

Daring decisions and representative municipal democracy: an exploration within the new river management in the Netherlands

Peter Scholten
Institute for Science Innovation and Society
Centre for Sustainable Management of Resources
Radboud University Nijmegen
The Netherlands

Abstract

Public sector innovation is often driven by informal groups of visionary key actors ('transition arenas'). The WaalWeelde project in the Netherlands, where new river management strategies are designed with new groups of stakeholders, is one example. In this article the role of political leadership in these processes of innovation is further explored. In order to mediate between the transition arena, with its long term perspective and experimental character and the conditions of the political domain in which short term results and public support are dominant, it is assumed that a certain element of 'daring' within the democratic context is required.

In the exploration of daring decision-making, the article focuses on the role of the individual municipal administrator as a mediator between a transition arena and the municipal context in processes of public sector innovation. The most important finding is the importance that the administrators ascribe to individual actors in decision-making processes. Their will to effect change, their skills, resources and strategies are seen as vital in exercising their role as 'policy entrepreneur'. Linkages with theoretical literature are briefly explored.

Key-words: Public sector innovation, political leadership, transition arena, daring decision-making, municipalities, grounded theory

Daring decisions and representative municipal democracy: an exploration within the new river management in the Netherlands

River management in the Netherlands has always been focused on strengthening and raising dykes to protect the low-lying polder areas against flooding. This is now generally regarded as insufficient. Climate change will induce higher discharge volumes, and confining the rivers between ever-higher dykes will only augment risks. The river management paradigm has therefore shifted towards 'room for rivers', i.e. to give the rivers more space to drain the excess waters (Van Stokkom *et al.*, 2005; Wiering en Arts, 2006).

The great question now is whether the idea of creating more room for rivers should be interpreted in a strictly technical and sectoral sense or whether it should also offer opportunities to additional societal aims such as nature development, recreational objectives, cultural revival and economic development. In the sectoral approach, the river management authority searches for sets of measures that are implementable within its institutional domain, e.g. lowering of groynes or removing obstacles in floodplains (see PKB, 2006). In the alternative approach, a much wider set of options is considered, including those that may act as economic drivers to alleviate government budget constraints, such as (flood-adapted) housing along (possibly relocated) dykes. 'Landscape quality' is the usual catchword for this broader, integrated vision.

The landscape quality approach constitutes a case of public sector innovation, because it requires a wholly new spirit and practice of collaboration of public and private parties, including the river authority, sand and clay excavation corporations, knowledge brokers, real estate developers, nature conservation agencies and last but not least the riparian municipalities, who will not only have to passively adapt their zoning plans to national demands but to involve themselves in the creative search for new 'win-win' opportunities.

Various authors have described innovations in terms of change, resulting in different terminologies. Examples are; societal innovation (Termeer, 2006), transformation (Kotter, 1995) and transition management (Rotmans, 2003).

Public sector innovation is often driven by informal groups of visionary key actors (transition-arenas), and the case study that this paper will present is no exception. One day or another, however, the cross-over has to be made from the visionary phase to include the municipalities in the process. It is on this involvement that the present paper will focus. It is argued that a certain element of 'daring' in the decision-making process is needed in order to mediate between the innovative spirit of a transition arena and the municipal political climate.

The objective of this paper is to explore the concept of daring decision-making, including its limitations and potentials for river management in the municipal administrative context. The concept is explored from a decision-maker's point of view.

First, this paper will give a short overview of the project WaalWeelde, being a typical case of public sector innovation and providing the rationale for this conceptual exploration. Then it will briefly position the concept of daring decision-making in the academic discussion on deliberative and representative concepts of democracy. The efforts to create a conceptual framework for daring decision making, using inductive methods provided by grounded theory procedures and techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are described. Within this framework, the conditions for daring decision making are further explained. Furthermore, efforts are undertaken to relate the conceptual model, based on empirical findings, to existing theories. Finally, some reflection concerning public sector innovation and specific aspects within this field of inquiry is given.

1. The WaalWeelde project

The new river management paradigm 'room for the river' has become the basis for the latest government proposals on river management policies in the Netherlands. Despite the efforts to use a landscape quality approach, so far, possible solutions are found only within the institutional domain of the water management authority. In case of the river Waal these measures boil down to an integral lowering of the existing groynes. This strictly technical approach is effective in creating room for the river, but without any added value for landscape quality, which was also one of the main issues of the new river policy.

The project 'WaalWeelde', initiated in the fall of 2006 by a small visionary group of academics and policy-makers, uses an approach which considers a much wider set of options in a search for a combination of safety measures, enhancement of landscape quality and economic activity. The project creates a transition arena (practically organized in so-called 'clusters' of four municipalities each) in which leaders of neighboring riparian municipalities are working together with a wide range of different stakeholders and interest groups, ranging from nature conservationists to real estate developers. The focus is on public-private cooperation in finding innovative solutions for water management. These clusters are practically supported by a team of facilitators and receive scientific support, for instance in the form of calculations on the effects of plans on the water flow or information on strategies of participation processes with the public.

