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Contentious Governance

Sub-National Governments, Activists and Controversial National Policies

Imrat Verhoeven

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Understanding Governance

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For my parents and for Tineke

Preface

The initial idea for this book emerged from a reconsideration of my PhD thesis which I defended in the late spring of 2009. After leaving the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), to work as a postdoctoral researcher in the Sociology Department at the University of Amsterdam, I had a conversation with Jan Willem Duyvendak, who had served on my doctoral committee. I asked him if there were elements in my thesis that had been overlooked. Jan Willem pointed out that my analysis placed too much emphasis on conflict from the perspectives of the national cabinet, municipal players, citizen action groups and the media, instead of looking at some of their interactions. And he was right. My thesis focused on the conflict surrounding the municipal amalgamation of the city of The Hague and its vicinity in The Netherlands, as a dichotomous analysis of citizens opposing government. What I had missed, was the multilevel governance dynamics between the cabinet and the municipal players and I overlooked the collaborative interactions between the municipal players and citizen action groups.

After reviewing my empirical materials, I worked on new ideas with Jan Willem on what we called at that time ‘governmental activism’, from which we published an article in Social Movement Studies. In the same period, I collaborated with Christian Bröer in a contribution to a collected volume edited by Jan Willem Duyvendak and James Jasper. Our chapter conceptualised contentious governance and local government players as social movement actors. After presenting several conference papers that followed the same theme, it became clear to me that social movement scholars were resistant to the notion of government players as activists, essentially arguing that government players will never behave as activists, even if they oppose policies by other government players. My emphasis shifted after a conversation with Conny Roggeband that turned out to be a pivotal moment in the development of this book. She suggested dropping the concept of governmental activism and further develop the concept of contentious governance. Thus, by analysing the complex contentious dynamics between (supra)national government players, subnational government players and activists, I understood how social movement and public policy scholarship could be in conversation with each other. After finding several appropriate cases the project became my labour of love and diligently occupied the time between teaching and working on other research projects. To maintain the momentum, I collaborated with several inspiring scholars to produce articles on contentious governance and related topics. These collaborations helped me further develop my ideas, and the interest in this work confirmed my belief that a full book would be a worthy contribution to a nascent scholarship.

The publication of this book fills me not only with great pride and joy, but also recognition and gratitude for the shoulders of the many people that I stand on, and who have contributed in various ways to this work. I would like to extend a big thank you to every politician, civil servant and activist who shared their experiences and assessments with me during the interviews. In addition, this book also benefited from newspaper analysis and the analysis of copious policy documents. I want to express my gratitude to Rik Braams, Hester de Gooijer, Jesse Evers, Jonas Jeunink, Nina Salomons, and Lucas van Straalen, who helped me as student assistants to gather and navigate a path through the vast amounts of newspaper articles and policy documents that the cases generated.

For a number of years, I have taught an MA course on policy conflicts to more than 200 students. I have enjoyed teaching them all, and offer my gratitude here for their collective contribution to refining my thoughts on policy conflicts and contentious governance. I have also been extended the privilege of working with, and learning a great deal from, the many colleagues with whom I have organised various workshops and panels on policy conflicts, or whose panels I have had the pleasure of participating in at countless conferences. Thank you for all the stimulating conversations and intellectual friendship to Tamara Metze, Davis Laws, Nanke Verloo, Eva Wolf, Wouter van Dooren, Anna Durnova, Chris Weible, Allegra Fullerton, Kayla Gabehart, Michael Orsini, Jennifer Dodge, Christian Bröer, Sonja Blum, Maarten Hajer, Martien Kuitenbrouwer, Eefje Cuppen, Lasse Peltonen, and Philippe Zittoun.

I would like to give special thanks to all my co-authors on conflict-related papers over the years: Jan Willem Duyvendak, Christian Bröer, Tamara Metze, Shanon Spruit, Elisabeth van de Grift, Eefje Cuppen, Michael Strange, Gabriel Silles-Brügge, Jelle van Aanholt, and last but not least Raphaelle Bazurli. Conny Roggeband, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Tamara Metze, many thanks for all the sound advice that you have given me on my book project. I owe you one. James Jasper, I cannot thank you enough for all the intellectual inspiration that your work and our personal conversations have given me over the years. This book has its roots in your intellectual legacies on the Strategic Interaction Perspective and on emotions.

In addition to the many individuals who have contributed to my intellectual trajectory, this book would not exist without the generous support from several institutes. I was fortunate enough to receive a fellowship at the Netherlands Institute for Advances Studies (NIAS) from February to June 2021, which liberated from the joys of teaching for half a year. Many thanks to all the NIAS staff for the intellectual sanctuary that you provided, and to all the fellows from the same year group for their companionship and stimulating discussions, which even continued throughout the Covid lockdowns. I also owe much gratitude to the program group Transnational Configurations, Conflict and Governance for several small grants and other forms of financial support under the directorship of John Grin, Marieke de Goede, Darshan Vigneswaran, and Polly Pallister-Wilkins. Many thanks also go to the Department of Political Science for giving me a sabbatical which helped me to focus on my writing, and to Ana Miškovska Kajevska and Oke Onemu from the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, for making it possible to publish this book as open access.

This book would not be the same without the great editing by Fraser King. I have truly enjoyed our collaboration on all the texts, and I am very happy with the end result. Thank you, Fraser, for all your patience, flexibility, and insight. Thanks also to Len Blonk, who designed the graphs and figures for the book. It was a joy to puzzle together on how to present vast amounts of data in ways that can be intuitively understood. Stewart Beale at Palgrave, thanks for all the nice conversations and for

your trust and patience. I am also grateful for the valuable feedback from the anonymous reviewers on the proposal and on the book.

I want to thank all my colleagues at the Department of Political Science, with whom I have discussed the content of my book and the laborious process of writing it. To all my friends, thanks for your support—you know who you are. To my father, who kept asking how things were going with the book and always cheered me on, thanks dad! Of course, I am deeply indebted to Tineke, you are the love of my life; thank you for all your support, love and patience. All those hours that cut into our time for doing things together cannot be returned, but I always deeply appreciate your flexibility and understanding, which are not taken for granted. I owe you more than one.

Amsterdam, The Netherlands — Imrat Verhoeven

Competing Interests The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

Praise for *Contentious Governance*

"Strategic engagements are complex affairs, and few scholars are patient enough to follow the chains of interactions among many players across various arenas, settling instead for broad correlations among crude variables. Imrat Verhoeven offers a beautiful exception, comparing three cases in which governments are internally at odds, with various government subplayers sometimes opposing and sometimes aligning with protestors, businesses, and other players. A fascinating study of how governance actually works."

