

## **Policy Entrepreneurs in the Picture: the Who, What, Why, and How**

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**Abstract:** Despite the fact that we currently witness an increasing interest in the study of the role of agency in policy dynamics, it remains in many respects a puzzle how policy change can be explained, let alone directed. This paper focusses intently on the concept, incidence, and strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs. By elucidating their strategic modus operandi, we aim to contribute to a better understanding of the strategies that individual change agents employ in their efforts to effect policy change, as well as to examine their contextual effectiveness. In addition to novel data on the incidence and profile of policy entrepreneurs and the (contextual) conditions relating to the selection of strategies, this paper presents a robust and complete typology of entrepreneurial strategies, linking these to circumstances under which they can be effective. Our paper concludes with a discussion on how our findings relate to the main theories of policy change, and what they mean for the larger democratic questions about accountability and legitimacy.

### **Introduction**

The understanding of how to adapt and effect policy change is becoming increasingly important in view of global environmental crises and challenges related to climate change. At the same time, it remains in many respects a puzzle how policy change can be explained, let alone directed. This paper is an attempt to further unpack agency in policy processes by focusing intently on role and strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs. Building on Kingdon's (1984) and Mintrom's (2000) conceptualisations, this study defines policy entrepreneurs as highly talented and exceptional bureaucrats, who, just like their private counterparts, are constantly on the alert for new opportunities (for policy change) and have the capacity to "sell" and "market" new ideas. What distinguishes policy entrepreneurs from other participants in the policymaking process is their above-average willingness to take risks, as well as their involvement throughout the entire process. Another distinguishing characteristic of policy entrepreneurs reflected in our definition is that they, unlike those who are only engaged in the generation of innovative ideas ("policy

intellectuals”) and those who mainly translate ideas into proposals (“policy advocates”), are involved throughout the policy change process. A last distinguishing feature is that we restrict the term policy entrepreneurs exclusively to those individuals who change the direction of policies while holding bureaucratic positions. Those individuals who seek elective office to pursue their vision of change we call “political entrepreneurs”, and those not holding any formal position in government (such as, members of interest groups, academics, consultants, media, and the mass public) “public entrepreneurs” (cf. Roberts 1992). Despite the recognition that policy change processes are often constrained, and to some extent, guided by the structure or context, we assume that individuals can exhibit agency when they are engaged in purposive action with the goal of changing policy. Furthermore, and in line with scholars such as Scharpf (1997) and Axelrod and Keohane (1985), we consider policy entrepreneurs as bounded rational individuals that act on the basis of perceived reality. Nevertheless, this study assumes that if there are at all individuals capable of influencing policy change, it must be these actors.

Interestingly, until relatively recently, the contribution of these individual agents in promoting policy change was largely neglected or underappreciated in the policy science literature. Only since the early 1980s have various political and policy scientists (for example, Kingdon 1984; Schneider et al. 1995; Mintrom 1997, 2000; Mintrom et al. 2014; Huitema and Meijerink 2009; Taylor et al. 2011) directly or indirectly acknowledged room for these individual actors. Despite this small but steady stream of studies of the role of agency in policy dynamics, there remain important gaps in our knowledge on the identity and strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs. The purpose of our paper is to shed greater light on *who* these hitherto rather abstract and underappreciated individual key actors are, *how* and *why* they act to achieve their goals, and *what* meaning their incidence and influence has. Our key aim is to elucidate their strategic modus operandi, thereby aiming to contribute to a better understanding of the strategies that individual change agents employ in their efforts to effect policy change. In addition, and unlike most previous studies, we wish to examine *when* certain strategies are combined with *what* effect, i.e., to assess the contextual effectiveness. The paper is structured as follows. After the presentation of various explanations of policy change and the role of policy entrepreneurs, this paper discusses the research design, the profiles of policy entrepreneurs, the use and effectiveness of their strategies, and the insights on the selection of these strategies. In the final section this paper draws conclusions, and discusses and reflects on the meaning our results.

### **Explanations of Policy Change and the Role of Policy Entrepreneurs**

To understand why and when policy changes, remains stable, varies from sector to sector, and differs in its consequences for the various segments of the public, the policy sciences offers various theories. When looking at - what may be called the four most influential meso level models that include a discussion of policy dynamics (cf. John 1998) - i.e. the multiple-stream model (Kingdon 1984), the punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones et al. 1998; Baumgartner et al. 2009), the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier 1988, 1993; Sabatier and Weible 2007), and the network management approach (for example, of De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof 2000, 2008), we find that despite the obvious differences in orientation and emphases, they all suggest that, except for minor or incremental changes, change is predicted to be relatively rare. Another commonality between these

theories is that if these occasions of change do occur, knowledge and novel ideas challenging the status quo must be implied; therefore the models identify changes in value orientations, in problem definitions, and/or new societal norms and views as potential sources of policy change. In line with that Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) pay extensive attention to policy beliefs, and Baumgartner and Jones (2002) emphasize the advent of new policy images. More importantly, all these models suggest that for these ideas to be able to change the course of a policy, agents are needed to articulate them in political debate. The same argument can be made regarding external system events, internal shock events, or changes in government; they can function as an important catalyst for policy change only when exploited. This brings us to the most important insight that can be drawn from these contrasting explanations of policy change: all these scholars directly or indirectly make the point that there is room for policy entrepreneurs to help stimulate or redirect debate about policy issues. This room is most evident in Kingdon's (1984) stream model. According to him, policy entrepreneurs play an essential role in policymaking processes as they are responsible for the exploitation of windows of opportunity and for coupling solutions (policy stream) to problems (problem stream) and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics (political stream).

Notwithstanding their dominant assumption that the possibilities for directing change are very limited, and even though not all these theories focus on the role of individual actors, our systematic analysis teaches us that these four explanations of policy change all contain important insights on the strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs. Albeit that the differences both in number and diversity are considerable, this analysis showed that some of the strategies that can be derived from these works are complementary and others are (partly) overlapping (see Table 1). The strategy of coalition building, for example, is both cited in the network approach and the advocacy coalition framework. Likewise, the recognition and exploitation of windows of opportunities is stressed in both the multiple-stream model and the network approach. Yet, despite these few overlaps, most strategies we derived from the theories above are only discussed in one specific theory and disregarded in the others, including, for example, the strategy of venue shopping, relational management, and goal stretching. Clearly, this detracts nothing from the merits of these theories per se, but strongly suggests that none of them exhaustively covers the full range of entrepreneurial strategies.