The WaalWeelde approach is innovative in many aspects. First of all because of its focus on inter-municipal cooperation in creating innovative plans for river management. Clusters of neighboring municipalities that have a history of ignoring or even competing with each other are now working together, creating linkages both alongside and across the river.

A strong focus is on economic drivers that can alleviate budget constraints for sustainable solutions, such as adaptive building in floodplains, sand and clay excavation and recreational functions. In these projects the linkages between safety, landscape quality and economic activity can be combined.

In a search for innovative ideas, WaalWeelde aims to work with a bottom up approach. Various stakeholders are invited to join in the process. Apart from this 'selective deliberation', WaalWeelde tries to involve the public directly in the process. A special focus here is on an experiment of 'non-selective deliberation' with an interactive internet forum that is used as a channel through which information about new ideas and possible projects is spread and a public debate about the pros and cons on these projects can be held. In combinations with various public meetings, the internet experiment aims to be an extension of the transition-arena in order to involve the electorate and council of the different municipalities in the process.

Furthermore, WaalWeelde is trying to facilitate municipal leaders in the pivotal moment of conveying the ideas and proposals of the transition arena into the municipality. The difficult task of providing information to other parties and discussions with opponents in the municipal council as well as in society is necessary to create possibilities for the development of innovative ideas and the gaining of both public and political support. One of the strategies here is the so-called council conference in which the councils of different municipalities are being invited to share in the ideas and processes of the WaalWeelde project.

The main question that arose from the first experiences in the project concerned the role of municipal leadership in the pivotal moment of connecting the transition arena with the

municipal context in the decision-making processes concerning public sector innovation. This formed the main motivation for the exploration of the concept of 'daring decision-making'.

2. Relating daring decision-making to current concepts of democracy

The theoretical discussion on western democracy centers on 'deliberative' and 'representative' interpretations of democracy. Simply put, the representative theory is based on the idea that political elites compete for votes of the public similarly to how shopkeepers compete for customers. The public decides who is allowed to govern, but further political decisions are made within professional, or elite, circles. These elite are then supposed to find a balance between short term and particularistic interests versus the long-term and collective goods. These decisions must then be explained to the elected councils and the public. Deliberative democracy theorists argue that the representative interpretation lacks a basic principle of democracy, inspired by the normative claim that citizens should be able to co-determine the specific political decisions that affect their lives (Renn, Webler & Wiedermann, 1995 p.21). In the Netherlands, this deliberative interpretation of democracy has been gaining popularity throughout the 1990's. In general, two basic forms of deliberative democracy can be identified. The first is a *non-selective deliberation* which involves a public participation with possibly all members of society. The second form can be described as a *selective deliberation*, in which specific stakeholders are invited to participate in the decision-making process. In terms of governance, this form is also referred to as the interactive or network approach, in contrast to the more hierarchic approaches of governance that are traditionally identified with representative interpretations of democracy.

In the current practice of governance, both the interactive and the hierarchic approaches can be problematic when dealing with change and innovation. Several authors have indicated the tendency in hierarchic approaches of governance to be focused on status quo and creating policies that are fixed on keeping things under control (see for instance: Weber, 1968; Frissen, 2003; Termeer en Kessener, 2006). In the other extreme, interactive approaches that are solely focused on generating consensus eventually create nothing more than colourless compromises that completely lack innovative elements (see also: van Stokkom, 2006; van Dongen et al, 1996). In this light Bobbio(1987, p.31) pointed out, from a more politico-philosophical point of view, that nothing kills of democracy more than an excess of democracy.

Recently, it is also highlighted that a combination of both approaches of governance is often being used in decision-making processes and it has been argued that the specific use of a mixture of both forms of governance can actually be very functional in processes concerning radical innovations of the public sector (Koffijberg, 2005 p.329). The present paper, focusing as it does on the cross-over from the deliberative transition arena to the representative municipal structure, engages this idea of 'mixed democracy'. However, it adds the attention to the leadership factor that may be the essential ingredient to in fact do the mixing effectively.

A risk in all forms and styles of democratic decision-making, especially on the municipal level, could be the tendency to solely focus on short term aspects. In an attempt to secure their position, elites might be fixed on keeping the vote of the public and therefore focus their policies on highly visible short term interests. Stakeholders that are invited in the decision-making process might use this phenomenon in order to set the agenda according to their own short-term needs.

But even if policies are focused on long term public good, these majority interests may be effectively blocked by persistent minority groups that vigorously promote and defend their own short term interests. This phenomenon, though obviously useful as part of the checks and balances in a democracy, may well develop into an obstacle for innovative decision-making.

As in the whole of the Dutch public sector, the municipal structure is largely composed of a representative structure with deliberative add-ons, in which short-term interests tend to dominate. In the representative structures the administrator is confronted by a municipal electorate and a municipal council that may often be manipulated to some extent but hardly ever emanates an invitation to visionary, long-term decisions. In the deliberative encounters confrontations occur with citizens or local interest groups for which basically the same applies.

