policymaking in which the political use of evidence was discussed, both by evidence providers and policymakers. Many actors from both the inside and the outside of government increasingly provide political advice to policymakers, ranging from the personal opinions from policy advisers to explicit partisan advice (Craft & Howlett, 2013). Studies for example find that the advice of inside actors such as political advisors attached to political parties and ministrial entourages have gained influence (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2008; Van den Berg & Dijkstra, 2015), and that the policy advice coming from the more objective outside actors like think tanks has become increasingly political.

Finally, the nature of the policy advice landscape has also changed through internationalisation. More often policymakers look to international policy experts for advice about domestic policies. Furthermore, because policy problems increasingly become international affairs, domestic policy providers can help shape the international policy advisory system on a specific policy area, and the international policy advisory system in turn can influence the decision-making process on the domestic level (Craft & Howlett, 2012; Van den Berg, 2016).

Most of the studies on policy advisory systems have focused on Anglophone countries, but recently a few studies have been conducted in non-Anglophone countries as well. One example is the study by Van den Berg (2016), who has analysed the policy advisory system in the Netherlands from the 1950s until the 2000s. Van den Berg finds that over the past fifty years the policy advisory system in the Netherlands has changed from a "stable and institutionalized, pillarized consensus-generating policy advisory system to a more politicized, flexible and ad hoc policy advisory system" (Van den Berg, 2016, p. 80). During the period of pillarization the Dutch public service relied on a wide system of advisory councils who had to form a proportional reflection of the Dutch society, but in the past few decades this system has changed into a system that is more fluid and fragmented. Nowadays the Dutch system is still characterized by pluralization and the representation of many different societal groups and representative organisations like trade unions, and, partly due to NPM-reforms since the 1990s, the in-house knowledge of the public service has decreased, which in turn has increased the demand for high quality external evidence.

The demand for high quality external evidence can for example be seen in the important role that state research organisations in the Netherlands have played over the past decades These institutions were installed to provide the government with reliable evidence about society (Van

den Berg, 2016, pp. 71-72). Examples are the Central Planning Bureau (CPB), the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS), the Social-Cultural Planning Bureau (SCP) and the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). Van den Berg shows that policymakers in the Netherlands furthermore strongly rely on ad hoc committees, because there is an increased need for specialized expertise which might not be available in the permanent advisory bodies, and there is also a great reliance on temporary external consultants. To illustrate this, the Netherlands has the highest density of management and policy consulting firms in the world, together with the USA (Rosenthal et al., 1996, p. 111). Van den Berg finds that external consultants especially play an important role as providers of policy advice and process support, and they are also involved in policy implementation and policy evaluation to a lesser extent (Van den Berg, 2016, p. 76)

Pattyn et al. (2019) have also analysed policy advisory systems in non-Anglophone countries. This study compares use the of academic evidence in Belgium and Germany with each other, two countries that, like the Netherlands, have a consensus-seeking, neo-corporatist tradition. The authors argue that in these countries there are often a limited number of key interest groups that have institutionalized access to the policymaking process and can thus provide evidence, such as employee and employer organisations, and the search for consensus is the most prominent feature of these countries. The Anglophone countries are instead characterized by the search for 'minimal-winning coalitions', and there is less concern for seeking a broad consensus. What counts in these countries as valuable evidence is the evidence that is provided by the technically most-qualified experts, and the influence of external consultants is often stronger.

2.3 Knowledge regimes

The concept of 'knowledge regimes' is similar to the concept of 'policy advisory systems'; this concept also shows that governments use evidence in national specific ways (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014; 2015). Knowledge regimes are "fields of policy research organisations and the institutions that govern them" and "the organisational and institutional machinery that generates data, research, policy recommendations, and other ideas that influence public debate and policymaking" (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, p. 3). Campbell and Pedersen distinguish four types of evidence providers from each other that can be part of a knowledge regime: private, academic-style scholarly research organisations, advocacy research organisations, party research organisations and state research organisations. A knowledge regime can encompass such elements as how these four types of evidence providers are governed, which evidence

providers policymakers perceive as trustworthy, what kind of expertise governments possess themselves and which channels exist for policymakers and experts to share their ideas with each other (Christensen & Holst, 2017).

Through their analysis of economic policies in the USA, France, Germany and Denmark since the 1970s, Campbell and Pedersen (2014, 2015) show that in each of the countries, different sets of actors, institutions and evidence providers generate ideas to influence the policymaking process. The authors find that the presence of these actors highly depends on the institutional and administrative characteristics of a country and the nationally specific policy-making regime and policy style in place. In more liberal and open markets like the USA, the knowledge regime is characterized by partisanship and heavy competition among various private research organisations like think tanks, while the knowledge regimes of Northern European countries like Germany and Denmark are characterized by a search for compromise and negotiation between the different actors, and these countries rely more on public and semi-public knowledge providers and advisory commissions (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014; Christensen & Holst, 2017), which is comparable to the differences between Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries that studies on policy advisory systems have found (Van den Berg, 2016; Pattyn et al., 2019)

Like the literature on policy advisory systems the literature on knowledge regimes traces the origins of evidence, and it argues that evidence can come from actors like academia, think tanks, advisory committees, advocacy groups, government research agencies, consultants and policy officers themselves (Van den Berg, 2016). Furthermore, the literature on knowledge regimes agrees with the policy advisory systems literature that the use of evidence by policymakers is a nationally specific endeavour. Both the scholarly fields of policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes therefore pose a critique on the early literature on evidence based policymaking, because this field assumes that the channels of access are the same for every type of evidence prover, and that every evidence provider has an equal opportunity to communicate their evidence to policymakers. In reality however, some types of evidence may not be able to get picked up by policymakers, because of the national specific policy regime in place, and not all evidence providers can consequently exercise the same amount of influence on the policymaking process (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, p. 281; Beland, 2016, p. 231).

While the two concepts of knowledge regimes and policy advisory systems are thus quite similar to each other and both analyse where the evidence that policymakers use come from, there are also a few differences between the two. First of all, the literature on policy advisory systems is concerned with every kind of actor that can provide advice to policymakers

in order to help them with shaping policies, and this advice may thus also come from inside of the public service, while the literature on knowledge regimes is more concerned with the knowledge providers who are situated outside of government. Secondly, up until now the literature on knowledge regimes has been concerned with mapping out the regime of evidence providers around a specific policy area, as Campbell and Pedersen (2014) have done for economic policy, while the literature on policy advisory systems has taken up a more macro approach, and has up until now mainly been concerned with mapping out the national policy advisory system in place. The literature on policy advisory systems has thus not focused its analyses on a specific policy area, and we will come back to this in the next section.

2.4 Expectation

As mentioned before, both the studies on policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes have analysed the use of evidence by policymakers in a limited number of countries. While some scholars in the field of policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes have begun to fill this gap in the literature by analysing the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Belgium for example, we still know too little about the use of evidence by policymakers in non-Anglophone countries. This is problematic because, as was shown earlier, both the scholarly fields of knowledge regimes and policy advisory systems argue that the use of evidence by policymakers is a national-specific endeavour. The institutional and administrative characteristics of countries influence which evidence providers play a role in the policymaking process, and it is thus important to compare countries with each other.

The scholarly fields of policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes have furthermore paid even less attention to different policy areas within one country, and too much is unknown about whether the use of evidence by policymakers not only differs between countries, but also between policy areas. The studies on policy advisory and knowledge regimes have shown that the institutional and administrative characteristics influence which evidence is used within a country, but do the specific characteristics that policy areas have also influence which evidence is used within a policy area? Campbell and Pedersen's work has made a start with answering this question, as their analysis looks at a specific policy area, namely economic policy, but their theory has not yet been applied to other policy areas yet. In their concluding chapter, Campbell and Pedersen (2014, pp. 333-334) argue that it is valuable to also look at other policy areas, because then you might find that different kinds of evidence are used by policymakers and that some evidence providers play a more prominent role in some policy areas than in others. The purpose of this study is to begin to fill up this gap in the literature by

comparing two different policy sectors in the Netherlands with each other, namely diversity policy and energy policy, and to research how the characteristics of these policy areas influence the evidence that is used by policymakers.

Based on Campbell and Pedersen (2014, p. 333), it is expected in this study that different policy areas make different use of evidence; different policy areas are often organized and governed in different ways and they each have a specific policy style (Richardson, 1982), and this can influence the use of evidence by policymakers. It is also be expected that policymakers who work on different policy areas attach different value to evidence and need different kinds of evidence for their policy work. If we apply this to energy policy and diversity policy, we can expect that the policymakers working on energy policy need highly specialist and complex evidence, because that policy area has a more technical nature than diversity policy. Diversity policy on the other hand is more generalist and more morally loaded, and the policymakers working on this topic do not need very specialist and technical evidence during the policymaking process. Energy policy might furthermore involve a wider range of evidence providers, given the fact that there are many societal groups who have organized themselves around energy policy and environmental policy (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, p. 334). The expectations in this study are therefore that energy policy and diversity policy make different use of evidence, that energy policy makes use of more complex, technical and specialist evidence compared to diversity policy because of the technical nature of energy policy, and that there are more actors who provide evidence on energy policy than on diversity policy.

3. Methodology

To study how the characteristics of policy areas influence the use of evidence by policymakers, a comparative case study of four cases has been conducted. Data on the four cases has been collected by analysing the citations to evidence providers in letters to parliament, policy documents and on websites and by interviewing policymakers about which types of evidence they use during the policymaking process. Case 1 and 2, the policy areas ‘women in politics and government’ and ‘people with a disability in politics and government’ respectively, fall under diversity policy, and case 3 and 4, ‘the energy transition and participation’ and the ‘Program Gas Free Neighbourhoods’ fall under energy policy. The selection of these four cases and their contents will be elaborated on this chapter. In this chapter the independent variable, the dependent variable and the control variables will also be operationalized and the methods of data collection and the methods of analysis will be explained.