—James M. Jasper, *author of The Art of Moral Protest*

"Understanding contentious governance through an interpretive lens is much needed today. Conflict in politics is not merely about strategy—it's about meaning, emotion, and the interpretation of the two. This book compellingly shows how contention is integral to politics itself. By connecting the study of emotion, policy processes, and interpretive analysis, Imrat Verhoeven offers a nuanced and timely contribution to the fields of public policy analysis, social movement studies and political sociology. A must-read for anyone seeking to grasp how controversy shapes governance in practice."

—Anna Durnova, *University of Vienna, Austria*

"Combining governance theory and social movement theory in an intriguing and useful way, Imrat Verhoeven develops the concept of 'contentious governance' as a lens for understanding policy outcomes. What I find immensely valuable about this analytical lens is the way that it reveals the evolving tactics of (supra)national and subnational governments and activist groups as they struggle to frame and set policy. Through a rich analysis of contentious governance in three Dutch energy and climate policy cases, Verhoeven demonstrates the value of this perspective to illuminate the bare-knuckle political dynamics of policymaking. One of the key insights of the book is to show how subnational governments and activists form contingent alliances; another is to show how subnational governments tend to coopt, rather than break or respect, the rules imposed by national or supranational governments."

—Christopher Ansell, *University of California, Berkeley, USA*

"This book is an excellent read, with conceptual innovations and in-depth case materials. It convincingly puts contentious governance on the agenda of the policy sciences. Imrat Verhoeven meticulously unpacks the taken for granted division between (local) governments and activists. He demonstrates that through their hearts (emotions and meaning) and minds (strategy and tactics) decision making by national governments may be further democratized."

—Tamara Metze, *Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands*

"In *Contentious Governance*, Imrat Verhoeven offers a lens that is both distinct from and complementary to the approaches many of us currently use to understand, broadly speaking, puzzles of policy collaboration and conflict. This lens emphasizes the interrelationships between (supra)national players, including businesses, and subnational players in situations involving policy initiation and implementation. It draws insights from three Dutch cases on energy and climate policy, each approached through multiple data sources and an inclusive scientific orientation. The book ends with nine propositions that provide a foundation for extending, and in a sense assessing, the applicability of its ideas in other settings. For anyone interested in conflictual interactions across levels of government, tactics, framing, strategy, and the central role of emotions in politics, this book will be richly rewarding for the insight it offers into how political differences play out in the context of (supra)national threats."

—Chris Weible, *University of Colorado Denver, USA*

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About the Author

Imrat Verhoeven is an associate professor of public policy in the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He obtained his PhD from the same institution in 2009, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. C.J.M. Schuyt and Prof. Dr. M.A. Hajer. Prior to this, he was a policy advisor at the Scientific Council for Government Policy (2000–2009) in The Hague. Following his defence, he became a postdoctoral researcher in the Sociology department at the University of Amsterdam, working with Prof. Dr. J.W. Duyvendak and Prof. Dr. E.H. Tonkens on three projects from 2009 to 2012. In 2012, he joined the Political Science department at the University of Amsterdam as an assistant professor of public policy. Since 2024, he has been an endowed professor of democratic professionalism at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, a position he holds alongside his current role as associate professor of public policy.

His ongoing research interests focus on contentious governance, the role of emotions in policy conflicts, the tension between effectiveness and justice in the implementation of energy transitions, and democratic professionalism among those working in underprivileged neighbourhoods. His work has been featured in *Policy Sciences*, *Policy & Politics*, *Environmental Politics*, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *Critical Policy Studies*, *Journal of Social Policy,* and *Comparative Migration Studies*. He has co-authored several books in Dutch on professionals and the activating welfare state. Currently, he is leading a large research project called Just Prepare, together with Prof. Dr. John Grin. In this project, researchers and many practice partners conduct action research on how to balance effectiveness and justice in the energy transition of the built environment. Imrat also leads the Participation and Inclusion programme at the Knowledge Centre Inequality in Amsterdam alongside Prof. Dr. H. Ghorashi, and is an active member of the Energylab Southeast in the same city.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In late 2005, the village of Schinveld in the south of the Netherlands was the setting for some rather unusual protests. To prevent two national ministries from levelling 20 hectares of forest to improve landing conditions for AWACS surveillance aircraft at the nearby German NATO airbase in Geilenkirchen, the municipality of Schinveld attempted to impose restrictions by virtue of a provincial zoning plan. In response, ministers overruled the locality, prompting the municipality to take court action. The court subsequently ruled that six hectares could be felled, but the remaining fourteen had to be left untouched. Despite a forest occupation by GroenFront![1] and a demonstration organised by the STOP AWACS action group, the trees were felled in January 2006. In a further lawsuit filed by the municipality and STOP AWACS to prevent future deforestation, the court ruled in July 2007 that no further trees could be felled in the remaining woodland. Legal battles continued over the next few years, most of which were won by the local opposition.[2] This account of provincial and local government being unable to resist national or supranational government actors by themselves is not an isolated example. A further illustration is the negotiations surrounding the Transatlantic

[1] Groenfront is a network of radical environmental activists that operate primarily in the Netherlands.

[2] All information was retrieved from https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vereniging_STOP_awacs.

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Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union and the United States between 2013 and 2017, which sought to liberalise the market. The proposal embedded in TTIP to grant large US companies the right to sue European local and provincial authorities in private arbitration courts if their policies hindered business activities was particularly problematic.[3] The TTIP negotiations were met with significant societal protest and resistance from provincial and local governments across Europe. In April 2016, this resulted in the Barcelona Declaration,[4] in which 56 local authorities, as well as almost 100 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movement organisations (SMOs), raised major objections against it. In addition, Friends of the Earth organised a campaign that mobilised around 2,000 local and provincial governments in Europe to declare themselves TTIP-free zones. This involved tens of thousands of people in demonstrations and the collection of a petition with over 3 million signatures.[5] However, all these efforts came to a halt when the newly elected President Trump stalled the negotiations shortly after his inauguration in 2017.[6]

In matters internal to national governments, disputes between national and local authorities have escalated over the question of migration. Federal immigration policies in the US, for example, require local authorities to not only curb the employment of unauthorised migrants, but also to find, detain and collaborate in their deportation. However, immigration enforcement has been obstructed by urban social movements who collaborated with local authorities that declared themselves to be 'sanctuary cities' (Daamen and Doomernik 2014; Ridgley 2008). The number of sanctuary cities grew from around 45 in 2008 to over 200 in 2016.[7] The first Trump administration attempted to pre-empt such resistance by

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/about-ttip/questions-and-answers/.