In the case of WaalWeelde, municipal administrators that take part in the project have a key role in the pivotal moment of connecting the visionary transition-arena with the political culture and structure of the municipality. In order to mediate between the transition-arena, with its long term perspective and experimental character, and the conditions of the political domain in which short term results and public support are dominant, it is assumed that a certain element of '*daring*' within the democratic context is needed.

The question explored in the paper therefore is: how do municipal administrators manage to bring an element of '*daring democracy*' into this representative and deliberative municipal context? The concept of daring democracy refers to daring planning and decision-making within the bounds of the foundational principles and rules of democracy.

3. Methods

The first stage of the research was devoted to understanding and shaping the concept of daring decision making, through efforts of linking theory to practice in an inductive analysis, being the principal research technique used in the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Inductive analysis means that the theoretical conceptualization emerges from the data, rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1980 p.306).

In order to have a starting point for the research without a theoretical framework, a conceptual exploration of existing literature was used to form sensitizing concepts that could guide the empirical research. Blumer (1954) described sensitizing concepts as devices that give the researcher a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Contrary to definitive concepts, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look (p.7).

Qualitative empirical research methods were then used to ground these preliminary theoretical ideas in the every day practice of municipal administrators and thus combine the *etic* (or *outsider's*) notions with *emic* (or *insider's*) views. Through strategic sampling, seven reputedly '*daring*' administrators were identified.

Based on semi-structured interviews with these administrators of different municipalities in the Netherlands, an initial conceptualisation of daring decision-making could be formed. In these interviews, administrators discussed the issues of daring decision-making and its conditions and constraints, based on their own experiences and reflections. The political process and the different parties that play an important role were broadly described as well as their own role as elected representative in the process.

The interviews were transcribed and processed with the text analysis programme MAXQDA. The analysis of the data occurred through a process of coding. Coding is the core process in grounded theory methodology (Holton 2007, 265). Through coding, the data is

fractured, analysed and grouped in categories in order to generate a conceptual abstraction that can provide the possible foundations of a theory.

In this analysing phase, the specific procedure of grouping coded segments in order to distinguish certain categories was done by the author as well as two others (a social scientist and a philosopher). The categories that were created independently showed an almost complete overlap. With these coding and analysing procedures a first step in forming a model for daring decision making has been taken.

The model thus constitutes an exploratory but empirically grounded conceptualisation of daring decision making as well as a first description of the conditions needed in order to achieve such decisions.

4. Conceptualising daring decision-making

The conceptual model for daring decision-making is depicted in two figures. The first gives an insight in what is meant by daring decisions in the view of municipal administrators based on the data that was gathered. It provides a grounded definition of the concept. The second figure will give an overview of the conditions that are needed for daring decision-making processes.

4.1 What characterises daring decision-making?

“You see, the every-day expected policy has nothing to do with daring decision-making. But something that changes the course, ambitious...a substantial change...Something that will make you sweat, that is daring decision-making...It contains risk.”

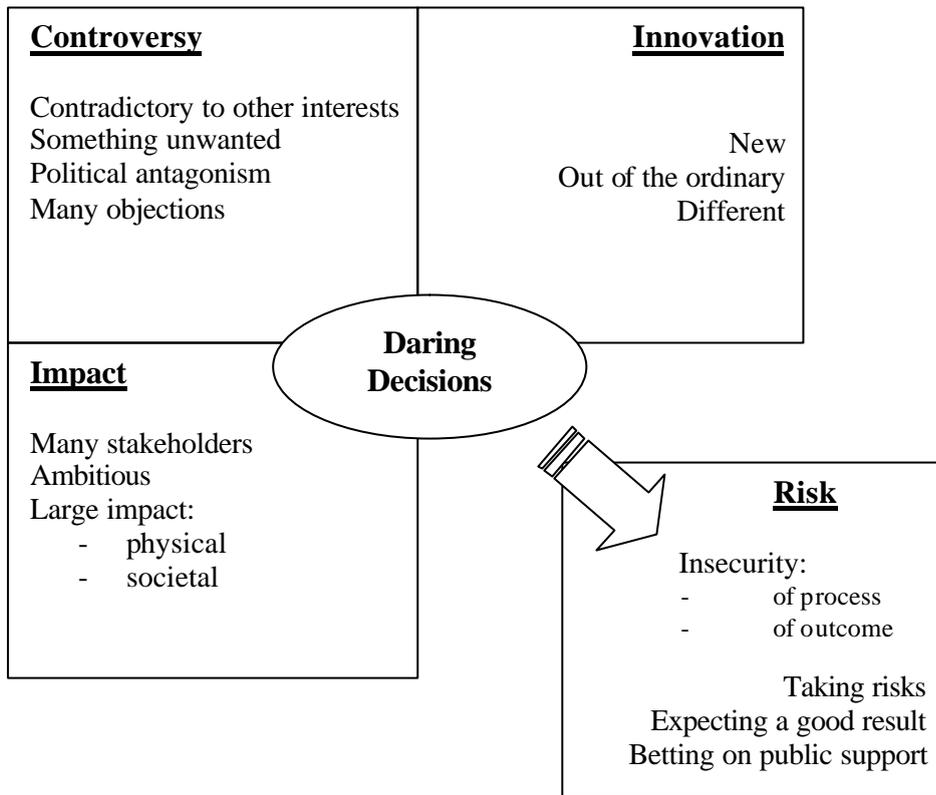
In the analysis of the interviews, the answers to the question on defining daring decision-making could be grouped into four major categories that summarise the different elements of daring decisions. These dimensions are depicted in figure 1.

