

Leaving Your Mark









For Arie and Jansje
For Paulien

Leaving Your Mark: Policy Entrepreneurs Setting the Agenda in the IJsselmeer Area



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INTRODUCTION

**‘Where there is no vision
the people perish.’**

Proverbs 29:18

(King James Version)

1.



Legend

-  IJsselmeer area
-  Village/City
-  Main road
-  Main waterway

Figure 1.1: The IJsselmeer area encompasses the entire former Zuiderzee and has a surface of more than 2,000 square kilometres. It has the largest freshwater lake in the northwest of Europe. Today, the area has several lakes: the IJsselmeer (around 1,200 km²), the Markermeer-IJmeer (around 750 km²) and the corner lakes (Veluwe) (around 75 km²). The largest supply of water (70 per cent) comes from the Rhine basin through the river IJssel. Also part of the area is the Province of Flevoland, which consists of the polders of Eastern Flevoland, Southern Flevoland and the Noordoostpolder. The Wieringenmeerpolder and Afsluitdijk, which demarcate the IJsselmeer from the Wadden Sea, are also considered part of the IJsselmeer area. Another landmark is the Houtribdijk, which separates the IJsselmeer and Markermeer-IJmeer (Beleidsnota IJsselmeergebied 2009–2015, 2009, p. 8).

1.1 Introduction

Cornelis Lely had a dream—change the Netherlands by closing off the Zuiderzee with a large dam and creating new land, rising out of its waters within. In 1891, he gave voice to his dream by drafting a plan; however, it would take over 27 years before the plan was accepted by the national government. Within his lifetime, he witnessed the beginning of this largest and most ambitious infrastructural endeavour ever initiated by the Dutch—the Zuiderzee Works—but did not live to see it finished. This water engineer clearly left his mark in Dutch history and is remembered as the visionary who accomplished what not many deemed possible at the time—transforming a whole sea into a freshwater lake with polders of new land within. This triggers the following questions: how did Lely achieve this, and what can we learn from his story?

Lely was not the first to propose such a plan. In 1667, Hendrik Stevin first developed plans to close the Zuiderzee, with the goal of preventing the hinterland from ever flooding again. Although this was an ambitious plan, it was impossible to complete with the technology available at that time. Moreover, the Zuiderzee was an important trading route on water for the Dutch, and closing it off would be disastrous for the trading market. Two centuries later, around 1850, the issue returned to the agenda due to changing circumstances. First, the Zuiderzee had lost its international status as a trading route because of a newly created canal from the Zuiderzee to the North Sea. Second, the Dutch population was growing, and land was lost after Belgium revolted in 1830. Third, due to the industrial revolution, more powerful steam-run mills were produced and used to successfully drain some lakes in the Zuidplas. This gave new life to the development of plans for turning water into land in the Zuiderzee, as a whole or in part. Numerous plans were created by engineers from private firms and by Rijkswaterstaat—the Directorate-General for the Public Works and Water Management Department of the then Dutch Ministry of Water Trade and Industry. However, most initiatives did not receive support from the national government because they were deemed too unrealistic, unnecessary and expensive, or were put on the political agenda at the wrong time due to issues such as Cabinet crises or other concerns. This changed when a lobby organisation, called the Zuiderzeevereniging, was founded in 1886. This group—with representatives of provinces, local municipalities, water boards and private notables—had the goal to set an agenda to transform the Zuiderzee.

The group commissioned the relatively unknown water engineer, Lely, to take the lead in developing a plan. Lely and his associates conducted research on the alternatives and possibilities to transform the Zuiderzee. He established a public campaign, wrote papers and gave lectures to raise awareness. In 1891, he finally presented his plan—known as ‘Plan Lely’. The plan impressed many and gen-

erated some public support, but not enough for the plan to be accepted. However, in the same year, Lely became the Minister of the Dutch Ministry of Water Trade and Industry, and sought for his plan to be approved as an Act. He formed and chaired a state commission that had the task of judging his own plan. Unsurprisingly, in 1894, this commission developed a report advocating Plan Lely as a matter of national interest that should be implemented by the state. Unfortunately for Lely and his supporters, the Cabinet lost power and the Cabinet that replaced it had other priorities. In 1901, Lely again became Minister for the Dutch Ministry of Water Trade and Industry; however, due to his plan's large costs, opposition to the plan was growing. In response, Lely changed the plan by proposing construction of smaller polders in order to meet the financial constraints. Plan Lely was close to being accepted; however, again, a Cabinet change prevented it from reaching a final decision. In 1913, Lely became minister for the third time, but now on the condition that his plan would be supported. Despite objections from the Ministry of War—which viewed the Zuiderzee as a part of the national defence system—the plan received considerable political support.

Ultimately, fortunately for Lely, two events helped push his plan onto the agenda and receive approval (Bosch & Van der Ham, 1998; Peys & Koetzier, 1985; Van der Ham, 2007). First, in 1914, World War I diverted the attention of the national government to more urgent matters. However, because of the Netherlands' neutrality in World War I, it was cut off from some important trading relationships with neighbouring countries. As a result, the Dutch faced food scarcity because the country was unable to self-sustain. Thus, Lely framed his plan as the solution to the problem of food scarcity because the newly created polders would offer room for additional agricultural land. Second, the Dutch suffered from a flood of the Zuiderzee in 1916 that caused considerable damage deep into the country. In response, Lely emphasised that closing off the Zuiderzee would reduce the risk of future floods. Subsequently, the parliament accepted Lely's plan and, on 13 June 1918, the original draft of the *Zuiderzee Act* was signed by the Dutch queen. After 27 years, the Dutch finally started working to realise Lely's dream.