To overcome these limitations, we broadened our theoretical exploration, and also examined the most prominent works on policy entrepreneurship, namely Roberts and King (1991), Mintrom (1997, 2000), Huitema and Meijerink (2009) and Taylor et al. (2011). These works are selected because they all seek to take the already mentioned meso level theories further by focusing on the micro-level, which includes attention to the role and strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs: Roberts and King (1991) extensively studied the strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs calling for a restructuring of the U.S. educational system in the early to mid-1980s; Mintrom made important conceptual and empirical contributions foundation on the subject, among others by studying the activities of policy entrepreneurs in shaping the fate of choice-based school reform, also in the U.S.; Huitema and Meijerink (2009) offered an important contribution by broadening their analysis to the role of policy entrepreneurs in creating water policy transitions around the globe; Taylor et al. (2011) conducted novel theoretical and empirical study on "policy

champions” within the Australian water industry. These works on policy entrepreneurship contain a wide range of entrepreneurial strategies, again demonstrating both overlaps and dissimilarities (see Table 1). For instance, the strategy of trust building is only mentioned in the works of Mintrom (e.g. 1997, 2000) and Taylor et al. (2011); and venue shopping is only explicitly recognised as a strategy in the work of Huitema and Meijerink (2009). Yet, despite the extensive work that has already been done, we believe that a combined qualitative and quantitative study involving a large number of policy entrepreneurs whereby the actual unit of analysis is the individual policy entrepreneur (instead of certain changes in policy or transitions) can throw important light on (the completeness and robustness of) the existing typologies and answer relevant remaining questions about the effectiveness of the various individual strategies (most previous studies stop with the rather generic observation that this effectiveness is highly context dependent).

To further elucidate the full range of entrepreneurial strategies, and upon thorough analysis, we conclude that the multiplicity of strategies of the previously discussed literature (summarised in Table 1) can be condensed to ten mutually distinguishable strategies, which can be grouped into four logical categories that capture the range of strategies in a more general manner: (1) attention- and support-seeking strategies, to demonstrate the significance of a problem and to convince a wide range of participants about their preferred policy, including three strategies, namely: the demonstration strategy; rhetorical persuasion; and the exploitation of focusing events strategy; (2) linking strategies, to link with other parties in coalitions, projects, ideas, and policy games, again including three strategies, namely: coalition building; issue linking; and game linking; (3) relational management strategies, to manage the relational factor in policy change trajectories, including the strategies of trust building and networking; and, finally, (4) arena strategies, to influence the time and place in which policy entrepreneurs act, including the strategies of venue shopping and timing.<sup>1</sup>

Category	Strategy	Sources
Attention- and support-seeking strategies	Demonstration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Softening-up (Kingdon)</li> <li>• Demonstration project activities (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• Administrative and evaluative activities (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• The demonstration of facts and figures (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Drawing attention to actual working examples (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Setting up of demonstration projects (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Establishing pilot projects (Taylor)</li> </ul>
	Rhetorical persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulation of policy images (Baumgartner and Jones)</li> <li>• Naming and framing (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Problem framing activities (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• Dissemination activities (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• Framing/ rhetorical persuasion (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Building cases for initiatives (Taylor)</li> </ul>
	The exploitation of focusing events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birkland (1998) based on the work of (Kingdon; Baumgartner and Jones; and Sabatier)</li> </ul>
	Coalition building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalition building (Sabatier)</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> In this study we are primarily interested in the process of what happens *after* a policy entrepreneur sees an opportunity for change. Therefore, and unlike Roberts and King (1991), Huitema and Meijerink (2009), and Taylor et al. (2011), our typology does not start with the idea that the generation or development of new ideas is the first entrepreneurial strategy.

Linking strategies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selective activation/ coalition building (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Assembling and maintaining coalitions (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Build coalitions and sell ideas (Huitema and Meijerink)</li> <li>• Using social networks to build coalitions of support (Taylor)</li> <li>• Forming and managing teams (Taylor)</li> <li>• Coordinating leadership activities (Taylor)</li> <li>• Getting the right people involved (Taylor)</li> </ul>
	Issue linking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brokerage (Kingdon)</li> <li>• Negotiation (Sabatier)</li> <li>• Multi-issue decision making (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Goal stretching (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Raising complexity (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> </ul>
	Game linking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brokerage (Kingdon)</li> <li>• Negotiation (Sabatier)</li> <li>• Compensation in other places (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> </ul>
Relational management strategies	Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational management (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Activities fostering bureaucratic insiders and advocates (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• Collaborative activities with high-profile elite groups (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• Activities enlisting support from elected officials (Roberts and King)</li> <li>• Networking (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Orchestrate or manage networks (Huitema and Meijerink)</li> <li>• Building and using networks (Taylor)</li> <li>• Building and using relationships with executives and politicians (Taylor)</li> <li>• Undertaking scanning behaviours (Taylor)</li> </ul>
	Trust building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust building (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Developing trust (Mintrom)</li> <li>• Fostering trust (Taylor)</li> </ul>
Arena strategies	Venue shopping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue shopping (Baumgartner and Jones)</li> <li>• Recognise, exploit, create, and/or manipulate the multiple venues in modern societies (Huitema and Meijerink)</li> </ul>
	Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recognition and exploitation of policy windows (Kingdon)</li> <li>• Incrementalism (Kingdon)</li> <li>• Waiting for the window of opportunity (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Priming (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Delaying and accelerating (De Bruijn and Ten Heuvelhof)</li> <li>• Recognise and exploit windows of opportunity (Huitema and Meijerink)</li> <li>• Using windows of opportunity (Taylor)</li> </ul>

**Table 1: New typology of entrepreneurial change strategies (categories) vis-à-vis the literature**

The above depicted entrepreneurial strategies and categorisation is a first important step to better understand the strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs. Clearly, thorough empirical research will have to be undertaken to reveal whether this typology holds, whether adaptations and/or additions need to be made, as well as to assess the contextual effectiveness of all strategies. After a concise explanation of this study's research design and a characterization of policy entrepreneurs in Dutch water management, this paper discusses all ten strategies extensively, highlighting both relevant theoretical foundations as new in-depth empirical data.