The elements of controversy and innovation are linked to some extent. Daring decisions often are contradictory to other interests, because some or a lot of people will object them or because they don't fit the political agenda and corresponding budget. This agenda is often focussed on business as usual and ideas or policy proposals that are innovative or 'out of the box' are conflicting with such an agenda:

‘What you see in daily practice is business as usual. Issuing passports, making sure children can go to school, keeping the streets clean... Everything different from these tasks, everything that has a perspective of development... that is daring decision-making.’

Figure 1: four characteristics of daring decision-making

The risk element is the essential characteristic; the other three are causally underlying, creating the risk.



It needs to be emphasised that innovative or unconventional ideas can be both positive and negative and therefore daring decision-making is obviously not intrinsically good. The invasion of Iraq is a clear example of a decision with obvious daring, but controversial morals.

Another element of daring decisions can be the impact of the project that is proposed. This has to do with the number of people that are involved or affected and the significant financial consequences it can have:

“You should not forget that daring decisions often have a great physical impact! And the question is; who is going to pay for it. Then it is daring decision-making. If the yearly financial budget is always consumed by all the normal things a municipality has to do, what amount of money do you dare to set aside for such a project?”

It has also to do with the great impact it can have on the society of a municipality or its physical environment. This was for instance described during an interview, in a discussion on the public resistance against the building of a trailer park:

These are things that nobody wants, I can understand that. And then the council meeting is overcrowded... But you shouldn't be afraid of that, because a lot of people are eventually happy that it will not be built in their street.

All characteristics mentioned above entail a certain risk in initiating these processes of daring decisions. Risk seems to be the denoting element in the concept. Daring decisions always have an element of risk, whether they are controversial, innovative, having a high impact or a combination of the three other elements.

In daring decisions the outcome of the policy-making process is unclear, it is unknown if there will be any support, both in politics and in society and it is uncertain if this support will eventually develop. One of the interviewees described it as follows:

‘You don’t know what the outcome will be...and you must have the courage to enter this process and let it go its way. Along the way you try to intervene but you never know how it will work out. We are used to think in timeframes and schematics but in daring decisions you must let these go...’

In this process of a daring decision the administrator has to cope with the insecurity of whether or not he will get support for his ideas. The way to do this seems to be a matter of confidence:

‘If you start walking, then the path you walk on will come to existence as well. My policy now has a strong public support but if I would have asked people for their support when I started it, a few years ago, I probably wouldn’t have received it. Now I do, because it is implemented. It’s like the chicken and the egg...’

In another interview this point is even stronger suggested. Trust in your self and in the proposed policy has, in this case, to do with being the representative of the people and therefore representing their best interests.

‘...That is the point, because you know what people want. It is just that they don’t trust that it is possible to reach what they want in this way. So if you reach it anyway then you will get the public support, I am convinced of that.’

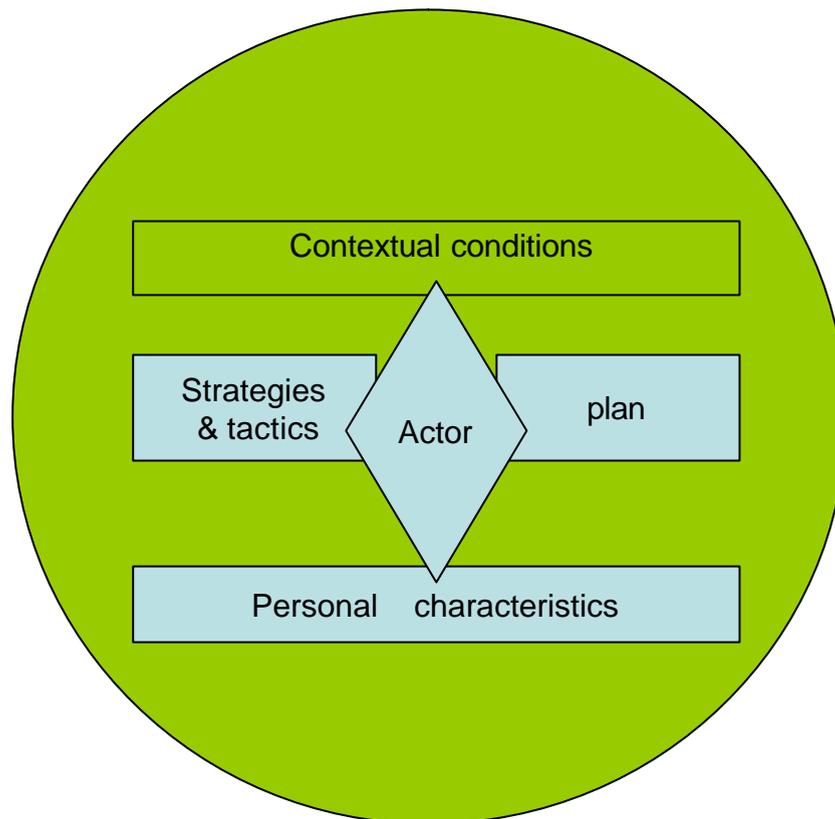
Daring decisions, in the view of individual municipal administrators are decisions that are risky to make, often have an innovative character, with a high impact on society or its environment and therefore bring forth a certain controversy. It is unclear whether there will be enough public support for such decisions. Daring decision-making may therefore be defined, informally, as making decisions whilst betting on public and political support.