[4] http://www.noalttip.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Declaració-final-amb-esmenes-ANG..pdf.

[5] See https://friendsoftheearth.eu/news/2000-ceta-and-ttip-free-zones-in-europe/ and https://friendsoftheearth.eu/our-successes/.

[6] https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/europeans-are-skeptical-of-trade-truce-with-trump/2018/07/26/316d68de-9054-11e8-ae59-01880eac5f1d_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.eb24f17b95a8.

[7] Numbers based on a combination of Ridgley (2008: 55) and http://cis.org/Sanctuary-Cities-Map.

limiting federal grants to sanctuary cities.[8] He escalated his opposition in 2024 by signing executive orders designed to defund state authorities who refused to cooperate with immigration agencies, but has faced opposition from local judges, who question the legality of withholding federal funds without congressional approval.[9] Similar forms of resistance to national immigration policies can be found in Spain and the Netherlands. In Barcelona, city officials and activists created and implemented the 'Barcelona Refuge City' plan, which went directly against Spain's restrictive immigration policies by aiming to employ unauthorised migrants and prevent their deportation (Bazurli, 2019). In the Netherlands, municipalities, NGOs, and action groups have similarly resisted strict national immigration policies by creating a 'shadow network' that provided temporary housing, schooling, food, and medical support ('bed-bath-bread' arrangements) (Kos et al., 2015).

These examples strongly suggest that neither provincial and local governments (hereafter referred to as subnational government players)[10] nor action groups, and NGOs and SMOs can rely on their own efforts to resist, or seek redress from, unwanted policies imposed by supranational or national government players. Moreover, the initial action can originate from either or both. In the case of Schinveld and AWACS, subnational government players were the initiators of contention, the resistance to TTIP, however, was characterised by NGOs or SMOs taking the lead, while the establishment of sanctuary cities (with the exception of Barcelona) have been primarily, though not always, joint initiatives between subnational government players and activists. Collaborations may be overt, as in the case of AWACS and Barcelona, or more covert, as in the cases of TTIP and the other sanctuary cities.

While subnational government players and activists sometimes do work together to shape new policies, such as the women's movement in the US (Banaszak, 2005) and the anti-pollution movement in Japan

[8] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-38738423.

[9] https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/11/judge-administrations-withholding-funds-illegal-00504650; https://www.npr.org/2025/02/16/nx-s1-5294690/as-judges-move-to-block-trumps-executive-orders-who-has-the-ultimate-power.

[10] I use the term 'players' because it refers to their strategic behaviour in strategic interactions, and because this book is attentive to contentious governance from an agency perspective. I am interested in the critical interactions between these players.

(Brewster Stearns & Almeida, 2004), it is unusual for subnational government players to collaborate with activists to oppose the policies of (supra)national government players. Typically, in policy conflicts, we see governments and activists diametrically opposed to each other, as exemplified in the literature on opposition to highways (Burningham, 2000; Wolf & van Dooren, 2017), hazardous and radioactive waste disposal sites (Botetzagias & Karamichas, 2009; Laws & Rein, 2003; Munton, 1996; Rabe, 1994), airport expansion (Bröer and Duyvendak, 2009; Marchi, 2005; Griggs & Howarth, 2023), and other infrastructure projects that impact provincial or local communities. If subnational government players and activists so often oppose each other, what causes them to join forces in contesting policy?

1.1 Excluding Activism: Hierarchical Threats and Support for Protest

The cases above provide an initial part of the answer. In each example, (supra)national government players formed part of a policy domain in which they had significant interests. The Dutch national government needed to ensure safe landing conditions for AWACS aircrafts as part of its obligation to NATO, the European Commission considered TTIP important for ensuring free trade and economic growth, and finally, migration policies played a key role in enabling national governments in the US, Spain, and the Netherlands to regulate the influx of migrants. All three fall within the high-profile policy domains of international security, trade, and migration. Extant scholarship on the relationship between governments and new social movements suggests that the former tend to exclude the latter from such high-profile policy domains (Kriesi et al., 1995). This may explain why action groups, NGOs and SMOs may be interested in teaming up with subnational government players when contesting policies in these domains. With powerful allies, they may achieve more.

The cases also point to the ways in which (supra)national government players operate *vis-à-vis* their subnational counterparts. In the AWACS case, for example, national government players overruled the municipality's decision to deny the deforestation based on the provisions of the zoning plan. In the case of TTIP, the EU was willing to agree to provisions that would undermine the jurisdiction of subnational government players to create policies, in favour of large US companies. Equally, when sanctuary cities resist the imposition of strict migration regimes, they risk facing sanctions in the form of pre-emptive action, such as Trump's decision to limit federal grants to cities and the states they reside in. This illustrates how (supra)national government players, who occupy a central position in the design and implementation of high-profile policies, frequently assert hierarchical modes of governance to safeguard their policy objectives by imposing their will on subnational government players, even in countries with formal local government autonomy (Blau & Meyer, 1987; Pollit & Bouckaert, 2017; Pierre & Peters, 2020). In environments where processes of rescaling have boosted the autonomy and economic self-reliance of subnational government players, the hierarchical card has become less acceptable to play, making them less submissive and disinclined to wait for cues from the (supra)national level (Brenner, 2004; Barber, 2013; Pierre & Peters, 2020). One consequence of this is that tighter higher-level control over policy design and implementation, and accompanying hierarchical interventions, can be perceived as a threat to provincial and local policies or communities. Under such circumstances, subnational government players may seek to collaborate with action groups, NGOs and SMOs to increase the pressure on (supra)national government players.