3.1 Operationalization

3.1.1 Independent variable

The independent variable in this study, "the character of a policy area", is a rather broad term, and it is therefore important to explain what is meant by this. There are different factors that can make up the character of a policy area, such as the extent to which a policy area is internationalized, which is for example the case with foreign affairs policies, or whether it is mainly a national affair, but also the extent to which a policy area has a secretive nature, defence policy for example, as opposed to more transparent policy areas (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, pp. 333-334). In this study however, the term "character of a policy area" refers to the extent to which the policy area has a technical nature, hence the question is how policymakers within more technical policy areas use evidence in comparison to policymakers within less technical policy areas. With "technical nature" the extent to which the policy area deals with highly specific and complex policy problems and policy solutions is meant, which require the participants in the policy area to have specific, technical knowledge, and which require participants to take complex technologies into account. Opposed to this are policy areas that do not deal with highly technical and complex policy problems and policy solutions, but are more generalist. The extent to which the policy area has a technical nature is an important characteristic that influences the policy style and the use of evidence by policymakers, because as Thomas and Buckmaster (2013) argue, in policy areas that cover technical and specialist issues, policymakers have to rely more on external experts and evidence than in less technical, more generalist policy areas.

3.1.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable in this study is the "evidence used by policymakers". It is first important to make clear what is meant by 'used'. Evidence in this study is 'used' when it is cited in the documents that are analysed or when policymakers address an evidence provider in the interview that has been conducted. We will return to the methods of data collection in the final part of this chapter.

Evidence in this study is defined as information, research or knowledge that is specifically used during the policymaking process, by policymakers, to help these policymakers with creating policy measures. This evidence can be actively supplied to or demanded by policymakers for their policy work and it may be produced by universities, universities of applied science, non-university research institutes, and think thanks (Pattyn et al., 2019, p.4;

Fraussen & Halpin, 2016). Campbell and Pedersen (2014, p. 30) make a slightly different categorization of actors that can provide evidence to policymakers, namely, private academic-style scholarly research organisations staffed with scholars, professional researchers and analysts, who tend to be politically non-partisan, advocacy research organisations, who tend to be more political and ideologically partisan, political party research organisations and state research organisations.

For this study the categories by Campbell and Pedersen (2014) have been slightly altered; the categories by Campbell and Pedersen are combined with the categories that are mentioned by Pattyn et al. (2019), to make the categories by Campbell and Pedersen more applicable to the Dutch environment. The categories of evidence that are central in this study are:

1. Academic evidence, supplied by scientists who are affiliated with a university or a university of applied science;
2. Private, commercial, academic style scholarly research organisations without a clear ideology or political standpoint, or advisory bureaus or consultancy bureaus;
3. Advocacy organisations with a clear ideology, or interest groups. These groups can have a lobby function, but they can also provide evidence to policymakers. It is important to take this dual function into account when studying these groups (Fraussen & Halpin, 2016).
4. State research organisations, with the most prominent ones in the Netherlands being the WRR, the SCP, the CBS, the PBL and the CPB;
5. Political party research organisations, which are the research organisations that belong to a specific political party. Their function is mainly to supply evidence on which political parties can base their plans, but their evidence may also be picked up by policymakers working within the ministries.

3.1.3 Control variables

To determine how the independent variable, the characteristics of policy area, influences the dependent variable, the use of evidence by policymakers, the cases that will be studied in this thesis must be as similar as possible on other possible variables that can influence the dependent variable; these are the control variables. Three control variables have been selected,.

Control variable 1 is the influence of the ministry on the use of evidence by policymakers. Most ministries in the Netherlands for example have a central Knowledge or

Science department, or Chief Science Officer. This department collects relevant evidence for the different departments within a ministry. These knowledge departments may be governed differently in each ministry, and this may have an influence on the evidence that is supplied to policymakers, and eventually the evidence that policymakers make use of during the policymaking process (Rathenau Instituut, n.d.). Ministries may thus have their own specific ways in which they deal with evidence (Veselý et al., 2018), and it is therefore important to keep this variable constant.

Control variable 2 is the influence that a specific department within a ministry may have on the use of evidence within that department. Departments within a ministry often have their own research or knowledge coordinator who collects the evidence that is relevant for the department (Rathenau Instituut, n.d.). These knowledge coordinators may influence which evidence policymakers make use of because they may have stronger contacts with some evidence providers than which others, or they may have their own ideas about what is considered to be good evidence (Gluckman, 2013). Furthermore, just like ministries may have their own specific ways in which they deal with evidence, this may also be the case for individual departments within a ministry, and this may consequently also have an influence on the dependent variable.

Control variable 3 is the size of the team that works on a specific policy theme. Speaking with evidence providers and processing evidence takes up time, and larger teams may thus be able to process more evidence than smaller teams. It is therefore also relevant to take into account how many people are working on the policy theme (Campbell & Pedersen, 2014, p. 263). A team comprised up of less than 5 people is considered a small team, while a team comprised up of more than 10 people is considered a larger team in this study.

3.2 Case selection

To study how the characteristics of policy areas influence which evidence is used by policymakers, two different policy areas in the Netherlands are studied; diversity policy and energy policy; these cases have been selected because they show variation on the extent to which they are technical policy areas. Energy policy is in this study categorized as a technical policy area, because it deals with specialist policy problems and solutions and policymakers need to take complex technologies into account, while diversity policy is categorized as a non-

technical, more generalist policy area, for which policymakers do not need to take complex technologies into account.[1]

3.2.1 The policy areas of diversity policy and energy policy

The area of diversity policy is committed to increasing the emancipation of women, people with a migratory background, LGBTI people, people with a disability and others who have a disadvantaged position in society. Different ministries work together on diversity issue, but the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) is the leading one. This ministry mainly focuses on the emancipation of women and LGBTI people in the workforce and society in general. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) focuses on the emancipation of people with a migratory background in the workforce, but also on people with a disability. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS) also commits itself to the emancipation of people with a disability. The final ministry that deals with emancipation and diversity policy is the ministry of BZK, which is committed to increasing the diversity within the government and politics.

The area of energy policy is guided by the National Climate Agreement, which was concluded in 2019. The agreement contains climate goals, most prominently the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and over 600 agreements on how to meet these goals. The Climate Agreement is the Dutch interpretation of the international Paris climate agreements (Rijksoverheid, 2019). Four ministries are responsible for the implementation of the Climate Agreement; first of all, the Ministry Economic Affairs and Climate (EZK), which is committed to increasing the amount of energy and electricity that comes from renewable sources, and to making industries and factories more sustainable. The second ministry that plays a role is the ministry of BZK, which focuses on the built environment. Thirdly, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality (LNV) works on making agriculture more sustainable, and finally the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management (IenW) is committed to mobility and transport. The Netherlands takes a regional approach to implement the agreements laid out in the Climate Agreement; there are 30 energy regions which each make their own implementation decisions. These 30 regions are organized in the National Program Regional Energy Strategy

[1] The author has worked as an intern at the ministry of BZK herself, on the topic of women in politics and government. She therefore could rely on insider information regarding the use of evidence in case 1, and she for example also knew beforehand what the size of the teams and which people the teams consisted of. This inside information has helped her with selecting the cases and with finding interview respondents.

(NPRES), which is an umbrella organisation responsible for supporting the regions by providing knowledge and by facilitating communication.

3.2.2 Case 1 and 2

Because both policy areas are very broad, consist of multiple themes and are dealt with by different ministries, this study will not analyse the use of evidence in the entirety of the two policy areas, but two specific themes within these broader areas are selected. Within these two themes, two cases were then selected, leading up to four cases in total. To keep control variable 1 constant, the ministry that deals with the policy area, the ministry of BZK was selected, because this is the only ministry that both deals with diversity policy and with energy policy. As for diversity policy, the ministry of BZK, and more specifically the department of Democracy and Governance, works on increasing the diversity and inclusiveness within government and politics, which means that national, provincial and local parliaments should become more diverse, and that there must be more diversity amongst high governmental positions, such as ministers, the King's Commissioners, who are in charge of governing the provinces, and mayors and aldermen. The department also works on making the work culture within politics and government more inclusive to anyone. The department focuses on three groups who have a disadvantaged position in society: women, people with a migratory background and people with a disability (Ministry of BZK, n.d.) . The first two are dealt with by the same team, consisting of less than 5 people, while the latter one is dealt with by another team, also consisting of less than five people. There is however some overlap of people between the two teams. Because the department has started to focus on people with a migratory background most recently, less work has been done on that group compared to the other two groups. Diversity and inclusivity in politics and government with a focus on women has therefore been selected as the first case, and diversity and inclusivity in politics and government with a focus on people with a disability has been selected as the second case.

3.2.3 Case 3 and 4

The ministry of BZK has multiple responsibilities when it comes to the energy transition. Besides making the building sector and houses more sustainable and diminishing the number of buildings that use gas, the ministry is also committed to strengthening the participation of citizens during the energy transition and securing that the energy transition is organized in a democratic way (Ollongren, 2018; Ollongren, 2020b). Because energy policy in the Netherlands is a regional affair, the ministry also supports local politicians and local

governments by supplying them with tools on how they can cope with the complexity of the energy transition and on how they can cooperate with other partners in the region. These two goals are both dealt with by the department of Democracy and Governance, and the team consists of less than five people. Because the team is of a comparable size to the two teams working on diversity in politics and government, because the team also falls under the department of Democracy and Governance, and because it has a technical character as opposed to case 1 and 2, it has been selected as the third case.

The fourth case that has been selected, the program 'Gas Free Neighbourhoods' (PAW), is different from the other three, because it is not a team within a single department; it instead is a program in which different departments work together. The primary responsibility for the program lies with the department of Building and Energy within the ministry of BZK, and other departments within BZK, the ministry of EZK, the Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO), and the Dutch Water Authorities (UvW) are also represented in the program. The team is thus larger than in the first three cases (PAW, n.d.). One member of the team that works on energy policy and participation also takes place in the program, so there is overlap between the two. The purpose of the program is to increase the number of neighbourhoods that do not make use of gas, but instead use renewable sources of energy. Because this is once again a regional and local approach in which the municipalities take a central position, the goal of the program is also to support and facilitate these municipalities. A summary of the cases can be found in Table 1.