4.2 Conditions for daring decision-making

What is needed in order to bring a daring idea to the table and make sure that it survives the process of decision-making from policy-proposal to implementation? Figure 2 shows an overview of the different conditions for daring decision-making, as they were given by the municipal administrators in the interviews. It provides an actor-oriented approach in describing the conditions for daring decision-making in a municipal context. This approach is visualized in figure 2, whereas the result from this approach can be seen in figure 3. The actor (municipal administrator) is placed in the centre of the figure, surrounded by the context in which he or she must act. This context brings forth a set of conditions, consisting out of the various organizations, the different actors that will be encountered in the process and the various (formal and informal) rules and regulations along which the game needs to be played.

The different conditions described by the municipal administrators that are typically actor-related can be summarized into three main categories. The first category is a summary of the actor’s *personal characteristics*; i.e. the ‘things you must be or must have’. This category is directly related to the second category which consists out of the *strategies and tactics* the actor is able to deploy; i.e. the ‘things you must do’. Specific personal characteristics are needed in order to engage in specific strategies and tactics. The characteristics of the *plan* or policy proposal itself form the third category.

Figure 2: the municipal administrator as actor within the context.



In this actor-oriented approach, personal characteristics are highly important. Administrators in the interviews have all been emphasizing that certain personal *skills* are a necessary resource in the process of daring decision-making. But next to these skills, a range of characteristics, which are summarized in figure 3 under the term *self-efficacy*, is addressed. For instance, to convince others of a policy proposal, the use of excellent communication skills is in itself not enough. The actor also needs to be the driving force behind the process of decision-making. Keeping spirits high time after time and show confidence in the plans, based on strong arguments. Interviewees explained it as follows:

I must have told everyone a thousand times; it is going to happen! That is a confidence you have to convey. It is a very important function in creating support with all the stakeholders.

Be persistent! You need to have the energy and the ambition to overcome the barriers that you will be confronted with. And there will be barriers, you can be sure of that!

In order to be able to do this the administrator must be well informed and have a strong attachment to the goals he or she wishes to achieve:

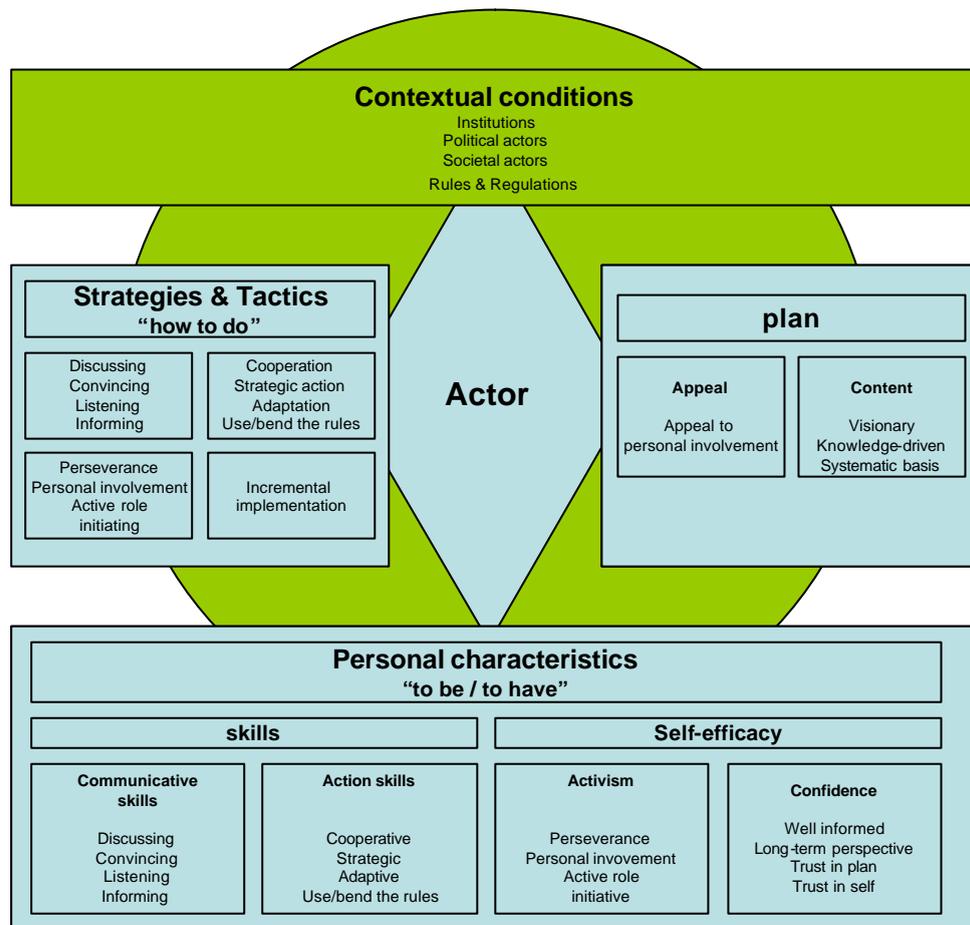
You have to create some intrinsic connection to the plan. If you agree with yourself on it, you can last a long time. And then you have to hold out! Persevere and believe in yourself. Find the energy to constantly convince people, answer questions. For this, you need knowledge and creativity but first of all commitment to yourself.