### Research Design

The environment informing this analysis is the water management system in the Netherlands, which can be characterised as a consensus-based, complex, and fragmented multilevel governance system with a relatively high degree of decentralisation (Van Leussen and Lulofs 2009). The Netherlands is a highly instructive place to study the modus operandi of policy entrepreneurs, as the country's water management system represents an excellent case of a system in which many policy changes are needed (among other things, due to the need to anticipate expected climate

change effects), one in which both the management of the system and the governing processes have become fundamentally more complex. The research design of this study is based on two assumptions: (1) the bureaucrats identified as policy entrepreneurs know relatively best which actions are most fitting in each unique situation; (2) by analysing the policy entrepreneurs' modus operandi, one can—in the absence of a direct measure or sign—not only learn about the pallet of strategies policy entrepreneurs use, but also gain knowledge on their strategy selection and the (contextual effectiveness) of the different entrepreneurial policy change strategies. Aiming to provide an as rich as possible understanding of the strategic acting of policy entrepreneurs, the methodological approach of the empirical study combines quantitative and qualitative methods, and comprises roughly three different phases. The first phase of this research consisted of ten marathon interviews and a focus group with a limited number of policy entrepreneurs. The middle phase of this research had a quantitative and large-scale character and consisted of an online questionnaire, sent to all water policy entrepreneurs at local governmental bodies in the Netherlands (census). At this point, it becomes clear how much this study diverts from its predecessors; whereas most studies on policy entrepreneurs primarily seek to explain certain changes in policy or transitions, and look at the role of individuals in them, in this study the actual unit of analysis is the individual policy entrepreneur himself. Furthermore, this is the first study involving such a large number of policy entrepreneurs. In total, 239 policy entrepreneurs filled out the questionnaire, a response rate of 70.5%. The last phase of this study again had an in-depth and qualitative character, and encompassed a large set of additional individual interviews with 50 randomly selected policy entrepreneurs. To identify every single policy entrepreneur, key informants within all 491 Dutch local governmental bodies working with water (443 municipalities, 12 provinces, 26 water boards and 10 regional services of RWS) were contacted and asked if they, among their water management officials, could identify one or more individuals matching the criteria for policy entrepreneurs described above, with a response rate of 95.3%. To enhance the reliability of this identification process, the questionnaire included five control questions as an additional check (Brouwer 2015).

### **Policy Entrepreneurs**

This study aimed to open the black box of the hitherto rather abstract figure of the policy entrepreneur by exploring their profiles and by efforts to systematically map out the number of policy entrepreneurs in the context of Dutch water management. Different from what one would expect judging the biographies and case studies that highlight the importance of some exceptional heroic individual entrepreneurs (for example, Doig and Hargrove 1987), and opposed to the widespread idea of a cumbersome and heavily bureaucratic government, this study clearly shows that entrepreneurship is relatively common in local water management in the Netherlands. In fact, in more than half of all its local water governmental bodies, at least one water management policy entrepreneur was identified. This finding is in support of Mintrom (2000) who suggests that change is propelled by actors other than a small number of heroic figures. In absolute numbers, this study identified 339 policy entrepreneurs within the 491 Dutch local governmental bodies concerned with water management.

Although the occurrence of policy entrepreneurship is not equally distributed, this study made clear that policy entrepreneurs can be found amongst all the different types of governmental organisations and among all ranks. To

be more precise, this study made clear that the formal position of policy entrepreneurs varies from policy officer, to project leader, to department head, and that they are active in various fields, ranging from (integrated) water management to sewerage, to town and country planning. Then again, the policy entrepreneurs' actual role (as opposed to their formal role) displays a rather coherent picture: policy entrepreneurs described themselves, among other things, as a "spider in the web", an "initiator", a "pusher", a "pioneer", a "lobbyist", a "broker", and a "catalyst". Furthermore, this study established that the overwhelming majority (88.7%) of policy entrepreneurs are male and between 36 and 55 years old (32.6%). In terms of disciplinary background, this study established that most policy entrepreneurs (74.7%) studied (agricultural) engineering and that almost all of them have a university degree or have completed technical college.

### **Entrepreneurial Policy Change Strategies and their Effectiveness**

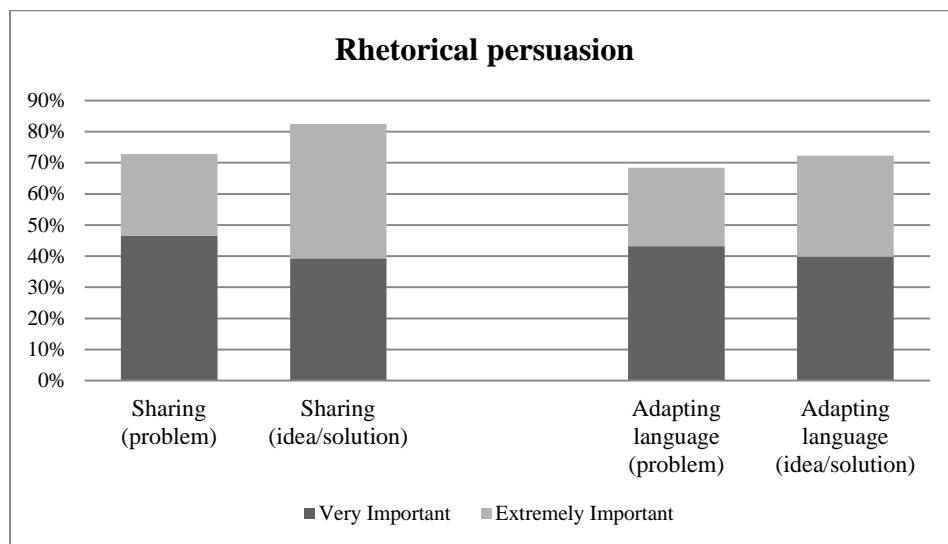
Following the theoretical derived typology as depicted in Table 1, this section analyses the use, effectiveness, completeness and robustness of all ten strategies, the categorisation, and the typology as a whole, starting with a discussion on the various attention- and support-seeking strategies.