The final ingredient to the answer on what causes subnational government players and activists to join forces in contesting policies is related to the public support that collaborative forms of resistance do, or do not, generate. Although no direct measures of such support are available, there is sufficient proof that citizens hold deep support for democratic forms of governance, strongly adhere to democratic values, and simultaneously distrust national governments and parliaments (Dalton, 2014; Norris, 1999). This distrust is rooted in the lack of fit between people's democratic aspirations and their satisfaction with how incumbent regimes perform (Norris, 2011). To express their discontent, citizens nowadays have access to a broad political repertoire of which support for, and participation in, protest has become a normal component (Jenkins et al., 2008; Norris, 2002). However, this does not mean that all forms of protest are acceptable. Scholarship in social movement studies indicates that the least contentious forms of protest such as petitions or peaceful demonstrations are most popular, while more contentious forms such as occupations and violent disruptions are less acceptable (Jenkins et al., 2008; Meyer & Tarrow, 1998). These findings suggest that subnational government players that join forces with activists can count on public support, if they do not engage in, or are perceived to be engaging in, radical forms of activism. This support lowers the threshold for their contentious collaborations.

1.2 The Puzzle of Contentious Governance

With activism crowded out of high-profile policy domains that are marked by hierarchical modes of governance and their associated threats, and the potential support for protest behaviour, it is certainly arguable that there is fertile ground for policies being contested through the joint efforts of subnational government players and activists. Given that these efforts involve collaborative contestation between subnational government players and non-governmental players—usually considered to be forms of governance—I propose that this phenomenon is best understood as 'contentious governance', defined as 'subnational government players and non-governmental players collaborating in the contestation of policymaking or implementation initiated by (supra)national government players or their business partners' (compare Verhoeven, 2020: 3; Verhoeven et al., 2022: 655). This definition is deliberately open-ended, allowing the inclusion of instances of collaboration regardless of who instigates contestation. It also reflects how contestation can take different forms, for example, a focus on new policy proposals or ongoing implementations, and also leaves space for the inclusion of (supra)national government players and businesses as the target of claims.[11]

Contentious governance processes are deeply political and by definition permeated by struggles over what constitutes, and who defines, the public interest (compare Schön & Rein, 1994; Stone, 2012). Elements of this can be traced in the ongoing concerns of politicians, civil servants and activists over how to persuade, manipulate or force others to yield. This type of manoeuvring is typical of conflict escalation processes, whereby players attempt to impose their own solutions at the expense of others through a 'set of moves and countermoves that intensifies conflict' (Rubin et al., 1994: 9; see also Glasl, 1982). It is fair to say that the inherently conflictual nature of contentious governance processes elicits strategic behaviour, with players constantly monitoring each other's actions, anticipating their moves and countermoves and reacting to each other (Jasper,

[11] A more detailed discussion of this definition and its implications is explored in chapter two.

2006; Verhoeven, 2020; Verhoeven et al., 2022). Subnational government players may ask themselves: how much pressure can be placed on our opponents without destroying our relationships with them? What tactics and framing should we use to put pressure on them? How publicly visible should our collaborations with activists be? Conversely, activists may wonder: how far should we collaborate with subnational government players to leverage our contentious claims? How can we avoid being co-opted? What tactics and framing should be used in stating our claims to government opponents? (Supra)national government players may ponder questions such as: How can we make legitimate decisions in the face of contention? How can we effectively counter contentious claims? When should we assert our authority over the decision-making process? Businesses, on the other hand, may ask themselves: How can we protect our reputation? Can we offer financial incentives to offset citizens' concerns? Would legal action be cheaper for us?

As these hypothetical questions suggest, contentious governance is a complex empirical phenomenon and it is also something that we know little about. However, some early examples can be found in facility siting literature, reporting on resistance against waste incinerators in Ontario, Canada, and upstate New York, USA, during the 1980s (Rabe, 1994). There are probably many more examples, but until now, contentious governance has occurred under the radar of social movement and public policy scholarship. Social movement scholars neglected contentious governance as their principal focus has been on the opposition between activists and governments (see, for example, McAdam, 1982; Della Porta, 1995), and they tended to view governments as unitary actors (Jasper, 2015b). Equally, public policy scholars also tend to think in terms of dichotomies when considering government-citizen relations. Such dichotomies are evident, for instance, in analyses attentive to the provision of public services, where governments attempt to engage clients in co-production (Alford, 2009; Pestoff, 2006; Pollit, 2003), or in policy design processes, where citizens participate alongside the government (Barnes et al., 2004; Edelenbos & van Meerkerk, 2016; Fung, 2004). In addition to all pervasive dichotomous thinking, contention has been undervalued as an important component of policymaking. While public policy literature acknowledges the role of adversarialism, the focus has been on collaboration directed towards achieving a shared purpose through deliberation (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bevir, 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003).

As cases of contentious governance become more apparent, they present an important puzzle that extant social movement and public policy scholarship lacks the analytical toolkits to solve. Consequently, contentious governance is under-theorised and under-researched. Like an orphan, it has been abandoned because the dominant perspectives and disciplinary boundaries between literatures have compressed the intellectual space. What is needed is a framework capable of accommodating the complexities posed by a multitude of players and how their power imbalances and strategic considerations play out over time. For this purpose, classic concerns such as the political nature of policy, power dynamics, governance processes, government-citizen relations, and policy conflicts must be revisited if new light is to be shone on hitherto under-researched phenomena. This book brings together insights from social movement and public policy literature and develops a deeper conceptual and empirical understanding of contentious governance processes.

1.3 Questions, Cases, and a Primer On Methods

The empirical analysis of contentious governance in this book focuses on the ways in which government players, activists, and businesses try to influence each other to get what they want. As new ground is broken in uncovering contentious governance processes, the analysis will be guided by exploratory accounts of power struggles and the strategic considerations of those involved. To this end, the book is fashioned around a general empirical question. Put simply, *how do government players, activists, and businesses involved in contentious governance processes attempt to change each other's hearts and minds when pursuing or blocking contested policies?* This is, of course, rather general and requires unpicking by the interrogation of three sub-questions that are attentive to tactics, framing, and strategic interactions which guide the various aspects of the empirical analysis.