This also implicates the need for strategic and tactical skills to cooperate, be adaptive and take the necessary steps in order to get things done. A remarkable skill in this light is the ability to

creatively use or ‘bend’ the rules. Years of bureaucracy have often lead to a jungle of, not seldom conflicting, rules and regulations. Finding a way through this jungle and sometimes bending the road a little to make sure it leads in the desired direction is indicated as a very useful characteristic in policy-making.

What becomes clear is that personal characteristics, i.e. the actor’s personality, the skills he/she has and the ability to use these in creating strategies and tactics are very much interrelated. The actor uses his personal characteristics in order to engage in certain strategic and tactical actions while interacting with the contextual conditions

Figure 3: Conditions for daring decision-making in an actor-oriented approach, based on daring actors’ insights



Next to a set of personal characteristics and the ability to use them in creating different strategies and tactics that can be deployed in the policy process, some conditions can be identified on the level of the plan that is proposed:

Before you start informing everyone you must have a sound plan. A good plan is not just consisting out of a few parts, it is systematically sound. All the parts are connected and it shows a vision. If you have a vision and everything or everyone concerned has a place in this vision, you can prove that it is a good choice. A good plan is easy to defend. The basis needs to be good.

So a plan needs to be visionary, based on sound knowledge and have a systematic approach. Apart from that, it should also have a certain appeal to personal involvement due to the fact that every stakeholder is addressed.

This appeal can be stimulated by a specific strategy, referred to in the model as *incremental implementation*:

People are, generally speaking, not very interested in a policy, they want to see something tangible being implemented. Because you actually bring words into practice, people tend to be less critical...Most people see it as an exception that a politician actually does what he says.

5. Relating the grounded model to existing theory

Without denying the importance of contextual factors, the model presented in this article shows a strong emphasis on the role of the individual political actor in the decision-making process. A political actor is defined here as anybody with a specific political position (e.g. a municipal administrator). The theories that will be discussed in this section show a similar focus on the role of individual actors although these individuals are not necessarily in a political position. In the description of these theories it is shown that all of them display connection with the grounded model that was presented in figure 3.

The policy entrepreneur

A vital role for the individual actor in a decision-making process can be found in the Policy Streams Approach (Kingdon, 1984).

The Policy Streams Approach regards policy formation as the result of a converging flow of three processes or streams: problems, policies and politics. Problems are public matters that can be perceived as (un)problematic. Policies are proposals for change, intended to be solutions to these problems and politics are the processes such as election results or societal mood swings that can have a profound influence on how public problems and possible solutions are defined (John, 1998). Here, Kingdon builds on the garbage can model (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) adopting the view that collective choice is not due to individual efforts aggregated in some fashion, but rather the combined result of structural forces and cognitive and affective processes that are highly context dependent (Zahariadis, 2007).

The theory uses ambiguity in the political decision-making process as a starting point but dedicates a special role to certain highly motivated individuals that try to couple the three streams together, creating meaningful definitions of problems and proposed solutions in their efforts to control this ambiguity. These 'policy entrepreneurs' attempt to mobilize opinion and institutions and they try to ensure that the idea does not fall off the agenda. These attempts can be more successful when a so called 'policy window' appears. This can happen by the appearance of urgent problems or happenings in the political stream, such as a change in government. Policy entrepreneurs are individual actors that make strategic use of the contextual factors in their efforts to raise awareness to their special problems and press home their proposed solutions. Success is more likely when all three streams are coupled, depending on the type of window that opens and the skills, resources and strategies of entrepreneurs to focus attention and bias choice (Zahariadis, 2007 p.79.).