#### *Attention- and support-seeking strategies*

The first attention- and support-seeking strategy is the demonstration strategy, used to obtain attention and to exhibit the significance of problems, as well as to gain support for solutions by making their value evident. Both the qualitative and quantitative data in this study suggest that, by making use of the demonstration strategy, policy entrepreneurs work hard to buttress claims on certain problems, and subsequently or even simultaneously, convince others of the value of their idea for policy change. Consistent with the work of Kingdon (1984, Mintrom (2000) and Meijerink and Huitema (2009), this study indicates that Dutch water policy entrepreneurs to this end consider it very important to draw attention to actual working examples and pilot projects. The most important (read: effective) means to demonstrate the value of policy ideas is however making efforts to demonstrate that their preferred policy idea offers the right solution to a pressing problem: as many as 87.4% of the policy entrepreneurs consider it very or even extremely important, suggesting it to. These findings combined suggest that it is highly effective to simultaneously demonstrate a problem (by showing that a solution is available), and the value of the idea they are promoting (by showing that this idea for policy change is the right solution for that very same problem). This, what could be referred to as the "correlation" of problems and solutions, may sound straightforward, yet is, apart from Mintrom (2000) and Brouwer and Biermann (2011), so far mostly neglected or at least underexposed in the literature. The strategy of demonstrating is particularly, but not exclusively, effective at the moment when ideas ought to be sold, in situations in which trust is fragile.

To realise these necessary couplings between problems and solutions, policy entrepreneurs also use the strategy of rhetorical persuasion. By exercising this strategy, policy entrepreneurs try to get their preferred policy innovation to be adopted by affecting others' attention, by persuading others about their preferred problem definition, and by changing preferences through argumentation. In line with the idea that it is the interpretation of data or events that

really can transform conditions into problems (Kingdon 1984), this study reconfirmed that language is a powerful means to emphasise or downplay specific elements of problems and policy ideas. As depicted in Fig. 1, fostering a shared sense of problem ownership through rhetorical persuasion is considered a highly effective means to get problems recognised. Furthermore, in their efforts to get support for policy change, policy entrepreneurs indicate that rhetorical persuasion can greatly affect support when ideas are depicted as solutions that are also favourable for (potential) coalition partners (82.5% consider this very or extremely important). Besides efforts of rhetorical persuasion in terms of sharing, our empirical data suggest that in their efforts to acquire attention for problems, policy entrepreneurs consider it effective to highlight and downplay specific elements of problems and solutions. Also the interviews were rich with examples showing that policy entrepreneurs often frame issues differently, depending on the positions and preoccupations held by their specific audience. As one water board entrepreneur noted: *“The story is always the same, but the emphasis is always different.”*



**Figure 1: Importance of rhetorical persuasion**

Policy entrepreneurs consider rhetorical persuasion effective throughout all stages of the policymaking process, yet above all in the stage wherein ideas ought to be sold and coalitions need be formed. The development of “causal stories” portraying the desired policy change as the appropriate solution to a pressing problem, again turns out to be the most effective means for attracting support for desired policy changes.

The third attention- and support-seeking strategy that policy entrepreneurs use, albeit to a lesser extent, is the strategy of the exploitation of focusing events. Focusing events are described as sudden, relatively uncommon events that are immediately harmful or expose the risk of potentially greater future harms (Birkland 1998). Various scholars, including Kingdon (1984) and Baumgartner and Jones (1993), have cited the importance of these unexpected (external) events as important potential triggers for policy change. Also in this study many examples in which the actual use of this strategy proved highly effective were reported. For example, one entrepreneur

commented: “For [measures to prevent] floodings calamities have been crucial, and they still are.” Nevertheless, the perceived importance of this strategy is relatively low: only 14.6% considers this strategy very or extremely important in their efforts to pursue policy change. Indeed, this study suggests that the use of this strategy is regarded effective only after the occurrence of an actual safety disaster or calamity, an exceptional occurrence in the context of Dutch water management. Opposing Wondolleck and Yaffee’s (2000) suggestion that also threats may be highly mobilising, this study shows that most policy entrepreneurs only consider the strategy effective when something actually happens. As one water board entrepreneur observed: “When a small disaster should happen, I would certainly exploit it (...) Only threatening with them makes you vulnerable. If nothing happens, you will lose your credibility.” The key lessons on the use and effectiveness of the three attention- and support-seeking strategies are presented in Table 2.

	<b>Demonstrating</b>	<b>Rhetorical persuasion</b>	<b>The exploitation of focusing events</b>
<b>What is the core?</b>	Demonstrating the value of a policy idea (i.e. through working examples) and the significance of a problem (i.e. through facts and figures).	Trying to get policy innovations to be adopted through argumentation.	Taking advantage of sudden, relatively uncommon events that are immediately harmful or expose the risk of potentially greater future harms.
<b>What is the key?</b>	Demonstrating that the desired policy change is a necessary and appropriate solution to an (already demonstrated) pressing and significant problem.	Feeling for the positions and preoccupations held by different actors in order to present the desired policy change as the appropriate solution to an important problem.	Feeling for the right timing, fast response and a proper preparation.
<b>When effective?</b>	Particularly, but not exclusively, effective when ideas ought to be sold.	Particularly, but not exclusively, effective when ideas ought to be sold and coalitions need to be built.	Immediately after (water safety) disasters or calamities actually take place.
<b>When to avoid?</b>	Not applicable, at worst less needed after the formal start of projects, that is, after the stage wherein ideas ought to be sold.	Not applicable, at worst less needed after the take-off phase of a project, that is, after the stage wherein ideas ought to be sold and coalitions need to be built.	When it takes the form of threatening or simulating a crisis or disaster, and when it concerns events not related to (water) safety.
<b>Pitfalls?</b>	Demonstrating without interpretation and giving meaning, i.e. without rhetorical persuasion.	Losing an overall consistent story, and as a consequence, losing trust.	A late response; the strategy is effective only when exploited quickly after an actual crisis.