When attempting to change the hearts and minds of others, players can be expected to make use of various 'tactics'—intentional forms of collective action that players engage in to achieve their goals (compare Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Rubin et al., 1994; Staggenborg, 2020). The first sub-question therefore reads as follows: *what are the most important tactics through which players try to influence each other?*

Changing hearts and minds not only depends on how the players act and react towards each other, but also on how they interpret and give meaning to the substance of policy, the processes in which they are engaged, and the actions of others. To analyse these interpretive elements of contentious governance, I adopt an interactional framing perspective, which pays attention to how the interpretive activities of the players involved are captured in their framing (Dewulf et al., 2009; Gray, 2003; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). These interpretive activities are shaped by the meanings attached to players' interactions and subsequently shared. As players involved in contentious governance not only need to change each other's minds, but also each other's hearts, the analysis of their framing will also consider the emotional storylines that are embedded into their narratives (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). The second sub-question is therefore: *what are the most important forms of framing through which players try to influence each other?*

In guiding their tactics and framing, players are also continuously developing and reshaping strategies to act and react to each other during interactions. Thus, strategy has a dual meaning: much like a game of chess, it refers both to the premeditated plan that players initially put into place, and to the emergent process in which players (re)direct their actions based on moves and countermoves during strategic interactions (Jasper, 2006; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Mintzberg, 1987). To understand how players try to influence each other, strategy must be understood and studied in this dual sense. The third sub-question asks*: how do players use strategies and engage in strategic interactions to influence each other?*

These empirical questions will guide the core analysis of the book. However, exploring contentious governance without some normative reflection would be incomplete. Of particular importance here are the normative questions that arise from the ways in which contentious governance impacts the democratic functioning of political systems. This aspect is underpinned by a further question that explores the normative dimension of what a critical consideration of contentious governance elicits: *how do processes of contentious governance affect the democratic functioning of political systems?*

While the empirical findings and normative reflections of this analysis may be valuable for academic scholarship and the disciplines that it traverses, I am also concerned to articulate practical recommendations on how politicians, policymakers, and public servants can deal with contentious governance processes. These are guided by the practice question: *how can political players and policymakers deal with contentious governance processes?*

To bring life to these questions, I studied three cases of contentious governance in the Netherlands. I chose the Netherlands because the country scores somewhere in the middle on the Local Autonomy Index (Ladner et al., 2015), indicating that local government players have an average scope of discretion for decision-making. This suggested an expectation that Dutch local government players would not only be somewhat assertive, but also that they are unlikely to immediately contest policies in response to hierarchical steering by the national government. In a decentralised unitary state, the Dutch national government can exercise considerable authority over subnational government players through the unitary legal structure but is heavily dependent on municipalities to implement national policies through processes of co-governance (Steen & Toonen, 2010). This makes the Netherlands an ideal country to situate this study, as contentious governance will be neither over nor under-represented in the interplay between directing and co-governing. Moreover, studying cases of contentious governance within one country has the advantage that being within a shared institutional structure means each case is subject to the same rules and policies, and thus easier to examine in greater depth how the respective players influence each other.

The book focuses on three cases; all embedded within energy and climate policy domains. Consistent with my objective to empirically explore an understudied phenomenon and develop new variables, patterns, and concepts, I needed to identify extreme or deviant cases of contentious governance. The Dutch energy and climate policy domains are host to a number of such cases rich in information, actors, interactions, and patterns (Flyvbjerg, 2006; George & Bennett, 2005), three of which constitute a perfect fit. The first is the Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) plans in Barendrecht (2008–2010), the second, the plans to build a nearshore windfarm along the coast of Zandvoort, Noordwijk, and Katwijk (2013–2016), while the third focuses on the conflict over earthquakes induced by natural gas production, also known as 'gas-quakes', in the north-eastern region of Groningen (2012–2018). The CCS and nearshore windfarm cases were both flagship national government projects to mitigate climate change. The gas-quakes conflict turned out to be one of the longest-running policy conflicts in the Netherlands, with political and economic high stakes for the national government (for more information on the selection of these cases see Appendix 1).

The same methods were used to study all three cases. To triangulate the data and methods, I analysed large quantities of articles from several

Dutch national and provincial newspapers, as well as a substantial volume of policy documents from national, provincial, and local levels. Additionally, I conducted interviews with local and provincial politicians, civil servants, and activists, as their tactics, framing, and strategies were underrepresented in the newspaper articles and policy documents compared to national players, who were covered in much greater depth (see Appendix 1 for a more in-depth discussion).

1.4 Analytical Framework: Strategic Interactions and Persuasion

In order to make sense of contentious governance processes, an analytical framework needs to address multiple stakeholders at various levels of government who possess widely divergent levels of power and different interests, and who are constantly monitoring each other's actions as their conflicts evolve. James Jasper's strategic interaction perspective (hereafter SIP) can serve as the backbone of this framework, albeit with some modifications.

Jasper and colleagues (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999, 2004, 2011; Jasper, 2004, 2006; Jasper & Duyvendak, 2015; Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015; Jasper & King, 2020) have long argued that strategic interactions are the primary drivers of political action. In the SIP, key actors are referred to as 'players' who operate in specific 'arenas'. Players may be individuals (simple players) or informal groups and formal organisations (compound players) (Jasper, 2015a: 10). Arenas are 'bundle[s] of rules and resources that allow or encourage certain kinds of interactions to proceed, with something at stake' (Jasper, 2015a: 14), and can be physical settings such as parliaments, law courts, or public squares, or less tangible settings, such as bodies of public opinion, social media, or economic markets. Arenas can also be institutionalised, with formal and/or informal rules that affect players to varying degrees depending on their positions within them, and the distinct bundles of rules and resources at their disposal (Jasper, 2011, 2015a; Jasper et al., 2015). Most players are active in various arenas and move between them to gain strategic advantage (Jasper et al., 2015).[12]

Within arenas, players employ strategic endeavours 'to get others to do what you want', which includes 'preventing them from doing what you

[12] Compare Pralle (2003) on venue shopping.

do not want them to do' alongside 'getting others to notice, believe or feel something' (Jasper, 2006: 5). As such strategy manifests itself during interactions, which Jasper (2006: 6) defines as: 'you face other players who regard you strategically, just as you do them, and engage in a series of actions in response to others, anticipating their reactions in turn'. Another way of putting this is to view all the players as constantly moving targets (Jasper, 2015a), where strategic interaction requires players to consider others' perspectives in anticipating their next move. It also requires players to be alert to new events affecting the current situation, and attentive to any mistakes made by other players (Jasper, 2006, 2011). One of the main advantages of the SIP is that it treats all players symmetrically as they make choices, act and react, and make sense of what others are doing (see Jasper, 2004: 5) as opposed to overemphasising one type of player. This helps us to understand how players in contentious governance processes deal with strategic questions related to mutual dependencies and power differences.