3.3 Research design

A comparative case study of four cases will thus be conducted in order to analyse how the technical or non-technical character of a policy area influences the evidence that is used by policymakers. The four cases will each be analysed in depth on which types of evidence are used and why, and then they will be systematically compared with each other in order to determine how the independent variable influences the dependent variable. The cases have been selected using the Most-Similar Systems Design (MSDD), which means that they are as similar as possible, except for one variable. In the case of MSDD very often cases are selected on their varying scores on the dependent variable, but because the scores of the cases on the dependent variable were unknown in this study, the cases have been selected on their varying scores on the independent variable (Anckar, 2008).

	Diversity policy		Energy policy	
	Case 1: women in politics and government	**Case 2: people with a disability in politics in government**	**Case 3: energy policy and participation**	**Case 4: PAW**
Independent variable	Non-technical	Non-technical	Technical	Technical
Control variable 1	Ministry of BZK	Ministry of BZK	Ministry of BZK	Primarily Ministry of BZK, but together with other partners
Control variable 2	Department of Democracy and Governance	Department of Democracy and Governance	Department of Democracy and Governance	Primarily Department of Building and Energy, but together with other partners
Control variable 3	Small (< 5)	Small (< 5)	Small (< 5)	Large (>10)

Table 1. Overview of cases

Case 1 and 2 score the same on the independent variable and on all the control variables, but it is still interesting to see whether they score differently on the dependent variable. A different score on the dependent variable would mean that other variables influence the use of evidence by policymakers. By comparing case 1 and 2 with case 3, of which the latter one only differs on the independent variable, we can see whether the independent variable influences the dependent variable. If case 3 scores differently on the dependent variable than the other two, this can be attributed to the character of the policy area. Case 4 is an entirely different case, it scores the same on the independent variable as case 3, but it differs on the control variables. It is therefore interesting to see whether case 4 scores differently on the dependent variable as case 3, because this can then be attributed to other factors.

3.4 Methods of data collection and methods of analysis

Two types of data were collected in order to analyse how the character of a policy area has an influence on the evidence that is used by policymakers; first of all, relevant policy documents, letters to parliament, reports of expert meetings and websites and the evidence sources on these websites were analysed. By analysing the citations of evidence providers in these documents and websites, we can get an objective view of the sources of evidence that were used during the policymaking process. All citations in these documents and on the websites are considered to be equal and therefore no weight has been attached to these citations.

An overview of the documents and websites can be found in Appendix 1. These documents were selected because they were either suggested by the interview respondents after questioning them about which relevant documents could be used for the document analysis, or through independent internet research. For case 1 and 2 the selection of documents was very straightforward, and all the publicly accessible documents for these cases have been analysed. For case 3 and 4 the selection of documents was less straightforward, because more letters to parliament have been sent on these topics, by different ministries as well. Because one of the control variables in this study is the ministry that the policy areas fall under, only the letters that were sent by the minister of BZK were selected. The selection of data for these two cases was also less straightforward because there is a lot of information to be found on the websites, and the websites contain many documents, but many of these documents do not contain any citations to external experts or evidence, and they could thus not be used for the analysis. Only information on the website and the documents that directly cite evidence or external experts were selected. The documents and websites for all four cases are from the time period of 2018 or 2019 until the present, because that is when the policy work in all four cases started.

Not all evidence sources may however be cited in these documents and on these websites; some evidence sources may have played a role during the policymaking process, without being cited in the documents. By only analysing documents we also do not learn the reasons why these evidence sources play a role and how the character of the policy area has an influence on this. Furthermore, some evidence providers that are cited may have played a more prominent role than others that are cited, but we also do not learn this from citation analysis alone. 11 semi-structured interviews have therefore also been conducted with policymakers; through which we can understand the weight that must be attached to the citations in the documents, which evidence providers play a prominent role, which mechanisms are at work and which factors influence which evidence is used by policymakers. Semi-structured interviews are a good way through which we can understand a case in-depth, but because the exact content of the questions varies per interview, their findings can be difficult to generalize (Boaz, Fitzpatrick & Shaw, 2009, pp. 261-263). The use of both documents, websites and semi-structured interviews however positively contributes to the reliability of the study (Drost, 2011). We will come back to the issues of reliability and validity in the discussion section.

3 interviews for each case were conducted. Sometimes an interview with one policymaker counted for two cases, because there is sometimes overlap of people between the cases. For case 3 this meant that the entire team has been interviewed, for case 1 and 2 it means that one or two people who are also part of the team have not been interviewed, but that

saturation had been reached after the third interview. This means that almost no new information was found in the third interview, and that a fourth interview was thus not necessary. For case 4 it finally means that a small part of the team has been interviewed, but the people that were interviewed took a central position in the program and therefore had a good overview of the types of evidence that are important, and saturation was therefore reached as well. When we speak of 'policymakers' later on in the analysis section, we thus mean the 11 interview respondents and their direct colleagues. The term 'policymakers' does not refer to politicians or others who are not working on the policy area from within the ministry.

The respondents all gave their informed consent before the interview started, and they were asked permission for the interview to be recorded. At the end of each interview, respondents were given the option to read the final transcript, allowing them to check for any errors and to add things they had missed during the interview. The topic list of the interviews can be found in Appendix 2. The names and other details of the respondents as well as the transcripts have not been enclosed as a transcript, because the respondents were promised anonymity.

To analyse which types of evidence are used in each case, the evidence that is cited in the interview transcripts, documents and on the websites are coded. The reasons that are given in the interviews for why these types of evidence are used were also coded, which helps us to compare the reasons for which evidence is used in each case with each other. The coding scheme was created after the interviews were conducted, and it has been altered throughout the coding process. The coding scheme can be found in Appendix 3.

4. Analysis

This chapter will give an overview of the evidence that is used in each of the four cases, based on the interviews and the citation analysis. The chapter will furthermore explain why these types of evidence are present in each of the four cases and how the characteristics of the policy areas have an influence on this. To make more insightful which types of evidence are the most important in each of the cases, the most prominent ones are made bold.

4.1 Case 1: Women in politics and government

The attention that the topic of gender diversity in politics and government receives has fluctuated over the years. As one interview respondent indicates, the political attention for the topic depends on feminist waves in society and on prominent agenda setters. The most recent

wave of attention for the topic was initiated by member of parliament Monica den Boer, who organised a parliamentary round table in March 2019. During this round table, experts were asked to hand in position papers, which were then discussed with members of parliament (Tweede Kamer, n.d.). In response to this round table, the minister of BZK sent a letter to Parliament in July 2019, in which she indicated that she is going to take a few actions to strengthen the position of women in politics and government (Ollongren, 2019). These actions are mainly focused at stimulating political parties to increase the gender diversity on their candidate lists, to stimulate political parties and local governments to actively invite women to apply for positions, to stimulate women themselves to apply for positions and to make the work environment in politics and government more inclusive to both men and women.

The team that works on these goals draws quite heavily on external evidence. The first category of evidence that stands out in the interviews and in the documents is the **academic evidence**. The few academic researchers that are prominent in the field of gender and politics are consulted repeatedly. The policymakers have for example asked one prominent academic to give feedback on the letter that was sent to parliament, and they have has asked three academics from the University of Amsterdam to write two essays. This collection of essays was published in December 2019. The first essay analyses causes and solutions to the underrepresentation of women in politics and makes an international comparison, and the second essay focuses on gender diversity in local governments (Kennisbank Openbaar Bestuur, n.d.). The authors presented the collection of essays in an expert meeting in December 2019, during which various other experts were invited to share their thoughts on the essays and on the proposed actions by the minister. Present during the expert meeting were other academics from various universities, the boards of political parties, the women's networks of political parties, **political and governmental representative associations**[2], interest organisations that concern themselves with the emancipation of women (Women Inc, Atria), and more specifically interest organisations that concern themselves with women in politics (Stem op een Vrouw). The policymakers tried to invite people from as many different organisations and expertises as possible, and they concluded that it was a very fruitful meeting. The expert meeting brought

[2] The political and governmental representative associations represent local and provincial governments and people in political and governmental professions. We will also come across these organisations in case 2 and 3. This group of organisations consists of the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG), ProDemos, the Dutch Association of Mayors (NGB), the Association of Aldermen, the Dutch Association of Local Councilors (NvvR), Statenlidnu and the Association of Municipal Secretaries (VvG). The Dutch Water Authorities (UvW) and the Association of Provinces of the Netherlands (IPO) can also be categorized as political and governmental representative associations, but they do not play a role in case 1, 2 and 3.

forth very interesting ideas which were later used to sharpen the policies, according to the interview respondents.

A third academic that the policymakers have consulted is Sarah Childs, an English professor who has written a report about how to make the House of Commons more inclusive (Childs, 2016). Not only have the recommendations in the report been important input for the policymakers working in this policy area themselves; the policymakers have also organized a webinar in November 2020, during which Sarah Childs was invited to present her report to the same actors that were present during the expert meeting of December 2019. This time however women who are politically active, women who aspire to become politically active and people who are responsible for the selection procedures in politics and government were also present (Ministry of BZK, 2020).

The main reason that the respondents gave for why the academic evidence is so prominently present, is because the policy area is fairly new, and the policymakers were therefore in need of inventorying and exploratory evidence, which academics are best able to provide. Private research organisations are for example more suitable when there is a clear and demarcated research question according to the respondents, and the respondents agreed that these organisations might be consulted at a later stage, but that they had not needed them yet; they are therefore absent in this case. The choice for an evidence provider is thus partly based on the result that you want to achieve. The respondents also pointed out that the evidence that is provided by academics often is of very high quality, and that they therefore first look for academics, and later for private research organisations. The fact that most of the academics that were consulted were connected to the University of Amsterdam was not a conscious decision; it just happened that all the academics who were experts on this topic were working for this university. The expertise of the individual academic is therefore an important factor, and if there had been academics with relevant expertise at other universities, they would have been consulted as well.