**Table 2: Attention- and support-seeking strategies: lessons learned**

### *Linking strategies*

If only as a result of the dependency upon the actions and resources of others, policy change can rarely be brought about in isolation (Imperial 2005). Not surprisingly, then, policy entrepreneurs must find ways to realise their plans and ideas in collaboration with others, making use of the coalition building strategy. As depicted in Fig. 2, policy entrepreneurs appreciate various advantages of coalition building, including legitimacy, (financial) support, and the idea that increasing the number of actors involved within a certain policy leads to better (informed) decisions, with

extra support being the most frequently cited advantage; for 45.6% this is the prime reason to opt for broad coalitions.

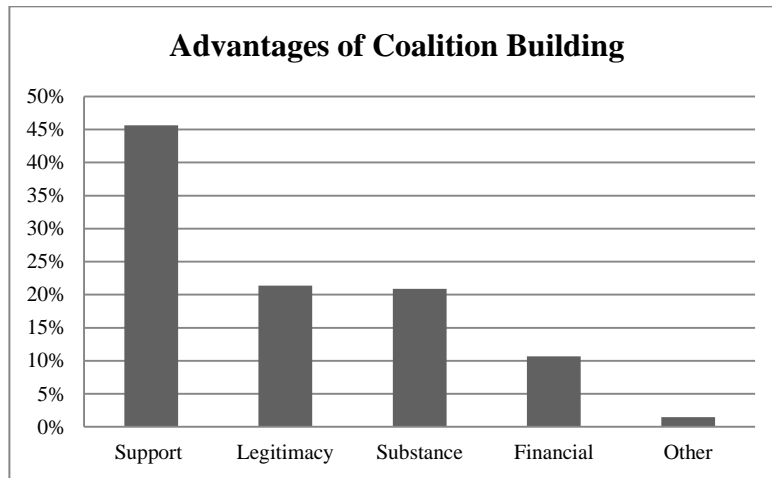


Figure 2: Perceived advantages of coalition building

Despite all advantages and often unavoidability of building coalitions, Dutch water policy entrepreneurs are well aware of the potential pitfalls of this strategy. In accordance with the work of Koppenjan and Klijn (2004), they especially fear the risk of uncontrollable complexity. Hence, the strategic challenge turns out to be not so much deciding whether or not to build a coalition, but rather determining the most effective size and composition of the coalition. Given that coalitions that are either too narrow or too broad can frustrate processes of policy change, this study makes clear that, for each individual project, policy entrepreneurs very carefully weigh the pros and cons and search for the right balance or optimum. To this end, this study suggests that policy entrepreneurs, if possible, not only think about the question which organisations to involve, but are also actively concerned with the selection of individual members. As one entrepreneur observed: *“In my experience, policy change trajectories are especially dependent on the individuals involved, and not so much on the parties involved.”* Policy entrepreneurs certainly do not always aim for the broadest coalition; where it concerns proposals for radical policy change, projects whereby confidentiality is essential, or when there is very little time for the project realisation, broad coalitions should be even avoided.

Furthermore, this study strongly indicates that in their efforts to direct change, policy entrepreneurs not only link actors in coalitions, but (often simultaneously) also make use of the strategy of issue linking, entailing both the linking of dimensions to a problem and the combination of two or more solutions. By employing this strategy, entrepreneurs not only push for acceptance of their own problem definition and preferred solution (as is the case for coalition building), but primarily consider whether or not they should adapt their policy proposal and link it with other issues. Hence, policy entrepreneurs use this strategy not only as a means to an end (to facilitate processes), but also for substantive reasons (to realise better solutions). Our empirical data suggest that as many as 92.7% of all

policy entrepreneurs regard issue linking as a crucial strategy for bringing about policy change; after internal political support the most important success factor. At the same time, and in support of Koppenjan and Klijn's (2004) argument, it is suggested that issue linking may also result in unfavourable consequences. Hence once more, the key effectiveness question is a balancing act between realising optimal added value while simultaneously minimising delay, needless added complexity, and costs, whereby one has to take into account that the non-recognition of the actual complexity can also lead to serious risks in terms of delay, conflict, and stagnation. As one policy entrepreneur explained: *"Every so often I observe projects where too many processes are kept separate while in reality they simply are linked [...] In my view, such cases are even more problematic, kept too simple, and are doomed to fail."* The empirical data of our study suggests that issue linking should be avoided when this implies collaboration with partners with highly diverging interests, at the very start as well as the final phase of a project, and when (due to the threat of a disaster) there is very little time.

The third linking strategy policy that entrepreneurs use is the strategy of game linking, a strategy whereby, in order to acquire the necessary support, concessions are made to parallel or future projects. The use of this strategy – even more clearly than is the case for the other strategies – is generally not an end in itself. An inductive analysis of the research data shows that it is possible to differentiate between 'parallel game linking', whereby an actor makes sacrifices on some issues in project A, in order to gain more on project B taking place at the same time, and 'game linking in time' whereby one gives 'something' away in project A, aiming to get 'something' back in project B taking place in the future. The use of the game linking strategy can be especially effective when essential coalitions cannot be created without some form of compensation and issue linking is unfeasible and/or undesirable. Furthermore, especially in the light of game linking in time, an important prerequisite for using this strategy is that the partners involved are equal and trusted. The key lessons on the use and effectiveness of the linking strategies are shown in Table 3.