Although Jasper employs the terminology of game theory when referring to players, choices and arenas, his conception of strategy is deeply cultural. Rather than seeing players as rational calculators, he sees them as interpreters who observe each other's processes of meaning production, emotions and actions, and make choices accordingly (Jasper, 2004, 2006, 2011, 2015b). Unlike rational choice approaches, Jasper's cultural approach to strategy assumes that players' choices are predominantly based on the actions, meanings, and feelings of other players and the cultural and institutional contexts in which they occur (Jasper, 2006). This does not preclude rationality, instead it assumes that most players can only think two moves ahead at most,[13] therefore they often rely on meaning and feelings (Jasper, 2006, 2011).

While many elements of the SIP are directly applicable, the prominent role of government players in contentious governance calls for two modifications. First, in Jaspers' cultural approach, strategy is constantly emergent[14]; players discover what they want and how they want it through their interactions. This agentic focus on strategy downplays the notion of 'strategy as a plan', involving conscious and purposeful designs

[13] Compare Herbert Simon (1946) on bounded rationality.

[14] A similar approach is found in organization studies, where strategies emerge over time as patterns based on players' reactions to developments within their organizations, actions by other players and events (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Mintzberg, 1987).

for action based on goals (Maney et al., 2012; Mintzberg, 1987; Staggenborg, 2020). While I agree that studying emergent strategy is crucial to understanding the dynamics of contentious governance processes, the central role of government players means that attention needs to be paid to the process of developing goals. Subnational government players cannot avoid making plans and developing goals to achieve intended outcomes when countering undesirable policies; this is necessary to ensure that their contentious claims are grounded in political decision-making. Likewise, policy proposals by (supra)national government players and their business partners are equally based on goals and plans, rendering their strategic behaviour less spontaneous and perhaps more predictable. Understood as a plan, strategy is closely related to rationality and intentionality, however, this is not necessarily at odds with Jaspers' cultural approach, since rational understanding and intentions are highly dependent on, and filtered by, cultural and institutional contexts (Jasper, 2004; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). Therefore, for processes of contentious governance, I propose analysing strategy both as emergent, through the interactions of all players, and as a plan, through which government players in particular, set goals and develop designs for action.

Secondly, in contrast to activists, government players are more deeply embedded in the formal and informal rules and discourses related to the arenas in which they operate (Hajer, 2009; Ostrom, 1999; Schmidt, 2008). Jasper's SIP cannot fully explain this, because he attributes too much importance to agency as the source of players' strategic choices (Jasper, 2015a: 13). Similarly, the logics of appropriateness in sociological institutionalism (March & Olsen, 2006) and path dependencies in historical institutionalism (Pierson, 2000) overdetermine the structural constraints on government players' strategic choices. To avoid overdetermining agency or structure, third phase institutionalism, developed by Vivien Lowndes and Mark Roberts (2013), strikes a balance. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) argue that formal and informal rules and discourses constrain and enable players through their agency as they 'draw upon and reproduce'[15] these institutional elements. Through this process, players

[15] Ontologically, this approach is based on Anthony Giddens' concept of the duality of structure. Giddens (1984: 2) which argues that human social activity is in essence recursive, meaning that players 'in and through their activities' (…) 'reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible.' Elsewhere Giddens argued that institutions are 'instantiated in the action of individuals–they do not have an objective existence beyond

interpret, apply, recombine, adapt, bend, or resist rules and discourses in attempting to form or reinforce coalitions and combat their political opponents (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 108). Building from these ideas, I argue that strategic interactions and choices are influenced by institutions through the ways in which players draw upon and reproduce formal and informal rules and discourses in specific arenas. When contentious governance moves from one arena to another, for example, from, say, parliamentary to judicial, the rules that players draw upon and reproduce are different, affecting strategic interactions accordingly.

By seeing strategic interactions as central to processes of contentious governance, the power differences between the various players must be conceptualised in terms of how they attempt to influence each other. Given the importance of government players, it is sensible to examine policy instruments such as coercion, payment, and persuasion (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2003; Jasper, 2006; John, 2011; Schneider & Ingram, 1990; Stone, 2012). Coercion has limited value in contentious governance processes, as it can only be used by higher tiers of government to enforce rules, regulations or policies on subnational government players, not the other way around (compare, e.g., John, 2011; Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2003). At most, subnational government players can use zoning plans, permits, or other location-specific requirements to obstruct or frustrate their opponents' policies (Verhoeven, 2020; Verhoeven et al., 2022). Payment is mostly attractive to (supra)national government players as they can attempt to buy off or compensate subnational government players or activists who contest their policies. However, this does not work the other way around.

Persuasion is different in that it can be employed by all government players, as well as by activists and businesses. A useful perspective on persuasion can be found in communication studies, where it is considered to operate through communication *and* collective action to influence players' '[…] sense of what is true or false, probable or improbable; their evaluations of people, events, ideas, or proposals; their private and public commitments to take this or that action; and perhaps even their basic

their effects upon actors' (Giddens 1999 quoted in Lowndes & Roberts, 2013: 75). This instantiation of institutions operates through 'knowledgeable agents' during the 'course of interaction' *drawing upon and reproducing* 'structured properties of social systems' (Giddens 1984: 15).

values and ideologies' (Jones & Simons, 2017: 24).[16] For (supra)national government players, persuasion is an attractive option since it allows them to avoid coercion, which could damage intragovernmental relationships. It also enables them to avoid making payments and thus saves money. Persuasion is also the only strategic means fully at the disposal of subnational government players and activists to change their opponents' hearts and minds.

Perceiving persuasion as both communication *and* collective action opens two analytical approaches to understanding how players attempt to influence one another during contentious governance processes. The first approach is interpretive, focusing primarily on the contextual understanding of meanings and interpretations communicated by the players (Stone, 2012; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). For this analysis, I will use an interactional framing perspective (Dewulf et al., 2009; Gray, 2003; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014), which views framing as interpretive activities through which players generate meaning during their strategic interactions. Focusing on framing as a verb helps us to understand the dynamics of contentious governance processes as an unfolding film, as opposed to studying frames as snapshots of meaning production that are situated in specific moments in time. To uncover players' framing, the analysis will focus on their stories concerning the substantive, procedural, and relational dimensions of their conflict (Wolf, 2021) and their emotional storylines (see Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2015; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022).[17] The second analytical approach is action-oriented, with a strong focus on players' observable actions. These can be observed in players' variant use of collective action to achieve goals and needs, which are referred to as tactics (Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Rubin et al., 1994; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). These tactics can take institutional forms, such as negotiations, lobbying, or lawsuits, or extra-institutional forms, such as petitions, demonstrations or occupations (Davidson, 2021; Pettinicchio, 2016; Taylor & van Dyke, 2004).[18]

[16] This focus on communication and collective action is broader than commonly found in public policy and political science literature, where persuasion is limited to communication processes (Dahl & Stinebrickner, 2003; John, 2011; Stone, 2012).