Because the policymakers have a supporting and stimulating role, **practical evidence and the experiences from political parties, selection committees and women** themselves is very important. The policymakers cannot increase gender diversity in politics and government themselves; they must instead stimulate political parties to for example make candidate lists more gender diverse, to actively invite women to apply for positions, and they must stimulate women to become politically active. The stories from women about how inclusive the work culture is in practice, about how they encounter discrimination in their work life and which training facilities would be useful, and the experiences from selection committees and political

parties about factors that may prevent them from attracting more women, really help the policymakers with determining the direction of the policies. This practical evidence can not only be found in the webinar that was organized in the expert meeting of December 2019, but also during two networking events that were organized in 2019 and 2020, and during an inspirational meeting in May 2020, during which women and other practitioners could also share their stories.

Governmental research organisations also deliver some evidence in this policy area, but they play a minor role compared to academia and practitioners. The CBS is mainly consulted when numbers are needed about the representation of women in politics and government, and a SER report about gender quota in the private sector (2019) has also been used by the policymakers. According to the respondents, the evidence that is provided by governmental research organisations is also perceived as being of high quality, like academic evidence. However, no reports have been published on this specific theme, and consequently these organisations are not very present in this case.

The evidence role of interest organisations is also a minor one; these organisations are invited to events, and they do provide practical evidence to the policymakers that they receive from their target audiences, but their function is mainly to help the policymakers with the implementation of policies. Finally, the political party research organisations do not deliver evidence in this policy area, as well as the aforementioned private research organisations.

One thing that stood out in the interviews, is that the personal network of the policymaker is also important. Two of the policymakers that are active on this topic used their own network to find actors or individuals to provide evidence. One of them for example has the function of knowledge coordinator within the department, and she has a very broad network and knows many academics personally – which makes it easier to find the ones that would be able to provide valuable evidence. It is interesting to find out whether a different knowledge coordinator, someone with a different network, may thus make use of different sources of evidence.

To conclude, the policymakers mainly make use of **academic evidence, the experiences of practitioners and evidence provided by political parties and political and governmental representative associations**, which provide practical evidence through sharing the issues that their target audiences face in practice. As was argued before, the practical evidence and experiences from these actors is so important because of the stimulating and supporting role that the policymakers have. The respondents furthermore agree that the

environment of evidence providers surrounding this policy area relatively non-complex, at least compared to case 3 and 4, which will be elaborated on later.

4.2 Case 2: People with a disability in politics and government

In January 2016 members of parliament Otwin van Dijk and Linda Voortman proposed a resolution containing the demand that government should do more for the emancipation of people with a disability (Tweede Kamer, 2016). In a reaction to this resolution a team within the department of Democracy and Governance was set up specifically with the aim of increasing the participation of people with a disability in politics and government. The team has regular contacts with the team that works on gender diversity, and they have shared ideas with each other on how to increase the representation of their target audiences. Their use of evidence however differs greatly. While the team that works on gender diversity has mainly outsourced research projects to academia, the team that works on the representation of people with a disability has decided to conduct research themselves on how to increase the number of people with a disability in politics and government. The respondents told during the interviews that they also considered to let a private research organisation conduct a study, but because the policymakers were so unfamiliar with the topic, they did not know which concrete questions to ask from such a private research organisation. The policymakers therefore decided to **conduct an exploratory research by themselves**. The policymakers stressed that this is not something that they do more often, but that the specific nature of this policy area made them realize that it would be most suitable to conduct research themselves.

Another reason why the policymakers decided to conduct the research by themselves, besides the fact that they did not know which questions to ask from a private research organisation, was that they personally wanted to get to know the relevant stakeholders, as they did not know yet who the relevant individuals and organisations that manifest themselves on this topic were. If they had asked an external research organisation to conduct research, the findings and policy recommendations in that study would undoubtedly be useful, but the policymakers would then still not have contacts with important people and organisations in the field. The policymakers also realized that it would be important to visit people with a disability who are politically active in their own work habitat, because then they could see for themselves which practical issues people are facing, such as the accessibility of buildings. Through conducting interviews themselves, the policymakers got much more feeling with the topic than when they would have received a final report from an external research organisation.

The policymakers eventually conducted around fifty interviews with people with a disability who are politically active, people with a disability that used to be politically active and people with a disability that are considering a career in politics and government. They found the respondents through snowball sampling. The team also interviewed interest organisations and political parties. The respondents were questioned about their experiences, but they were also asked to name suggestions for policy measures. Based on these interviews, the policymakers have formulated policies that have the aim to make people with a disability more interested in a career in politics and governance, to make job positions in politics and government more accessible to people with a disability and to increase the quality of the support that those ones who are already politically active receive.

Practical evidence from practitioners was therefore the main source of evidence for these policy measures, according to the policymakers. The policymakers stressed that the stories they heard during the interviews were most valuable to them, because they could not have possibly imagined behind their desks which kind of difficulties people with a disability in politics and government encounter. Conducting the research themselves also had a positive side effect; the policymakers created goodwill amongst their respondents, because they took the time to visit the respondents themselves. Some respondents have now become important partners of the policymakers in implementing the policy measures, so the policymakers still enjoy the positive effects of conducting a study themselves.

Besides the individual respondents, **interest organisations** that serve the interests of people with a disability were also interviewed, and they were thus also an important evidence provider for the policymakers. One policymaker told that they were surprised by the number of interest organisations that are active in this field, because for each disability there are a few interest organisations that can provide evidence. The evidence that was provided by these interest organisations mainly had a practical nature as well, because these organisations communicated the experiences and stories of their target audiences to the policymakers.

The policy measures that were formulated thanks to the interviews were published in a report in July 2019 (Ministry of BZK, 2019a). Also part of this report is an international comparative study, which was conducted by the Dutch chair of the international study group Disability Studies, which resides at VU Amsterdam. In this comparative study, Disability Studies has analysed the representation of people with a disability in politics and government in other countries, and they have researched what the Netherlands can learn from the approaches in other countries. **Academia** have thus also been an important evidence provider for the policymakers.

The ministry of BZK and Disability Studies together organised a congress in July 2019 (Ministry of BZK, 2019b), during which they presented the report to the respondents, to the interest organisations, to political parties and to the same **political and governmental representative associations** that have also been present at expert meetings organised by the team that works on gender diversity in politics and government. The attendees were asked during the congress to reflect on the report, and they had the opportunity to add any suggestions to the policy measures. No new or notable suggestions were made however, and because of this the policymakers learnt that their report and the policy measures that they have formulated were complete. The policymakers are currently working on implementing the policies, and they do this in cooperation with some of the respondents, the interest groups and with Disability Studies.

To summarize, **practical evidence, interest organisations and academia** are important categories of evidence in this case. Private research organisations and the political party research organisations have not delivered evidence in this policy area, and governmental research organisations only played a minor role; the policymakers only used the definition that the SCP uses for 'person with a disability' in their report.

Like in case 1, the practical evidence was the most valuable, according to the interview respondents. This is because the policymakers in both case 1 and 2 have a stimulating and supporting role; political parties and political and governmental representative associations are responsible for the implementation of the policy measures that are formulated by the policymakers, because they are responsible for making the selection procedures become more inclusive. The policymakers furthermore work on stimulating people with a disability to become politically active. So just like in case 1, evidence about which issues actors and individuals are facing in practice is therefore very valuable, and this evidence is provided by role models, practitioners, interest groups, political parties and political and governmental representative associations.

The two cases however differ in how this practical evidence was delivered to the policymakers; the policymakers that work on gender diversity in politics and government relied more heavily on external evidence by primarily academics, while the policymakers that work on people with a disability in politics and government have mainly relied on their own research, which makes it a rather unique case. From the interviews it seems that the personal networks of the policymakers plays a role here; the policymakers that work on gender diversity already knew the relevant people and organisations, and they thus could easily ask academics to provide

evidence. This was not the case for the policymakers that work on people with a disability, and they thus decided to conduct an exploratory study on their own.

4.3 Case 3: Energy policy and participation

The 2019 National Climate Agreement (Rijksoverheid, 2019) is the leading document on how the energy transition in the Netherlands should take place. It contains various measures which together have the goal to decrease the dependence on fossil fuels and increase the use of renewable sources of energy. As the measures in the Climate Agreement affect the lives of citizens deeply, it is important that the energy transition is organized as democratically as possible and that citizens have the chance to participate, according to the minister of BZK (Ollongren, 2018). A team within the department of Democracy and Governance therefore concerns itself with this topic. The energy transition is mainly a regional and local affair, so the role of the policymakers is to provide support to regional and local decisionmakers. The team for example makes instruments and guides for local politicians on how to cooperate with other local politicians in the region and how participation by citizens can be increased. The team works very closely with the NPRES and PAW, and the team consequently also makes use of evidence that has been commissioned by either of these programs, but the team also asks external partners for evidence themselves.

We can distinguish two types of evidence that the team deals with; first of all the team collects evidence on how to best support local politicians and local governments, and on how to secure that the energy transition happens in a democratic way. As will be elaborated on later, this evidence is mainly provided by **academia, practitioners, interest groups, political and governmental representative associations and private research organisations**. Secondly, there is the technical evidence regarding the techniques that are used in the energy transition, and complex calculations such as how many kilowatt hours are produced or used. This evidence is mainly provided by **state research organisations**, and in particular by the PBL. The respondents agree that this type of evidence is very complex and sometimes hard to understand, but that they also do not have to understand this type of evidence completely, as their focus is on participation. It is however still important that the policymakers read along with these reports, because the techniques that are used in the energy transition influence how participation can take place and which kinds of support a local politician or local government needs.

The type of evidence that stands out in the interviews, in the documents and on the websites is the **academic evidence**. The policymakers have for example asked three academics from different universities and expertises to write an essay on the role that citizen's assemblies

could play in such a complex policy area as energy policy (Ministry of BZK, 2021). The policymakers have furthermore asked an academic to write an essay specifically on how to make the energy transition more democratic (Boogers, 2019), and the policymakers also said during the interviews that they actively look for any publications by academics on this specific topic. The NSOB has also recently conducted a study in which they analyse the decision-making process surrounding the energy transition (NSOB, 2020), and even though this study has not been commissioned by the team that works on participation, but by NPRES, the evidence from the study has been very valuable to the team.