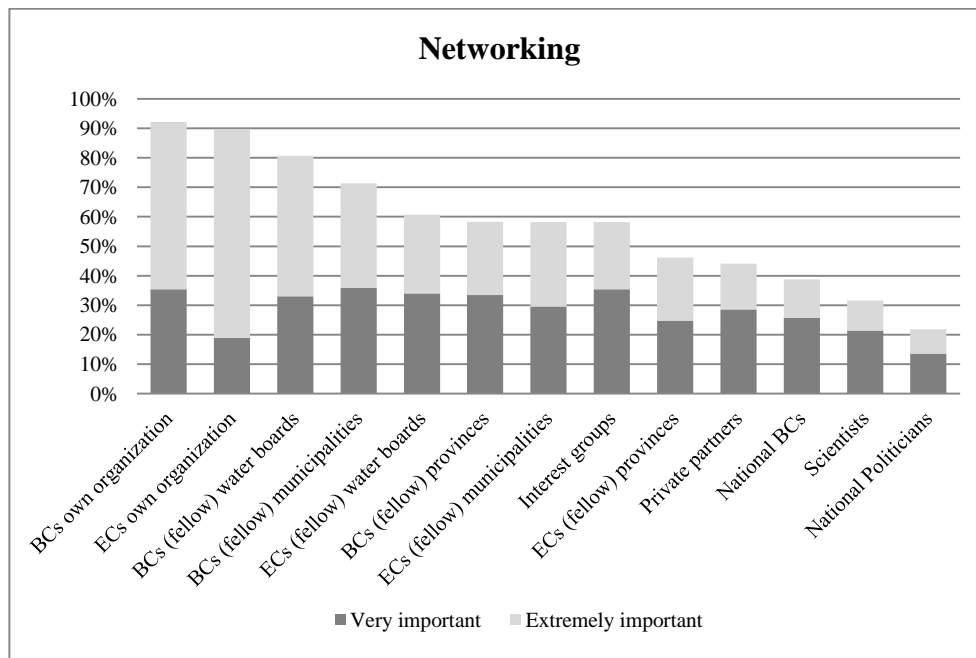
	<b>Coalition building</b>	<b>Issue linking</b>	<b>Game linking</b>
<b>What is the core?</b>	Obtaining support for the realisation of policy objectives.	Linking of two or more issues, for substantive and/or strategic reasons.	Linking of two or more parallel or future policy games in order to find mutually acceptable concession packages.
<b>What is the key?</b>	Feeling for the optimal level of collaboration while simultaneously minimising delay and complexity.	Feeling for the optimal linking point; the point where added value turns into uncontrollable complexity.	Feeling for opportunities for giving and taking and a readiness to compromise.
<b>When effective?</b>	Nearly always, but the width of the most effective coalition depends on the context.	Nearly always, especially when it is a prerequisite to building coalitions or when substantive added value may be created. Most effective degree of linking depends on the context.	When coalitions cannot be built without some form of compensation and issue linking is unrealistic or undesirable.
<b>When to avoid?</b>	To avoid or minimise when it concerns a radical policy idea, when confidentiality is required, and when there is little time.	To avoid or minimise when linking implies collaboration with partners whose interests are too divergent, at the very beginning of the idea development phase or at the very end of projects, and when	To avoid when future interaction with partners involved is uncertain, and/or when dealing with partners with a weak relation of trust.

		there is little time.	
<b>Pitfalls?</b>	Too broad coalitions, resulting in unmanageable complexity and delays.	Too much linking, resulting in unnecessary complexity; too little linking and the non-recognition of actual complexity which may also lead to ineffective outcomes.	Opportunism and unreliable trade partners.

**Table 3: Linking strategies: lessons learned**

*Relational management strategies*

Our data clearly demonstrate that the overall success of policy change trajectories greatly depends on the relational aspect. This is an important insight, and an confirmation that policy entrepreneurs, despite the fact that they are the masters of strategic playing par excellence, should not be seen as masters of ruse, guile, and nasty tricks. In order to create and foster good relations, policy entrepreneurs use two relational management strategies: networking and the strategy of trust building. As depicted in Fig. 3, policy entrepreneurs invest much time in networking with all sorts of actors, and especially with bureaucrats from the different governmental bodies. Networking with the ‘home’ organisation is considered the most important networking relationship. In fact, many interviewees’ accounts reveal that they mostly play several interlinked games at the same time, both within and outside the internal organisation. For example, one policy entrepreneur stated: *“You continuously play on several boards at the same time, and certainly not only in the outside world.”*



**Figure 3: Networking** (percentage of policy entrepreneurs who to bring about desired policy change consider it important to network with bureaucrats (BCs), executives (ECs), and external parties).

Consistent with the suggestion of Schneider et al. (1995), our data suggest that policy entrepreneurs think carefully about the question how much and when to network with various parties. Furthermore, despite the multiple claims

concerning shifts towards governance (e.g. Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000), the data in Fig.3 suggest that governmental actors are still highly important in the way water is managed in the Netherlands. Networking is not only essential for building and maintaining good relations, but also for obtaining knowledge and a better understanding in the preferences, plans, resources, and worries of the other participants. For policy entrepreneurs, this knowledge is of crucial importance for discovering new ideas and linking opportunities, and hence to the progress of their overall strategic game.

The second relational management strategy, trust building, is effective throughout the entire policy change process: in advance of a project (as to acquire attention and support, and to make collaboration possible), throughout the project (without trust and communication progress is hardly possible), and afterwards (the relational outcomes are important for parallel and future games). This study established that as many as nine out of ten policy entrepreneurs (91.8%) consider trust building very (34.5%) or even extremely (57.3%) important. The building of trust is of vital importance, both within and outside the internal organisation, once more illustrating that for policy change processes to succeed, also the internal strategic game is vital (Westley 2002). The key lessons on the use and effectiveness of the relational management strategies are enlisted in Table 4.

	<b>Networking</b>	<b>Trust building</b>
<b>What is the core?</b>	The building and orchestration of networks, and above all, operating within them, which in practice largely comes down to spending time talking with and listening to a wide range of actors engaged in a certain domain.	Purposive behaviours of policy entrepreneurs to respect the rules of the game in order to foster and maintain mutual confidence between partners.
<b>What is the key?</b>	Feeling for the right moment to talk and listen to the right actor in order to obtain as much as possible relevant contextual knowledge.	Being reliable, stable, and predictable; demonstrating an open attitude, and communicating transparently.
<b>When effective?</b>	Effectiveness of networking primarily relates to the “with whom” rather than the “when” question. Networking is particularly effective with bureaucrats and executives of one’s own organisation and with members of water boards.	In advance of a project (as to acquire attention and support, and to make collaboration possible), throughout the project (without trust progress is hardly possible), and after completion of a project (the relational outcome is important for parallel and future games).
<b>When to avoid?</b>	Not applicable, however, networking with national bureaucrats, national politicians, and non-governmental organisations is relatively less effective.	Not applicable.
<b>Pitfalls?</b>	Internally losing one’s image of loyalty due to considerable external networking activities.	Trust is difficult and time-consuming to establish and relatively easy to lose. Especially renegeing is killing for reputations of trustworthiness.