[17] A fuller exposition of the interpretive element of the analysis can be found in Chap. 5.

[18] A further consideration of tactics and their use is elaborated on in Chap. 4.

1.5 Contribution and Plan of the Book

This book makes six key analytical contributions to the existing scholarship. First, it adds to the multilevel governance (MLG) literature by shedding light on how conflicts play out across different levels of governance. This is significant, because the existing MLG literature primarily focuses on consensus-driven forms of governance (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Pierre & Peters, 2020). Second, by analysing subnational government players and activists who collaborate to contest national policies, the book broadens the policy conflict literature beyond the perspective of citizen–government oppositions. Third, by closely examining persuasion as a combination of tactics and framing processes, the book transcends the divide between positivist and interpretive approaches to public policy (Durnova & Weible, 2020). Fourth, the dynamic approach to framing contributes to framing literature in social movement studies, where analysis seldom reveals frames as more than interpretations and meanings frozen in time (Benford, 1997; Snow et al., 2014). It also makes a meaningful addition to the recent development of dynamic perspectives in public policy literature (Metze & Dodge, 2016). Fifth, framing involves not only cognitive arguments and stories, but also emotional storylines (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). By paying attention to emotional storylines, the book contributes to the growing body of public policy literature on the role of emotions in policy conflicts (see e.g., Durnova, 2022; Fullerton et al., 2024). Sixth, the empirical study of strategy contributes to public policy literature on policy conflicts, where strategy is typically discussed theoretically (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). In this respect, the book enriches existing social movement studies literature on strategy by incorporating strategies employed by government players (Jasper, 2006; Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Staggenborg, 2020). These contributions that cut across disciplinary siloes are touched upon at various points throughout the book, but are addressed more extensively in chapter seven.

The book is comprised of six further chapters and three appendices Chapter two conceptualises contentious governance, beginning with a discussion of why another governance concept is needed, followed by discussions of contention, governance and the multilevel dynamics of contentious governance. Contentious governance is then defined through a critical in-depth discussion of its various elements, and compares the concept with bureaucratic activism, institutional activism, and other relevant concepts. Chapter three outlines the context for the three case studies. It begins with a discussion of Dutch intergovernmental relations, followed by an examination of the various modes of governance found in Dutch governing practices, and an analysis of the potential support for contentious governance among the Dutch population. Having outlined the broader governance context, the chapter gives readers sufficient background knowledge of each case, providing an in-depth introduction to their policy subsystems, and offers an overview of the key issues and developments between the players. This permits the subsequent empirical chapters to focus thematically on tactics, framing, and strategy.

Chapters four, five, and six constitute the empirical core of the book. Chapter four analyses the use of moderate tactics by subnational government players and activists to persuade national government players. Following a brief introduction, I discuss the theoretical nature of tactics, which sets the scene for the remainder of the chapter. The empirical analysis then examines lobbying, symbolic uses of knowledge, legal mobilisation, and protest as the main tactics employed, before further analysing the dynamics of the use of tactics and ending with conclusions. Chapter five focuses on framing and begins with a theoretical discussion of the interactional framing perspective. The empirical analysis focuses on countering economic rationalism, using safety as reassurance and a mantra for change, making claims against an unwilling national government, attempts to escape the 'Not-In-My-Back-Yard' label, and emotional storylines that counter rational policy. The chapter then analyses the framing dynamics and closes with conclusions. Chapter six completes the empirical analysis and focuses on the various uses of strategy. Consistent with the previous two chapters, it begins with a theoretical discussion. The empirical analysis addresses how local government players unified internally around the goal of blocking the unwanted policy. This is followed by analyses of administrative and activist approaches to resistance, strategic dilemmas, and strategy as an emergent process during strategic interactions. The chapter draws to a close with an analysis of strategic dynamics, the role of events and strategic adaptation, before moving on to the conclusions.

Chapter seven first presents the book's general conclusions, which are then elaborated into nine propositions on contentious governance before providing a normative assessment of contentious governance in relation to the democratic functioning of political systems. The chapter, and thus the book, concludes with reflections and recommendations on how those who occupy the most powerful positions and are best placed to influence these dynamics, namely politicians, administrators, and policymakers at the national level, can develop their own strategies to deal with contentious governance.

The book contains three appendices. The first appendix explains case selection and methods in detail. Appendix two describes the codebook used for the empirical analysis. Appendix three provides an example of the topic list used in interviews with politicians, civil servants, as well as activists.

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CHAPTER 2

Conceptualising Contentious Governance

Since the mid-1990s, new perspectives on governance have provided more nuanced ways of understanding policymaking processes (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). One key insight showed how government can no longer be perceived as a monolithic entity and discussed in singular terms. Studies that explored the complexities generated by increased interaction with public and private players revealed that other governments, departments, or smaller organisational units within governments are systematically imbricated at multiple levels of governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Kooiman, 2003). More recently, similar observations have been made by theorists of social movements. For a long time, Tilly's (1978) distinction between authorities and social movement organisations (SMOs) reduced the government to a 'context' that offered threats to, or political opportunity structures for, social movements. *Contra* Tilly, new agentic approaches show government less as a unified body and more fragmented into 'a web of sub-players' engaged in strategic interactions with SMOs making contentious claims. In this respect, scholars are more attentive to interactions between SMOs and variant government entities such as legislatures, executives and agencies, rather than 'the government' as a single entity (Jasper, 2015: 11).

The notion of 'government players' in the plural widens the analytical perspective on government agency. It allows the exploration of government boundaries as permeable, revealing how a variety of non-governmental entities are incorporated into or excluded from strategic

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interactions (Jasper, 2015). The idea of permeable boundaries has been applied to a wide range of consensus-based governance approaches, including interactive governance (Edelenbos & van Meerkerk, 2016), collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Gash, 2016), network governance (Keast, 2016; Klijn, 2008), new public governance (Osborne, 2006) and multilevel governance (Bache et al., 2016; Pierre & Peeters, 2020). However, it is also applicable to government and activist players who collaborate in opposition to policies in certain circumstances, only to diverge in others.