The policymakers argued in the interviews that academic evidence is used because it is such an objective and legitimate source of evidence, more objective than for example evidence from interest groups, and that academic evidence is very useful for making longer term policy measures. Academic evidence, being more theoretical, is not directly used by the policymakers in designing the tools and guides they make for local governments; it is instead used as background evidence. For the tools and guides that the policymakers make for their target audience, **practical evidence**, or the **good examples from practitioners** are used instead. The policymakers for example have initiated two so-called "innovation projects" in two regions in the Netherlands, where the local governments experiment with ways in which they can manage the energy transition in a democratic way (Lokale Democratie, 2020). The experiences of these local politicians are valuable evidence for the policymakers, because they can learn what has proven to be successful in practice. Universities also conduct research in these two innovation projects, so the policymakers also learn about the successes in these projects through academia. The policymakers also regularly talk with politicians and civil servants from other regions to discuss with them how the decision-making process takes place. The lessons and best practices from these talks are then included in the guides that the policymakers make for local governments, so that other local governments can learn from these best practices as well.

Practical evidence is also delivered by **interest organisations**, of which the most prominent ones on this topic have organized themselves in the Participation Coalition[3]. The interest groups in this coalition supply evidence in the form of best practices and experiences from successful local energy projects and citizen's assemblies, and they thus know a lot about how citizen's participation can become successful. The coalition is furthermore an official partner of the ministries of BZK and EZK in working towards the goals that are formulated in the Climate Agreement.

[3] The Participation Coalition consists of HIER, Natuur en Milieufederaties, Energie Samen, LSA bewoners and Stichting Buurtkracht. https://departicipatiecoalitie.nl/

The **political and governmental representative associations** that were important in the first two cases, are also important providers of practical evidence in this case. These organisations also deliver best practices to the policymakers and they communicate signals that they receive from their target audiences to the policymakers.

Reports by **private research organisations** about topics like how to design regional cooperation are also consulted, but these reports were not commissioned by the team itself. The only private research organisation that the team works closely with is Platform31, which is an independent academic evidence provider. These reports entail good examples from practitioners and the findings of these reports are often formulated in a practical way as opposed to evidence delivered by academics, which is often more theoretical. The evidence from these reports can therefore be directly applied in the instruments that are created by the team, and it is therefore very useful according to the respondents.

The practical evidence that the practitioners, interest organisations, political and governmental representative associations and private research organisations deliver is so dominantly present because, like the policymakers in case 1 and 2, the policymakers working on case 3 have a supporting and stimulating role: their main task is to support local governments during the energy transition and to help them include citizens in the decision-making process. Through talking with political and governmental representative associations, local politicians, civil servants and citizens the policymakers learn which guidance these groups need, and this helps the policymakers with designing their tools and instruments. Another reason why practical evidence is so dominantly present according to the respondents, is that it is the best they can do with their limited budget. This case differs from case 1 and 2 in that the policymakers are less independent; because the policymakers work so closely together with NPRES and PAW, they make use of the evidence that is commissioned by these programs. The team working on participation also has a budget to commission evidence by themselves, such as the essays that have been written, but their budget is not that large. The respondents therefore argued that the best option to find evidence is to contact practitioners.

As was mentioned before, the **state research organisations** are also important evidence providers, especially the PBL, which assesses the feasibility of the energy strategies that are formulated by the regions. The PBL has furthermore recently published a study in which they assess the progress of the measures that are formulated in the National Climate Agreement (PBL, 2021a). The evidence that is provided by the PBL is quite technical and complex, as the respondents argued in the interviews, but it is still important for them to read along with this evidence. Like academic evidence, the evidence provided by state research organisations is

used as background evidence, and not as evidence that is directly applied to the tools and guides that are created. Still, because of the technical nature of the policy area, the reports that the PBL and SCP write on the energy transition are very important. The respondents argued that these organisations also have some kind stature and that you have to take them seriously. It is not often that these organisations write a report, but when they do publish something, you have to take it seriously, according to the interview respondents.

A final important evidence provider in this case is the **ad hoc advisory committee** 'Citizen's participation in climate policy', which was installed by the government to research and advise how citizens can be involved in energy policy. The final report of the independent committee was published in March, and these findings have been very important for the team that works on participation. The committee mainly consisted of academics, but the PBL, NPRES, provinces and municipalities were also represented (Rijksoverheid, 2021).

The only category of evidence providers that is absent in this case is that of the political party research organisations. The **academic evidence** and **practical evidence** were dominant according to the policymakers, but the **state research organisations** were also important, and an **ad hoc advisory committee** was installed to do research on this topic, which was absent in cases 1 and 2. Overall, the corpus of evidence providers in this case is more complex than the ones in case 1 and 2. We can see that there are much more organisations that play a role in this policy area, because, as one respondent indicated, the energy transition has so many different sides. On the one hand it has a very technical component, on the other hand it also has a democratic component, and many different kinds of evidence providers thus have to be consulted.

4.4 Case 4: Program Gas Free Neighbourhoods

The National Climate Agreement states that seven million houses and one million buildings should no longer be making use of gas by 2050. This is organized per neighbourhood at a time in pilot projects, so-called "testing gardens", and the responsibility for these pilots lies with the municipalities, which are supported in this task by the intergovernmental program Gas Free Neighbourhoods (Knops, 2020). Up until 2021, 46 testing gardens have been initiated – which means that 46 neighbourhoods have started the process of decreasing their dependence on gas. To support municipalities, one of the main tasks of the program is to transfer evidence to them about other successful local and regional approaches regarding the energy transition, and to connect municipalities to each other so that they can share their experiences (Ollongren, 2020a).

Learning from others takes a central place in the program; the website[4] of the program for example speaks off "reinventing the wheel together", and it contains good examples and best practices from practitioners. It also contains a section with frequently asked questions, for example about how other municipalities have tackled certain issues, and there is a forum on the website through which municipalities can come into contact with each other. The website is not only targeted at the 46 "testing-gardens", but at every municipality in the country.

To support the municipalities as adequately as possible, the program officers use a wide array of sources. The one that stands out in the interviews, on the website and in the letters that have been sent to parliament is the **practical evidence** that comes from the "testing gardens". The program officers have regular contacts with the **local politicians and decisionmakers** that are responsible for the local neighbourhood approaches, and these local decisionmakers tell the policymakers about the issues they face and about which solutions have proven to be successful for them. A **community of practice** has for example been set up, in which decisionmakers from various municipalities have shared their experiences with the program officers. This is valuable evidence that the program officers can transfer to other municipalities and which can be used for the instruments and guides that are created. As one interview respondent said: *"I think most municipalities just want to know how others are doing it and whether that works; that is what they need the most"*. Another reason why best practices from practitioners are considered to be valuable evidence, is because this helps the program officers focus their attention on certain issues; when a municipality points out which difficulties they are facing, the program officers can decide to focus their attention more on those issues, or they can decide that there is a certain evidence gap that can be filled up by for example academic evidence.

The program officers also receive practical evidence from various **interest groups**, of which the most prominent ones are organised in the Participation Coalition, which we also came across in case 3. Other interest groups that the policymakers have regular contacts with are the housing corporations, energy network operators, energy companies, gas companies and organisations that concern themselves with the interests of the building sector. The goal of these organisations is not to provide evidence per se, but to protect the interests of their target audiences. They do however conduct their own research and they do have their own numbers and statistics, which is also very valuable evidence according to the program officers, because they then learn what the specific interest groups perceive as problems and solutions. The evidence that is delivered by these groups consequently also has a very practical nature, and

[4] https://www.aardgasvrijewijken.nl/home/default.aspx

through this evidence the program officers learn which issues stakeholders are facing in practice. The political and governmental representative associations that were present in case 1, 2 and 3 are also slightly present in this case because they are important stakeholders to take into account, but they do not provide evidence in this case. One political and governmental representative association that is important here is the UvW, or the Dutch Water Authorities. They are an important provider of technical evidence in this case; they for example deliver numbers and statistics about groundwater levels and the quality of water, which are important to take in account when designing or redesigning the neighbourhoods.

Private research organisations are also important providers of practical evidence for the program officers. The program officers often task advisory bureaus with smaller, more concrete research questions, such as conducting resident satisfaction surveys. Private research organisations also conduct research themselves within the "testing gardens", and they report these findings to the program as well. Private research organisations that are specialized in construction or energy are also consulted, and because these organisations have consultants who have been long time experts within the field, the evidence that they provide is also very valuable according to the respondents.

This case seems to differ a lot from the other cases because it is an independent program and because it has such a technical nature, but this section has so far shown that this case has in common with the other ones that the practical evidence is the most important. The evidence from interest groups, private research organisations, individual practitioners and local and regional governments, through the community of practice for example, is the most valuable, because this helps the program officers the most with their task, namely to support municipalities in reducing the dependence of neighbourhoods on gas.

The program does not only make use of practical evidence however; **academia** are also important evidence providers in this case. Multiple universities have conducted studies for the program, and academics also conduct research within the "testing gardens" themselves, and then share their findings with the program. The program has furthermore asked various individual academics to write essays on how to design the decision-making process surrounding the warmth transition, how to decrease the dependence on gas and how to incorporate citizens in the process. The collection of essays was published in 2020 on the website, so that municipalities could learn from the essays as well (PAW, 2020a). Various universities of applied science have conducted research for the program as well, which were not found in case 1, 2 and 3.

The interview respondents in this case agree with the other respondents that academic evidence is very important, but that it is more applicable for longer term policymaking and as background knowledge. It is important to ensure that policy decisions are backed up by academic evidence, according to the respondents. Practical evidence can however be applied more directly, as opposed to academic evidence. The program officers furthermore agree with the other respondents that private research organisations are more useful than academic evidence when you have a practical and concrete question, and that the choice for an evidence provider depends on the results that you want to achieve.