**Table 4: Relational management strategies: lessons learned**

#### *Arena strategies*

Last but not least, this study shows that policy entrepreneurs also strategically play with the arena wherein policymaking processes take place, referring to both the locus and time. The search for the most promising venue or locus where policy entrepreneurs can affect policy change, i.e. the use of the strategy of venue shopping proves important in this respect: 51.5% of the Dutch water policy entrepreneurs considers this strategy very important,

about a quarter (25.7%) even extremely important. Nonetheless, our data suggest that if policy entrepreneurs search for alternative existing venues, they generally do so as a last resort, and only in circumstances in which there is very little support for their ideas; in general they consider it more effective to respect the established procedures and not to risk their relations with their regular partners. This result was not foreseen, but may retrospectively be explained by the current study's research strategy as it exclusively focuses at (1) change agents working within and thus bound to specific governmental agencies, and (2) exclusively focuses at the subnational level of Dutch water management, where concrete projects need to be realised and parties generally have long-lasting (dependency) relationships. As one entrepreneur, for example, noted: *"Given that we are almost always dependent on others for the attainment of our goals and always deal with the same parties, we know that specific behaviour in one project has implications for future projects as well. That is why we cannot bypass certain parties."* Then again, this study shows that policy entrepreneurs are active in the creation of all sorts of new venues, including project-based organisations, task forces, advisory committees, and sounding boards (providing support for Huitema and Meijerink 2009), considered particularly effective in relation to relatively large-scale projects that involve broad coalitions.

The second arena strategy, timing, is about affecting the time-pressure in policymaking processes. Policy entrepreneurs are constantly on the lookout for opportunities for change, and well aware that timing is crucial in this respect. In anticipating such opportunities, including upcoming elections and the arrival of new executives, they make deliberate efforts to both slow down and speed up policymaking processes. Policy entrepreneurs slow down processes by pushing for small parts at a time, and even more so by delaying, postponing, and/or waiting. Deadlines, on the other hand, are often used to speed up processes. The key lessons on the use and effectiveness of the two arena strategies are shown in Table 5:

	<b>Venue shopping</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<b>What is the core?</b>	Searching for, or alternatively, creating the most promising venue to effect policy change.	Affecting the time-pressure in policymaking processes, both by slowing down and/or speeding up.
<b>What is the key?</b>	Feeling for the most promising venue to select an optimal composition of participants and decision making rules, while simultaneously minimising relational damage.	Feeling and constant alertness for opportunities, as well as awareness about how the length of policymaking processes can be influenced without worsening strategic positions.
<b>When effective?</b>	The shopping for alternative venues can be effective in surroundings that provide little or no support for policy change; policy entrepreneurs consider the creation of new venues particularly effective for facilitating decision making in broad coalitions.	Affecting the time-pressure is particularly effective when anticipating policy opportunities, new elections and the arrival of new executives.
<b>When to avoid?</b>	When the selection of alternative venues damages important relations (as a result of bypassing).	Not applicable.

<b>Pitfalls?</b>	Relational damage along with the creation of venues without actual participation and decision making authority (fake venues).	Overlooking the possible disadvantages of setting deadlines that may worsen strategic positions.
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**Table 5: Arena strategies: lessons learned**

When conceptualising the strategy of timing as selecting the best moments for strategic action in order to achieve desired outcomes, this study suggests that timing not only functions in terms of affecting the time-pressure, but plays a critical role in the overall strategic process and is important for all entrepreneurial policy change strategies, and accordingly not only functions as an independent strategy, but also can be seen as an overarching strategy or as a meta-strategy. Even though the importance of time and timing is cited in various studies (see, for example, Mintrom 1997, 2000; Huitema and Meijerink 2009; Taylor et al. 2011), the insight, recognition and demonstration that timing functions both as independent and as an overarching strategy or meta-strategy is new. Although important, this conclusion does not call for an amendment of the theoretically derived typology of strategies.

### **Strategy Selection**

The policy entrepreneurs' selection of strategies importantly relates to the context, that is, the set of circumstances and facts that surround policymaking processes. This study suggests that three contextual conditions are of particular importance: the policy proposal they wish to progress, the network environment they operate in, and the policy entrepreneurs' home organisation. As regards the policy proposal, this study suggests that especially the (desired) scope or interconnectedness of a project – and with that the extent to which the project success is dependent on others' resources, support, and/or regulatory capacity – is important, and so is the available time to implement particular projects (Roberts 1992). Most striking in this context is the importance of the position of relevant actors (ranging from support to fierce resistance) as well as the relation between coalition partners (Scharpf 1997; McCown 2004). The empirical work of our research strongly suggests that not only the position of current coalition partners is important, but that also the stance of potential future partners explains, to some degree, the strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs. In line with this, the present research found that the strategy selection is not only determined by substantive elements of the desired outcome, but that desired relational outcomes are at least as important (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004). Apart from the policy proposal and the network environment, this study suggests that the position of their superiors, and the specific preference of the executive assembly in particular, also determines the strategic modus operandi of policy entrepreneurs (Snare 1995). This reminds us of the fact that policy entrepreneurs, despite their talent and outstanding role, at the end of the day also remain public servants dependent on the decisions of their political masters. Finally it is important to note that policy entrepreneurs should not be considered as fully rational actors (Axelrod and Keohane 1985), but as individuals with having pre-existing preferences for certain strategic behaviour, manifested, for instance, in an intrinsic strategic orientation towards strategic dilemmas. This personal inclination is the fourth variable that determines the policy entrepreneurs' strategic behaviour. When viewing the identifiable conditions affecting the policy entrepreneur's selection of strategies more abstractly, all these four conditions can be regarded as independent variables determining the strategy mix (see Fig. 4). Given that the strategy mix, in combination with the context, determines policy outcomes,

the mix of entrepreneurial policy change strategies can be regarded as an independent and dependent variable at the same time.