When it comes to these skills, resources and strategies, Kingdon categorizes them into three categories of entrepreneurs' qualities. These categories for the policy entrepreneur are in congruence with the conditions for daring decision-making of political actors, described in the grounded model of figure 3.

The first has to do with the fact that the individual in question has a claim to be heard, either because of expertise, the ability to speak for others (leaders of an interest group) or because this person is in an authoritative decision-making position. In the conditions for daring decision-making a description closely related to Kingdon's expertise is found in the personal characteristics of being well-informed, having a long term perspective and advocating a plan that is visionary and knowledge driven. Since the model is based on municipal administrators, the actor is obviously in an authoritative decision-making position.

The second category has to do with the fact that the person is known for his political connections or negotiating skill. This can also be found in the description of the use of personal skills in developing strategies and tactics for interacting with political and societal actors as part of the conditions for daring decision-making. The difference between the mere ability to use certain skills as a result of personal characteristics and the act of using these skills that is made in this description is not found in Kingdon's categorization.

Third, and probably most important, successful entrepreneurs are persistent (1995 p.181). This was also a very important outcome of the grounded research that is highlighted in the model with the term 'perseverance'.

According to Kingdon, entrepreneurs are generally engaged in two different types of activity; advocacy and brokerage. Sometimes the two activities are combined and sometimes entrepreneurs are specialists in either one of them.

The reputedly daring administrators in the interviews have been emphasizing strongly on the advocacy type. The fact that some brokerage is of course needed here and there is mentioned but by no means highlighted. One could speculate that these findings are the result of socially desired answering. It might be perceived as much more 'daring' to be standing strong and advocate your own plan, than to wheel and deal your way through the process while attempting to create consensus everywhere you go. Nevertheless, both advocacy and brokerage seem to be part of the processes that were described in the interviews.

The boundary spanner

Next to Kingdon also other authors have mentioned brokerage as an important part of entrepreneurial activity. The image of the policy entrepreneur acting as broker, trying to couple the policy streams and as such overcome gaps and connect different networks and bodies of identity in their pursuits of innovation can be regarded as a certain form of *boundary spanning*. Boundary spanners are individuals that have a pivotal role in the management of inter-organizational relationships (Williams, 2002). In his description of the art of boundary spanning Williams mentions several key factors which involve the use of particular skills, abilities, experience and personal characteristics (Ibid. p115). I will briefly highlight some of these factors.

The first is about managing complexity and interdependencies and requires experience, knowledge and cognitive capabilities. This again relates closely to Kingdon's mentioning of the role of expertise and the personal characteristics related to this matter as they can be found in the conditions for daring decision-making displayed in figure 3.

Williams also highlights the importance of influencing and negotiation capabilities and networking skills, but doesn't mention the importance of being persistent, as it has been so strongly highlighted both by Kingdon and as a research outcome in this article. As it was mentioned before, this outcome is very much based on interviews with the specific advocate type of entrepreneurship. This might be an explanation for the importance of perseverance or persistence in the research outcome and the lack of this characteristic in the description of the boundary spanner which relates to the brokerage type of political entrepreneurship.

Public leadership

Policy entrepreneurs and boundary spanners can be found in many fields. Examples are politicians, business leaders, members of the scientific community or journalists. The model presented in this paper focusses on municipal leaders, being political actors, as policy entrepreneurs and their skills, resources and strategies. Several other authors have also investigated the role of public leadership in processes of change (Termeer, 2006; Baez & Abolafia, 2002, Hosking, 2002). In the ambiguous world of political decision-making, leaders must participate in the process of continuous change and adaptation in order to make public sector innovations happen and be involved in it (Hosking, 2002). Based on Termeer (2006) several participation strategies can be distinguished. These strategies also reflect the distinction in brokerage and advocacy.

(1) The first strategy is about the restructuring of existing routines in order to tackle new problems. Leaders are engaged in a creative search for possibilities within the existing context of rules and regulations. This strategy can be identified as a form of advocacy. It is found in the grounded model as 'using/bending the rules'. (2) Another strategy that can be categorized as advocacy is the identification of new concepts and the framing and re-framing of these new meaningful identities. Typical brokerage strategies are the connecting of different networks (3) and the integrating of new concepts of innovation with the existing vocabulary and identity of an organization (4). The last strategy that is briefly mentioned here is described as improvising (5). Leaders who are engaged in this strategy are taking initiatives in innovation. They take risks and seize opportunities in an insecure context. They create a situation of minimal structure and maximal flexibility in which they and their societal partners must find new conceptualizations and meaningful identities. It seems that this latter strategy cannot be easily categorized as a typical image of brokerage or advocacy entrepreneurship. Probably best described as a combination of both forms, this strategy is clearly related to daring decision-making described in this article as risky, innovative and possibly controversial.