Lely's story provides numerous lessons. It indicates that people can make a difference and make radical change occur. Lely had a dream that he translated into an ambitious, yet feasible, plan that offered solutions to pressing problems, and he mobilised the public, politics and policymakers to adopt his plan. His perseverance also proved crucial, with giving up being much easier than continuously trying to change the government's agenda. However, this story also shows that change is not only reliant on individual design, but also influenced by contextual factors that can act as both a constraint (such as the Cabinet changes or lack of financial resources) and an oppor-

tunity. For example, the crises caused by World War I and the 1916 Zuiderzee flood helped Lely align his plan with these events; it seems unlikely that Lely's plan would have succeeded if these events had not occurred to create a sense of urgency.

1.2 Research focus

The present study focuses on change agents, such as Lely, who strategically seek to set the agenda for or against policy change. It focuses on the area that Lely—literally and figuratively—placed on the map: the IJsselmeer area. The Zuiderzee is known today as the IJsselmeer area and is a clear result of Lely's efforts.

The creation of the IJsselmeer and polders generated an open playing field for numerous actors with different plans, ideas and policies. The Zuiderzee had been an empty space or institutional void before the Zuiderzee Works commenced. The creation of new ground, nature, agricultural land, cities, a province and more produced opportunities for actors to project their ideas onto the area. This led to innovations and experiments in engineering, agriculture, spatial planning, city design, infrastructure, water management and even socialisation and colonisation practices by the national state, who would only allow farmers to live in the polder if they met certain social value standards for this brave new world (Van der Ham, 2007). While further examination of these innovations and experiments would be interesting in future studies, the current research does not focus on the agents behind these historical changes, but rather on those agents who sought to set the agenda during the last decades by advocating and opposing plans to change the IJsselmeer area.

The main research question addressed by this study is *how* actors strategically seek to set the agenda within the context of the IJsselmeer area. To answer this question, the agenda-setting process will be reconstructed. In particular, I will examine how actors frame the problem at stake and the solutions, and manoeuvre their way through the policy process by networking with others to create support for, or against, policy change. I consider the change agents involved and their actions as examples of policy entrepreneurship, and define a policy entrepreneur as an actor who advocates and strategically seeks to change or oppose policy (Kingdon, 1984). The overall hypothesis is that policy entrepreneurs, by employing strategies, can set the agenda.

On one side, there is the policy entrepreneur with his or her set of strategies, and on the other side, the agenda is believed to be influenced by the policy entrepreneur's strategies. As Lely's example indicates, policy entrepreneurs are constrained or enabled by the institutional context in which they operate, depending on the issues involved. Therefore, although this study adopts an agency perspective, the context is not neglected. However, this study will examine

the context primarily from the perspective of the policy entrepreneurs involved.

The main goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between policy entrepreneurs, who employ certain strategies, and the dynamics of agenda setting. Although policy entrepreneurs increasingly receive attention in political and social sciences, understandings of their strategies to pursue policy change is still limited (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011; Mintrom, 2000; Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Pralle, 2009; Roberts, 1998; Roberts & King, 1991; Sheingate, 2003; Zahariadis, 2007). For example, Mintrom and Norman (2009) note that there is still room for further conceptual development and empirical research concerning policy entrepreneurship, including policy entrepreneurs' strategies. They state that there is also need for further study of the interactions between policy entrepreneurs and their specific policy contexts (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Therefore, when studying the relationship between policy entrepreneurs and agenda setting, I take into account the context as perceived by the policy entrepreneurs.

The present research is different from other studies on policy entrepreneurship because it studies not only the stakeholders at the national governmental levels—such as members of parliament, political leaders and so forth—but also discusses the strategies employed by local and regional policy entrepreneurs (cf. Carter, Scott & Rowling, 2004; Doig & Hargrove, 1997; Thompson, 1994; Uslaner, 1978; Weis-

sert, 1991). Moreover, the policy entrepreneurs empirically studied include people from within the political system, such as local aldermen, as well as policy entrepreneurs acting from

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outside on behalf of their own interest or that of their interest groups (Bakir, 2009; Oliver, 2004). Further, while most studies on policy entrepreneurship only discuss policy entrepreneurs in favour of policy change, this study also analyses the opponents of policy change (Bakir, 2009; Crow, 2010). The case studies reveal that numerous actors seek to influence the area by setting the agenda to change policy or prevent policy from occurring. Finally, as detailed in the next chapter, this research builds on the available literature on policy entrepreneurship, while also expanding its focus by studying theories on agenda setting. It also includes other theoretical frameworks to enrich knowledge on the framing and networking strategies employed by policy entrepreneurs. There is particular focus on the former because empirical studies of policy entrepreneurship tend to focus on networking strategies, rather than framing strategies (Brouwer, 2013;

ONTWERP

der
Afsplitting der Zuiderzee over Wieringen
met gedeeltelijke indykking binnen die afsplitting

Schaal van 1:200000



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Luit. Huis Nijland

Bosker Huis Nijland

Luit. van der Wieringse land