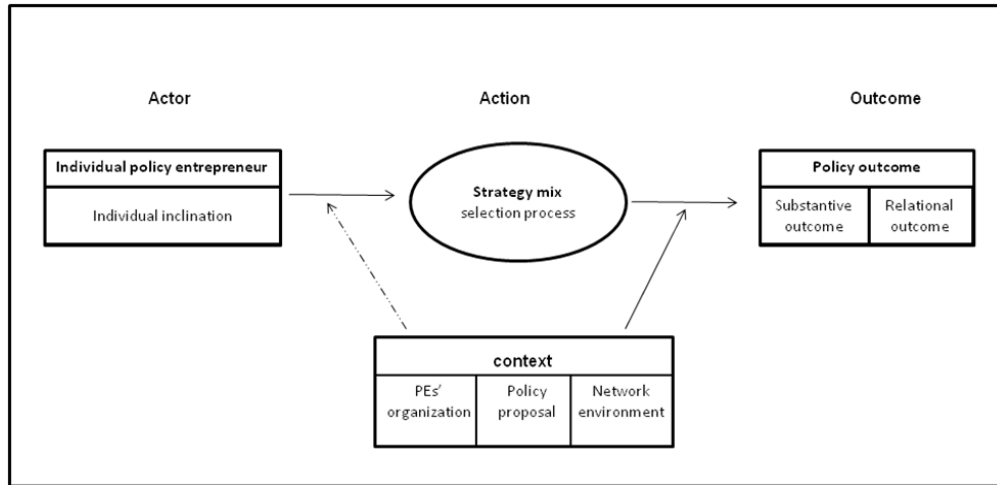


Figure 4: Entrepreneurial strategic behaviour in scheme

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study wherein the actions of policy entrepreneurs are systematically analysed and grouped, contributes to new insights on who these actors are, why and what kind of strategies they use to achieve their goals (summarized in Table 6), and the contextual effectiveness of these strategies.

Attention and support-seeking strategies	Linking strategies	Relational management strategies	Arena strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstration</li> <li>• Rhetorical persuasion</li> <li>• The exploitation of focusing events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coalition building</li> <li>• Issue linking</li> <li>• Game linking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Trust building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Venue shopping</li> <li>• Timing</li> </ul>

Table 6: Strategies of policy entrepreneurs

Policy entrepreneurs do not employ these strategies in a chronological order, nor exclusively in specific phases. Instead, this study found that they frequently use various strategies from the same category concurrently, such as the use of the demonstration strategy in combination with the use of rhetorical persuasion, or coalition building in combination with issue linking. An even more interesting insight is that policy entrepreneurs simultaneously employ attention- and support-seeking strategies, linking strategies, relational management strategies, and arena strategies. When using Westley's (2002) conceptualisation and visualising each category as a juggling ball, the conclusion would be that, in order to be effective, policy entrepreneurs must constantly juggle all of the balls, and cannot neglect or drop a single one. Accordingly, it can be concluded that effective strategic behaviour is not so much about detecting the one single 'most effective strategy', but rather about establishing the most effective strategy mix. This study suggests that by an effective use of the various strategies, policy entrepreneurs are, to

some degree, but much more than is suggested in most prevailing theories (see among others, Kingdon 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier 1988), capable of influencing policy change. In this connection we do not claim that policy entrepreneurs individually can fully control policy change processes, yet do argue that policy entrepreneurs can make a difference, and for this reason, can rightfully be considered as mindful and proactive orchestrators of policy change processes. On the basis of this fairly optimistic conclusion, one may ask whether the magic key to effectiveness is within reach. Apart from the difficulty that the context in which policy entrepreneurs operate is highly dynamic and surrounded with uncertainty (Koppenjan and Klijn 2004), and connected with that, the issue that effectiveness in the short term might be different from effectiveness in the long term (Bovens et al. 2001), the strategic dilemmas that this study has uncovered suggest that this is undoubtedly not the case. If there is one lesson to be learned for this study, it is the fact that strategic behaviour is far from straightforward or unproblematic. A denial of this importance would not only pass over the influence of the contextual conditions, but also mean a direct underestimation of the qualities of policy entrepreneurs.

In discussing the meaning of the findings of this study, especially considering that the proper role and power of the bureaucrat in democratic societies has long been a matter of contention, also the larger democratic questions about accountability and legitimacy need to be taken seriously. In this light, it is important to acknowledge that this study made clear that there is no denying that policy entrepreneurs potentially are powerful actors and (especially when the stakes are high) do certainly more than applying the established rules faithfully. In terms of accountability, however, one can say that retrospectively, policy entrepreneurs are nevertheless accountable to a forum, that is, their superior or executive, who must render political account to the general assembly. Furthermore, the current study gives no indication that the strategic behaviour of policy entrepreneurs, except in rare cases, is about double-dealing or playing nasty tricks. Policy entrepreneurs are generally ambitious first and foremost for the organisation or the public interest and not for themselves. For these reasons we take the view that entrepreneurship within the public sector should not be seen as a threat to the accountability of public sector organisations, but first and foremost as an opportunity.

When interpreting these conclusions, a number of caveats and limitations must be considered. The first limitation of this study is that it relies primarily upon retrospective and survey accounts, which can be inaccurate. In addition, particularly from the perspective of effectiveness, it would be fruitful to explore to what extent, if at all, the strategies of policy entrepreneurs diverge from other actors trying to effect policy change and/or other policy fields. Furthermore, it would be valuable to complement future studies on entrepreneurship with external assessments of the specific changes that policy entrepreneurs bring about. The most important limitation of this study is that it is conducted in one single country, and that it is unable to determine to what extent this particular context may have influenced the results. Reinforced by the work of Zhu (2008) conducted in China, it is, for example, not possible to rule out that strategies such as game linking may be more important in a more decentralised context. For this reason, we take the view that future research needs to draw on an extended research design that includes international comparison.

## Acknowledgements

We thank Springer International Publishing who have kindly given permission for the use of material from Brouwer (2015), *Policy Entrepreneurs in Water Governance: Strategies for Change*.

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