6. Discussion

In the exploration of the concept of daring decision-making, this article has been focusing on the role of the individual municipal administrator as a mediator between a transition arena and the municipal context in processes of public sector innovation. The most important finding in this exploration has been the importance of individual actors in decision-making processes. Their will to effect change, their skills, resources and strategies are vital in exercising their role as policy entrepreneur. The importance of the role of individual actors and their capabilities and resources is also strongly highlighted in the discussed literature. In this light, it has provided a distinction in advocacy and brokerage types of the individual actor's activities.

Although it seems that respondents in the interviews generally regard advocacy as more daring, both the interviewees and the literature suggest that brokerage is an important feature of the decision-making process. Therefore the concept of daring decision-making clearly has to do with both types of an individual's qualities.

It is also emphasized in the literature that policy entrepreneurs do not necessarily need to be political actors. Taking this into account it is argued here that political actors, although not necessarily as policy entrepreneurs, do play a vital role in certain processes of public sector innovation as they are the mediating factor between the transition arena and the

municipal structure. For instance in the case of WaalWeelde, proposals for innovation need eventually be conveyed to the decision agenda of a municipality. It is assumed that in this specific situation, the municipal administrator has to identify himself and his position with such a proposal in order to successfully push the proposal and keep it on the agenda.

What has remained remarkably untouched in the various described theories is the question of the implications that such an advocacy for radical change or innovation in the public sector might have for the individual advocate. The grounded definition of daring decisions as risk-taking by betting on public support might provide a basis for further exploration of this specific question.

About the Author

Peter Scholten has a background in Anthropology and Philosophy, and holds an MA in Social Sciences of the Environment. He did research on conflict and communal action in farmer communities of Northern Cameroon and worked for an environmental NGO in Curaçao, the Netherlands Antilles. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Policy Science at both the Radboud University in Nijmegen and the Erasmus University in Rotterdam in which he focusses on the role of political leadership in achieving change toward sustainability.

References

Baez, B. & Abolafia M. (2002) Bureaucratic entrepreneurship and institutional change: a sense-making approach. *Journal of public administration research and theory* 12(4):5225-552.

Blumer, H. (1954) What is wrong with sociological theory? *American sociological review* 18, 3-10.

Bobbio, N. (1987) *The future of Democracy; a defence of the rules of the game*. Translated from: *Il futuro della democrazia*, Torino Einaudi 1984.

Dongen, H.J. van, Laat W.A.M. de & Maas A.J.J.A. (1996) *Een kwestie van verschil*. Eburon, Delft.

Frissen, P.H.A. (2003) Een jaar later, een pleidooi voor ontregeling. *Bestuurskunde* 17, 314-322

Glaser, B.A. & Strauss A.L. (1967) *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research* Aldine publishers, Chicago

Holton, J.A., The coding process and its challenges in: Bryant, A. & Kathy Charmaz (eds.) *The Sage handbook of grounded theory*. Sage, Los Angeles

Hosking, D.M. (2002) *Constructing change: A social constructionist approach to change work*. Tilburg University.

John, P. (1998) *Analysing public policy*. London: Continuum.

Kingdon, J.W. (1995) *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. 2nd. Ed. New York: Harper Collins

Kotter, J. P. (1995). Leading change: why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard business review* 73, 59-67.

Koffijberg, J. (2005). *Getijden van beleid: omslagpunten in de volkshuisvesting. Over de rol van hierarchie en netwerken bij grote veranderingen*. Delft University press. (diss.).

Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat, VROM, LNV (2006), *PKB Ruimte voor de rivier*

Patton, M.Q. (1980), *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills C.A., Sage

Ren, Webler & Wiedemann (1995), *Fairness and competence in citizen participation*. Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers

Rotmans, J (2003). *Transitiemanagement, sleutel voor een duurzame samenleving*. van Gorkum, Assen

Rousseau, J. (1968). *The social contract*, translated and introduced by Maurice Cranston, Penguin books Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

Stokkom, B. van (2006). *Rituelen van beraadslaging, reflecties over burgerraad en burgerbestuur*. University Press, Amsterdam

Termeer, C.J.A.M. (2006) *Vitale verschillen over publiek leiderschap en maatschappelijke innovatie*. Wageningen University

Termeer, C. J.A.M.& B. Kessener (2007) Revitalizing stagnated policy processes: using the configuration approach for research and interventions. *The journal of applied behavioral science* 43(2), 256-272

Van Stokkom, H.T.C., A.J.M. Smits en R.S.E.W. Leuven (2005). Flood defense in the Netherlands: A new era, a new approach. *Water International* 30, 76-87

Weber, M. (1968). *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen ; Mohr.

Wiering, M.A. en B.J.M. Arts (2006). Discursive shifts in Dutch river management: 'deep' institutional change or adaptation strategy? *Hydrobiologia* 565, 317-325

Williams, P. (2002). The competent boundary spanner. *Public administration* 80 (1), 103-124

Zahariadis, N. (2007) The multiple streams framework; structure, limitations, prospects. In: Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.) *Theories of the policy process*. Westview Press, Boulder.