Another important evidence provider is the **advisory committee of the program** (PAW, n.d.), which is tasked with advising the minister of BZK about which requests from municipalities to launch a "testing garden" should be selected. The advisory committee consists of various important stakeholders, mainly interest groups on the topics of building and energy, political and governmental representative associations and two academics from Utrecht University and Nyenrode Business University[5], so that there is a connection with the academic world as well. Through the diverse range of expertises that are represented in this advisory committee, well-grounded decisions about which applications should be accepted can be made. The advisory committee is furthermore consulted by the program officers on other issues as well, so they function as a sort of sounding board for the program.

The **state research organisations** are also very prominently present, especially the PBL and SCP. The PBL has for example recently published an analysis on the "testing gardens", in which they formulate the lessons that we can learn from these pilot projects (PBL, 2021b). The PBL also plays a role in the report that the program publishes once a year in which its progress is described. For these reports, the PBL is asked to write a scientific analysis of the progress of the program (PAW, 2020b; PAW, 2021). The SCP (2020) has also written a report about gas-free living which has been very important for the program officers, but they also regularly have a meeting with the SCP about the research questions that the program has, and how the SCP can help them with this.

The reason why the state research organisations are more dominant in this case than in the others, is because they publish the most on this topic. The PBL is especially important because of the assessments they publish of the progress of the program. The respondents agree

[5] The advisory committee consists of Prof. dr. ir. Anke van Hal, prof. dr. Maarten Hajer, Aedes, Bouwend Nederland, Energie-Nederland, Nederlandse Vereniging Duurzame Energie, Netbeheer Nederland, TechniekNL, VNG, IPO, UvW, Woonbond, the ministry of BZK and the ministry of EZK (PAW, n.d.)

with the respondents for the other cases that the state research organisations are very important, and that when they publish a report, you always have to do something with it.

The program officers furthermore have to process a lot of technical evidence, because the choice for a technique, such as which energy sources a neighbourhood will use, influences which support local governments need to receive. This technical evidence is for example delivered by the energy companies, housing corporations, building companies, gas companies and the UvW, and this wide array of evidence providers makes the processing of evidence a complicated task. When asked about why so many actors provide evidence in this case, the program officers replied that the economic interests behind the energy transition can explain this. There is a lot of money to make from the energy transition and there are many organisations that play a part in it, and who thus have their own interests. These actors have often organised their own evidence and numbers well, and through providing this evidence they can exert influence. The policy officers realize that the evidence that is provided by these actors is thus biased to a certain extent, because the interests of these actors consciously or unconsciously influence the evidence. So, you have to be very careful as program officer, but as long as you know what the interests of a specific actor are, this should not be a problem. The evidence that is provided by these actors is still very valuable, because it is always good to look at a policy problem from different angles.

To conclude this section, there is a very high number of evidence providers that the program officers make use of, and the corpus of research organisations that plays a role in this case is more complex than in the other three cases. The only types of evidence that did not play a role were first of all the political party research organisations, which were absent in all four cases, and secondly the political and governmental representative associations, which do play an important role in case 1, 2 and 3. The provision of evidence is also more organized in this case than in the other three cases, as for example can be seen in the advisory committee, where many stakeholders are permanently represented.

An overview of the types of evidence that are used in each case is provided in Table 2. The extent to which these organisations are present in each of the cases is denoted by a score from 1 to 5: 1 means that the category of evidence is not at all present, 2 indicates it is slightly present, 3 indicates it is present, 4 indicates it is very present and 5 indicates it is dominantly present.

	Diversity policy		Energy policy	
	Case 1: Women in politics and government	**Case 2: People with a disability in politics and government**	**Case 3: Energy policy and participation**	**Case 4: PAW**
Academic evidence	4	3	4	4
Private research organisations	1	2	2	4
Interest groups	2	4	2	4
State research organisations	2	2	4	5
Political party research organisations	1	1	1	1
Other categories of evidence providers				
• **Evidence from individual practitioners**	5	5	4	5
• **Evidence from local and regional governments**	2	2	5	4
• **Evidence from political and governmental representative associations**	4	4	4	2

Table 2. Overview of evidence providers

4.5 Which factors influence to use of evidence by policymakers?

To summarize the findings, the four cases to a certain extent score very differently on the way evidence is used by the policymakers, but they also show great overlap. The technical character of cases 3 and 4 does have an influence on the use of evidence, according to the respondents. The policymakers working on case 3 and 4 have to make use of very technical and complex evidence, and they make use of a wider range of evidence providers. The expectation that was formulated in the theoretical framework is thus supported. The corpus of evidence providers in case 1 and 2 however is less complex, and there is a smaller range of evidence providers. The evidence that is used in case 1 and 2 is furthermore much 'softer' than in case 3 and 4; no hard numbers are used in these cases. To increase the inclusiveness of selection committees you for example need less complex evidence than for organizing the distribution of energy in a neighbourhood.

The corpus of evidence providers is especially complex in case 4. As was shown before, there are many stakeholders that provide evidence, and the provision of evidence is also much more organized than in the other cases, as we for example can see in the Participation Coalition or the advisory committee of the program. Diversity policy is less organized, more informal, but also more clear, because less actors provide evidence. From the interviews it seems that the economic interests behind the energy transition are an important factor here, so it is not only the technical character of the policy area that influences the use of evidence by policymakers. Respondents furthermore argued that because the energy transition is such a multidimensional policy issue, many kinds of experts have to be consulted. It does not only have a technical side, but also a democratic and ethical side, of which the last two are comparable to diversity policy. We can recognize this in both case 3 and 4, where academics mainly supply evidence on how to organize participation within the energy transition, where state research organisations provide technical evidence, and where interest groups provide both practical evidence and technical evidence.

Despite the technical character of case 3 and 4, they are in practice just as political as case 1 and 2. As one respondent argued: "*Placing a windmill somewhere seems a technical issue, but in reality it is very political.*" It is therefore important according to the respondents that the experiences of citizens are taken seriously and that people can participate in the decision-making process. The cases thus have in common that they all attach great value to evidence provided by individual practitioners, by political and governmental representative associations (for case 1, 2 and 3) and by local and regional governments (for case 3 and 4). In all cases the experiences of practitioners seem to be the most valuable.

Another reason for this is that the cases have in common that they have a supporting and stimulating role; they are not directly responsible themselves for increasing gender diversity, strengthening the position of people with a disability in politics and government, securing that the energy transition happens in a democratic way and reducing the use of gas; their job is to support others in implementing these goals, and the experiences of those actors are thus valuable evidence for the policymakers themselves. So, it is not only the technical or non-technical character of the policy areas that influences which evidence is used, or the extent to which economic interests play a role; it is also the supporting function of all the cases that influences which evidence is used, and which also makes the use of evidence in the four cases quite similar to each other.

Related to the supporting function that each of the four cases have is the fact that it is important for policymakers to 'sell' their policies to citizens or stakeholders, according to some

of the respondents; policymakers are dependent on citizens and stakeholders for the successful implementation of policies, and it is therefore important to include them in the decision-making process and to learn from their experiences.

Something that stood out in the interviews was that the respondents in each case, when asked about how the characteristics of a policy area influence which evidence is used, responded that they believed that their policy area made more use of practical evidence than the other policy areas, because they each believed that they were the ones who were dealing with the most practical issues. The policymakers that were dealing with diversity policy believed that the stories from practitioners where more valuable to them than to the policymakers who were dealing with energy policy, and that the latter ones only made use of very technical evidence. As we have seen before, this is true to a certain extent, but practical evidence is also very dominantly present in case 3 and 4. At the same time, the people who are dealing with energy policy believed that evidence from practitioners was more valuable to them than to the people dealing with diversity policy, because they expected that the people dealing with diversity policy only made use of academic evidence. As aforementioned, this is true to a certain extent, but practical evidence is also dominantly present in case 1 and 2. It is thus interesting to see how the policymakers in all four cases misjudge the extent to which other policymakers make use of practical evidence.

A final influence on the types of evidence that are used by policymakers is the way in which the department that the policy area falls under is used to consult evidence. Some respondents namely argued that the department of Democracy and Governance of the ministry of BZK has its own characteristic way in which it deals with evidence. The goal of this department is to strengthen the democracy and to support local governments, and to do so, politicians and the political and governmental representative associations are important evidence providers on the different policy areas that the department deals with. We can also see this through the presence of these actors in case 1, 2 and 3. They are however not important evidence providers in case 4, because, as was shown earlier, PAW falls under the department of Building and Energy within the ministry of BZK, and not the department of Democracy and Governance.

To conclude, the four cases to a certain extent differ on the way in which they consult evidence, and the reasons for this are the technical character of the policy areas, the extent to which economic interests are present and the specific department that they fall under. However, the cases also show important similarities, namely that practical evidence is very dominantly

present in all four of them, because the policymakers have such a supporting and stimulating role.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Summary and answering the research question

The important role that evidence plays during the policymaking process has long been recognised by scholars in the fields of evidence-based policymaking, policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes (Sanderson, 2002a; Halligan, 1995; Campbell & Pedersen, 2014). Both the literature on policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes argues that the use of evidence is organised in national specific ways, and that the presence of for example academia, think tanks, advisory committees, interest groups and state research organisations depends on the institutional and administrative characteristics of countries. The literature on policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes has however so far neglected to study whether we can also see differences in the way evidence is used within countries, and whether different policy areas make different use of evidence. Campbell and Pedersen (2014, pp. 333-334) argue that it is valuable to compare the use of evidence in different policy areas with each other, because just as countries are organised and governed in different ways, policy areas are also organised and governed in different ways. The purpose of this study has therefore been to begin to fill up this gap in the literature by comparing two different policy areas in the Netherlands with each other, namely diversity policy and energy policy, and to research which types of evidence these policy areas use, and how the characteristics of these policy areas influence this. Based on the theoretical framework, the expectation of this study was that different policy areas make different use of evidence, that energy policy makes use of more complex, technical and specialist evidence compared to diversity policy because of the technical nature of the policy area, and that there is a wider range of actors that provides evidence on energy policy than on diversity policy.

To study which types of evidence are consulted by policymakers who work on the policy areas of diversity policy and energy policy in the Netherlands, a comparative case study of four cases was designed. The policymakers working on case 1 and 2 concern themselves with diversity policy, namely the representation of respectively women and people with a disability in politics and government, and the policymakers working on case 3 and 4 concern themselves with energy policy, namely participation within the energy transition and the intergovernmental program Gas Free Neighbourhoods. Data on all of the four cases was collected by conducting

a citation analysis of letters to parliament, websites and other policy documents and by interviewing 11 policymakers.

Based on the citation analysis and interviews, we can conclude that the use of evidence on the one hand differs in each of the cases, and that the expectations that were formulated are supported. The more technical policy areas of case 3 and 4 make more use of complex, technical and specialist evidence compared to the less technical policy areas of diversity policy, and the number of actors that provide evidence on case 3 and 4 is furthermore larger than for case 1 and 2. On the other hand, the four cases also show overlap, especially in the way that evidence from practitioners is utilised. The policymakers in all cases attach great value to inviting as many actors who could provide evidence to the table. In case 1 we can for example see this in the way political parties, political and governmental representative associations and interest groups are invited to expert meetings, in case 2 we can see this in the way that these same types of actors were interviewed by the policymakers and were later also invited to the congress during which the findings of the research were presented, and in case 3 and 4 we can see this in the way that the Participation Coalition for example plays an important role, as well as interest groups and local and regional politicians and decisionmakers.

The research question asked how the characteristics of policy areas influence which evidence is used by Dutch policymakers, and the answer to this is that it is partly because of the technical character of cases 3 and 4 that these policy areas make use of complex, technical and specialist evidence, especially from state research organisations and interest groups. Because the economic interests in this policy area are furthermore substantial, especially compared to case 1 and 2, there are many actors that provide evidence in these cases, and especially the policymakers that work on case 4 have to navigate themselves within a very complex field of actors. Finally, the practical character of all of the four cases also influences the use of evidence by policymakers; because all of the four cases have a supporting and stimulating role, practical evidence is very dominantly present. We can thus see that it is not only the technical or non-technical character of the policy area that influences the use of evidence by policymakers, but that other characteristics of the policy areas also play a role.

5.2 Theoretical discussion

Now that the research question has been answered, it is important to discuss some elements from the theoretical framework that can be found back in the analysis. The most notable ones will be elaborated on in this section.

As previously mentioned, the policymakers from all four cases attach great value to inviting as many actors who could provide evidence to the table. Van den Berg (2016) argues that the Dutch policy advisory system is characterized by pluralisation, by a representation of many different societal groups and by a search for consensus, which Pattyn et al. (2019) have also found for Belgium and Germany, and which Campbell and Pedersen (2014) have found for Denmark and Germany, three countries that also have a neo-corporatist and consensus-seeking tradition, like the Netherlands. So, we can recognise the national specific policy advisory system of the Netherlands and the more general policy advisory system of neo-corporatist, consensus seeking countries in the analysis. We can see that even though the size of the corpus of evidence providers differs per case, and that especially case 3 and 4 make use of more evidence providers, the policymakers working on case 1 and 2 also try their best to talk to as many possible evidence providers as possible, and we can thus recognise the need for pluralisation and the representation of many different actors. Van den Berg furthermore finds that prominent actors within the Dutch policy advisory systems are ad hoc advisory systems and external consultants, and this can also be recognised in some of the cases. While these actors are completely absent in case 1 and 2, an ad hoc advisory committee has played an important evidence providing role in case 3, but this has less been the case for external consultants and private research organisations. These external consultants do play an important role in case 4 however, and the program officers working on this case mentioned in the interviews that they attach great value to the evidence that these private research organisations provide. Van den Berg's finding that state research organisations are important evidence providers can also be recognised in the analysis; while they are not very present in case 1 and 2, they are dominantly present in case 3 and 4.

It is also interesting to see how the three processes of increased externalisation, politicisation and internationalisation that the scholars who analyse policy advisory systems have found also partly play a role in the four cases. First of all, the process of externalisation, which refers to the increased dependence on external evidence providers because of the diminished in-house expertise of the public service (Howlett & Migone, 2013; Diamond, 2020), can be recognised in case 1, 3 and 4. In these cases the policymakers mostly depend on external actors for the provision of evidence. Case 2 is however clear example: in this case, the policymakers decided to conduct research themselves because of the specific nature of the policy area. Because the policy area was new to them, conducting research themselves was the most viable option. The policymakers noted that this is not something that they do more often, and we can thus conclude that making use of external evidence providers is the norm.

The politicisation of evidence, which refers to the increased political nature of evidence that is provided to governments (Craft & Howlett, 2013), cannot clearly be recognised in the four cases. Political parties are consulted in case 1 and 2, but this is done to learn from their practical experiences with increasing the representation of women and people with a disability, and their evidence consequently does not have a overtly political character. The same counts for the local politicians that are consulted in case 3 and 4; this is done to learn from their experiences. It is interesting to mention however that the respondents do realise that the evidence that is for example provided by interest groups or private research organisations can be politically biased, and that they sometimes find it difficult to deal with this. It is important to carefully consider what the political aims behind a study may be, according to the respondents. One respondent furthermore said that they realised that academics may also want to promote their own political agenda in their research, and this is also recognised by scholars from the field of evidence-based policymaking; they also argue that evidence providers are not always neutral (Head, 2013; Strassheim, 2015; Ashcroft, 2017).

Thirdly, internationalisation, which refers to the increased use of evidence from abroad, can also be recognised in the analysis. The policymakers working on case 1 have for example invited British academic Sarah Childs to present her findings in a webinar and they have asked an academic to write an essay on what the Netherlands can learn from other countries. The policymakers working on case 2 have furthermore asked Disability Studies to make an international comparison. The internationalisation of evidence can also be recognised in case 3; the respondents mentioned that they have learned from international examples that are mentioned in the final report from the ad hoc advisory committee and in the essays about the role that citizen's assemblies could play in the energy transition. Finally, the program officers working on case 4 also try to learn from other EU-countries, but the respondents argue that it is sometimes difficult to translate these good examples from abroad to the Dutch building and energy environment. To conclude, even though evidence from abroad is not overwhelmingly present in each of the four cases, the policymakers do try their best to learn from other countries.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

It is also important to discuss some of the limitations of this study, and based on these limitations, some suggestions for future research will be formulated. A first limitation concerns the reliability of the findings: while both a citation analysis and interviews have been conducted to analyse which evidence providers play a role in each of the four cases, for the questions such as which evidence providers are deemed the most important and how the characteristics of the

policy area influence this, only the data from the interviews has been used. The findings are therefore mostly based on the individual opinions of the respondents. With interviews there is always a risk that the respondent's own personalities or experiences may cause them to misjudge a certain situation or to misinterpret a question, which can lead to bias in the data. Respondents furthermore may respond in such a way they think is socially desirable, which may also lead to biased responses.

Respondents on all four cases did reply in comparable ways to the other respondents; no notable outlier responses were found, which increases the reliability of the interview data. Because the respondents on all four cases answered in comparable ways, it was furthermore fairly self-evidence which types of evidence played a prominent role in a case, and what the reasons behind this were. Furthermore, as was mentioned in the Methodology, interview saturation has been reached in all cases, which means that almost no new information was found in the last interviews that were conducted. This also increases the reliability of the interviews, but it is still important to take into account that the responses may be biased.

A second limitation concerns the external validity of the study. Only two policy areas and a total of four cases have been analysed, which is not enough for the findings to be generalizable to other policy areas. The findings could have been different if for example defence policy or economic policy would have been analysed, or when policy areas had been selected that have a stronger legislative position, instead of the supporting and stimulating role that the four cases had. The external validity would also have been higher if a higher number of cases were compared with each other and by letting a higher number of respondents fill in surveys. This would also take away the limitations that semi-structured interviews brought forth. The goal of this study was however to understand *how* the characteristics of policy areas, and specifically in this case gender policy and energy policy, influence the use of evidence by policymakers. A low number of cases and conducting semi-structured cases is a suitable way through which we can understand the mechanisms that are at work within a case in-depth, but it would be valuable for future research to focus on a larger number of cases instead, perhaps cases from different ministries as well, so that the findings become more generalisable.

A third limitation is that the interviews, documents and websites were coded by only one coder. Although a coding frame was used, which has been enclosed in an Appendix to be as transparent as possible about the coding process, there is always a risk of coding bias. Making use of several coders could have reduced this risk.

Besides the suggestion that future research could focus on a larger number of cases so that the findings become more generalisable, there are also some other aspects that future research could focus on.

First of all, as was argued before this study has contributed to the literature on policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes because it focuses on the Netherlands, while most of the previous studies have so far focused on the use of evidence in Anglophone countries. The use of evidence in these countries differs from countries with consensus-driven, neo-corporatist policy advisory system like the Netherlands, and more research is still needed that studies the use of evidence in non-Anglophone countries, so that we can better understand how countries exactly differ from each other (Van den Berg, 2016; Pattyn et al., 2019).

Secondly, it is also interesting to find out what the influence of a specific ministry is on the use of evidence by policymakers. The cases that were studied all fell under the ministry of BZK, but as was mentioned in the Methodology, multiple other ministries also work on the broader policy areas of diversity policy and energy policy. Do the policymakers working on the same policy area, but within another ministry, make different use of evidence? Some of the respondents for example mentioned that the ministry of BZK can be characterised as a coordinating department that is very dependent on other actors for the implementation of policies, which could explain the fact that so much practical evidence is used. This study has however not collected enough data on this, so this is merely an expectation, but it would be an interesting point of direction for future research to study how the characteristics of ministries influence the use of evidence within the ministry

Connected to this is the suggestion that future research could study whether the nature of the department or directorate also has an influence on the use of evidence. As was discussed in the Analysis, the department of Democracy and Governance, which case 1, 2 and 3 fall under, has its own specific nature according to the respondents. This department has a stimulating, supporting and coordinating function, and the policy work that is done has a very practical nature, which can also explain why so much practical evidence is used. The department furthermore has partners with whom it cooperates frequently, such as the political and governmental representative associations and the boards of political parties. These actors were not important evidence providers for case 4, so here we can see that the nature of the department may play a role. Not enough data has been found on this however, so this is again merely an expectation, but it could be an interesting starting point for future research.

A final suggestion for future research is to study how the personal networks of policymakers and knowledge coordinators influence the use of evidence in a policy area. In

case 1 we for example saw that the personal network of the knowledge coordinator mattered according to the respondents, but more research is needed on this. The knowledge coordinator often has personal contacts with evidence providers and the knowledge coordinator knows about the relevant research that is being conducted, which makes it easier for the policymakers to find evidence. Are different types of evidence then used in policy areas with different knowledge coordinators, or do these knowledge coordinators not have such an influential impact?

To conclude, this study has found that policymakers working on different policy areas also to a certain extent make different use of evidence, and together with these suggestions for future research, we can better understand how evidence in the public service is used in practice and which factors have an influence on this.

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Appendix 1: Documents and websites used for the document analysis

Case 1: Women in politics and government

- Letter to parliament: "Beleidsreactie rondetafelgesprek vrouwen in het openbaar bestuur"
- Position papers that were discussed during the round table in Parliament
- Collection of essays: "Op weg naar een betere m/v-balans in politiek en bestuur"
- Report expertmeeting "Naar 40-60% vrouwen in politiek en bestuur"
- Report webinar "Inclusief en representatief (lokaal) bestuur"
- Website diversity and inclusivity in politics and government: https://www.politiekeambtsdragers.nl/ambt-in-praktijk/inclusief-en-divers-bestuur

Case 2: People with a disability in politics and government

- Letter to parliament: "Politieke ambtsdragers met een beperking: hoe faciliteren we de toekomst?"
- Appendix of the letter to parliament: "Actieplan politieke ambtsdragers met een beperking"
- Internally conducted research "In de beperking toont zich de meester…"
- Report "Congres 4 juli politieke ambtsdragers met een beperking"
- Website diversity and inclusivity in politics and government: https://www.politiekeambtsdragers.nl/ambt-in-praktijk/inclusief-en-divers-bestuur
- Report congress "Onbeperkt actief: politieke participatie door mensen met een beperking" https://www.zorgbelanginclusief.nl/onbeperkt-actief-politieke-participatie-door-mensen-met-een-beperking/

Case 3: Energy policy and participation

- Website energy transition and participation https://regionale-energiestrategie.nl/participatie/default.aspx
- Website energy participation https://www.energieparticipatie.nl/
- Website Participatiecoalitie https://departicipatiecoalitie.nl/
- Website Climate Agreement and participation https://www.klimaatakkoord.nl/participatie

- Website Lokale Democratie and the democratic energy transition https://lokale-democratie.nl/cms/view/b39c65bb-d41d-4bf9-91fd-e1b9596beb4e/democratisering-in-de-energietransitie
- Letter to parliament: “Samenhang en sturing Programma Energiehoofdstructuur en Regionale Energiestrategieën”
- Letter to parliament: “Stand van zaken Regionale Energiestrategieën”
- Collection of essays: Nationale Burgerfora - Verkenning van nationale burgerfora als democratisch gereedschap

Case 4: PAW

- Website “Aardgasvrije wijken” https://www.aardgasvrijewijken.nl/default.aspx
- Website Participatiecoalitie https://participatiecoalitie.nl/
- Letter to parliament: “Aanbieding voortgangsrapportage Aardgasvrije Wijken”
- Letter to parliament: “Kamerbrief inzake selectie tweede ronde proeftuinen Aardgasvrije Wijken”
- Letter to parliament: “Voortgang Programma Aardgasvrije Wijken”
- Report “Voortgangsrapportage PAW: Monitor 2020”
- Report “Voortgangsrapportage PAW: Monitor 2019”
- Report “Programmaplan 2021-2024”

Appendix 2: Topic list interviews

- Personal questions
  a. What is the role of the policymaker within the policy theme
  b. What are specific projects that the policymaker works on
- Descriptive analysis evidence providers that play a role in the policy theme
  a. Explaining that a distinction has been made between five categories of evidence
  b. To what extent does the policymaker have contact with each of the five categories of evidence?/to what extent do the five categories play a role in the policymaking process?
  c. Especially important for the interest groups; do they have an evidence function or a lobby function?
  d. Are there other sources of evidence that play a role?
  e. Are there other sources that could play a role, but that the policymaker does not use yet?
- Explanatory analysis: the reasons why these evidence providers play a role
  a. Are there evidence providers that are more legitimate, reliable or useful than others, and why?
  b. How does the character of the policy area influence which evidence is used by policymakers?

Appendix 3: Coding scheme

In order to analyse the categories of evidence that policymakers make use of and the reasons for this, the interview transcripts, letters to parliament, websites and reports of expert meetings were coded using the following coding frame.

Descriptive analysis: what kinds of evidence do policymakers make use of?

The categories of evidence that policymakers make use of were analysed in the interview transcripts and documents, and the extent to which they were present was coded. A four-point scale was used: 1 means that the category or sub-category of evidence was not at all present in the interview transcript or document, 2 means that they were slightly present, 3 means they were present and 4 means that they were the predominant source of evidence.

Category of evidence	Sub-category of evidence	Presence (1: not at all present, 2: slightly present, 3: present, 4: very present, 5: dominantly present)
Academic evidence		
	Independent scientists	
	Universities	
	Universities of applied science	
Private research organisations		
	Platform 31	
	TNO	
Interest organisations		
	Interest organisation whose primary organisational goal is to provide evidence	
	Interest organisation whose primary organisational goal is not to provide evidence	

State research organisations		
	SCP	
	CBS	
	WRR	
	ROB	
	PBL	
Political party research organisations		
Other types of evidence providers		
	Practical evidence/best practices from organisations/municipalities/local parties	
	Practical evidence/best practices from individuals/role models	
	Evidence from the EU/abroad	
	Own numbers and statistics (e.g. Staat van het Bestuur)	
	VNG	
	IPO	
	Dutch Water Authorities	
	Women's networks of the political parties	
	Politiek Vrouwenoverleg	
	Boards of the political parties	
	Wethoudersvereniging	
	Nederlandse Vereniging voor Raadsleden	
	Vereniging van Griffiers	
	StatenlidNU	

Descriptive analysis: how many evidence providers are mentioned or cited?

	Size (1: 1-5, 2: 6-10, 3: 11-15, 4: 16-20, 5: 21 or more)
Size of the corpus of evidence providers	

Descriptive analysis: to what extent is the corpus of evidence providers complex?

	Complexity (1: not at all complex, 2: slightly complex, 3: complex, 4: very complex)
Complexity of the corpus of evidence providers	

For the explanatory analysis only the interview transcripts were used. The answers to the following questions, and the reasons that were given by policymakers, were coded:

Explanatory analysis: why do policymakers make use of these evidence providers?

Position of the policymaker	Reasons	Code
Legitimacy and reliability of evidence providers		
	Academic evidence is more legitimate when exploratory research has to be done and when international comparisons have to be made	2.1
	Academic evidence is more objective and therefore more legitimate	2.3
	Academic evidence often is of high quality and therefore more legitimate	2.5
	State research organisations are very reliable and objective, and they also have a certain stature, and therefore they are more legitimate	2.7

	Evidence from private research organisations or interest groups is not always objective, and thus less legitimate, and you have to be careful with these	2.10
	Evidence from evidence-oriented interest groups is more reliable than evidence from commercial, private, evidence providers	2.13
	Academic evidence is often more thorough than evidence from commercial bureaus, and therefore more legitimate	2.14
The legitimacy or reliability of an evidence provider does not matter		
	Every evidence provider has its own interests and background and therefore there are no evidence providers that are more legitimate than others	3.1
	It depends on where the expertise is located; which individuals are experts on the topic, and this can be within academics, or within a private research organisation	3.3
	It is about the quality of the evidence that is provided and not about the reputation of the organisation: in principle there are no actors that are more legitimate than others	3.5
Usefulness and suitability of evidence providers		
	Role models and best practices, so practical evidence, is important because that is what is most useful for the target audience of the policy area	8.1

	Practical evidence helps you find out what people really need, and therefore it is most useful	8.2
	Because the policy area is so politically sensitive, you are more likely to consult academic evidence instead of private research organisations	8.3
	Technical reports are often difficult to read, while practical evidence can more easily be applied	8.4
	Academic knowledge is more useful when you want to look at the long term, while evidence from private research organisations can be applied immediately	8.5
	Collecting evidence yourself can benefit the quality of your policies and it can be more suitable for policy areas that are new and unknown	8.6
	Evidence from private evidence providers is useful when you need very specific evidence in which the specific evidence provider is specialized	8.7
	Academic evidence is more suitable for exploratory questions, while evidence from private research organisations is more suitable for clear, demarcated questions	8.8
	Academic evidence is often more abstract and theoretical, while evidence from private research organisations is often more practical, and it depends on the situation and the result you want to achieve which one is more suitable	8.9
	Universities of applied science may be more suitable in practical policy areas	8.10

Explanatory analysis: how does the character of the policy area influence which evidence is used by policymakers?

Position of the policymaker	Reasons	Code
The technical or non-technical character of the policy area does not influence which evidence is used		
	It does not, because both policy areas are also morally loaded to a certain extent, and the same democratic and moral questions play a role	4.1
The technical or non-technical character of the policy area influences which evidence is used		
	Yes, more practical knowledge is needed for diversity policy, you want to hear the stories and experiences of people and this can inspire others	5.1
	Yes, the evidence that is used in energy policy has a more technical nature, because it deals with complex technologies	5.2
	Yes, for energy policy it is more important that you get the facts straight	5.3
	It does, but you also need to sell your technical policies to citizens, so practical evidence and participation is still important	5.4
Other characteristics from the policy area that influence which evidence is used		
	The economic interests are much larger for energy policy and therefore more organisations, who also provide evidence, play a role, so it's not necessarily about the technical character of the policy area. Because the economic interests are so high, there are more organized stakeholders	6.1

	The extent to which the policy area is new and the players are not yet known influences the evidence that is used: you then have to find the evidence yourself	6.2
	More practical evidence is necessary for energy policy, because they need to support municipalities as best as they can	6.3