Adding yet another governance concept to an already inflated list is a precarious endeavour. To make sense of governing practices where government players and activists join forces to resist policies proposed by (supra)national government players, the concept of 'contentious governance' provides a useful analytical tool. This concept adds value to public policy literature, where contention and conflict are often treated as background concepts (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Similarly, contentious governance can contribute to a more nuanced analysis of the state (Jasper, 2015) in social movement literature by examining the strategic interactions between government players and activists in contention processes. In this way, the concept of contentious governance can bridge the gap between hitherto siloed public policy and social movement scholarship.

This chapter explores the concept of contentious governance by examining its two key components: contention and governance. In light of this, I then outline my own take on contentious governance that transcends the divide between governments and activists, and consider its strengths relative to extant definitions before summarising my key claims.

2.1 Contention

In 2001, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly published *Dynamics of Contention*, an ambitious attempt to identify comparable mechanisms and processes within the dynamics of social movements, revolutions, waves of strike action, nationalism, and democratisation. Although the book has been the subject of criticism and debate (see McAdam & Tarrow, 2011), it provides valuable insights for conceptualising contentious governance.

One of the most notable contributions of *Dynamics of Contention* is the way it problematises the boundary between institutionalised and non-institutionalised politics:

> (…) we insist, that the study of politics has too long reified the boundary between official, prescribed politics and politics by other means. As an unfortunate consequence, analysts have neglected or misunderstood both the parallels and the interactions between the two. (McAdam et al., 2001: 6)

In criticising this boundary, McAdam et al. (2001) call into question Tilly's earlier distinction (noted above) between governments, who use established forms of claim-making through democratic institutions, and SMOs who engage in contentious forms of collective action that are not institutionalised as common forms of politics. McAdam et al. (2001) primarily question such a distinction because the use of contention in politics is not limited to SMOs. They introduced the term 'contentious politics' to broaden understandings of contention to encompass other political players and a wider range of political struggles. This concept points to episodes of contention that occur during public interactions between governments and other players, making claims that are acknowledged by governments as bearing upon their interests, the most comprehensive definition of which is:

> Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors' interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015:7)

I draw upon the notion of contentious politics, reconceptualising it as 'contentious governance', for reasons that will become clear below. First, I will further specify contention based on three distinctive elements from the definition of contentious politics.

2.1.1 Three Elements of Contention

First and foremost, the concept of contentious politics reveals the various ways in which government players can engage in processes of contention. The idea of viewing government players as *targets* of contention is not new; many SMOs and citizen action groups frequently target governments with environmental (Dryzek et al., 2003; Staggenborg, 2020), economic, and social equality claims (Gitlin, 2013), as well as many other types. Similarly, government players acting as *third parties* in conflicts between social movements and corporations (Osborne, 2007), for example, are not unusual.

The real innovation is the idea that government players can *initiate* claims. Making claims on whole groups of people and organisations is, of course, what government players do, simply by virtue of governing (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Moreover, studies of social problems have shown that such claims are often undertaken to legitimise government policies (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Spector & Kitsuse, 1987). However, government players may also initiate contentious claims through 'strident demands' or 'direct attacks' (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015: 8). This opens new conceptual space for identifying when government players are involved in contentious governance, for example, by initiating contentious claims, collaborating with SMOs, NGOs, or citizen action groups with similar claims, or by becoming the target of contentious claims by subnational government players and their activist allies. Consistent with McAdam et al. (2001), I expect these processes of government claim-making to be episodic, driven by strategic interactions between those who make contentious claims and those who receive them, and best understood as specific types of conflict on their own (see Chapter 7).

Secondly, the concept emphasises how interactions between players involve making contentious claims that affect the interests of others. Tilly and Tarrow (2015: 8) argue that such claim-making occurs constantly in daily life, with one player acting as claimant and the other as recipient. Consider, for example, spouses arguing over the television remote control or children demanding their parents' attention while they are working. For Tilly and Tarrow (2015), contention enters politics when government players become directly involved or when claims affect government interests. While this argument serves to highlight government agency in processes of contention, it does not specify the dynamics that drive such processes. To gain a deeper understanding of how contention works, it would be helpful to consider what conflict literature has to say about escalation processes.

A common understanding of conflict escalation can be found in the dual concern model in which players' 'perceived divergence of interest or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously' leads them to engage in conflict (Rubin et al., 1994: 5). Perception is a crucial aspect of conflict. In this respect, there need not be any real divergence of interests, needs, or values, only perceptions thereof are sufficient to set off escalation processes. Based on these perceptions, players may have concerns about their own interests, needs, or values, or about those of other players, leading to one of four basic conflict strategies: contending; yielding; problem solving; or avoiding. *Contending* strategies involve players being solely concerned with their own interests, needs, and values, leading them to impose their preferred solutions on others. This is similar to Tilly and Tarrow's (2015) idea of claims having a bearing on the interests of others, but here the crucial element is that the players making claims are engrossed in their own interests at the expense of others. In turn, players in receipt of a claim focus on their own interests, thus triggering an escalation process driven by a vicious circle of action and reaction, claim and counterclaim, and move and countermove, which intensifies the conflict. Based on Glasl (1982) and Rubin et al. (1994) five characteristics of such escalation dynamics can be discerned: (1) issue complexity inevitably increases over time with every claim or move having the potential to elicit a new issue, thus shifting the original conflict to other dimensions; (2) tactics become increasingly intemperate, for instance evolving from lobbying to demonstrations; (3) increasing investment of resources such as money, time, or organisational capacity; (4) seeking to broaden support from allies; and (5) increased psychological distancing through filtered communication and selective inattention. Such dynamics can only decrease if players *yield* by lowering their own aspirations, adopt *problem solving* by satisfying their own and the other players' aspirations, or *avoid* by leaving the conflict process altogether (Rubin et al., 1994).

In the context of policy processes, such contentious claims and the subsequent escalation dynamics are concerned with the policy positions of government players and how they think about the formation, or implementation, of specific public policies (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 27). From an interpretive perspective, however, such policy positions depend on frames that reflect the underlying beliefs, perceptions, and values of the relevant parties (Schön & Rein, 1994; Van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). In this sense, if a policy position is threatened by contentious claims, the recipient will respond with a counterclaim; if the original claimant does not yield, a policy conflict will escalate.[1] All five characteristics of escalation dynamics apply to government players during policy conflicts. For instance, issue complexity can increase when government players focus on substantive issues and activists focus on procedural fairness (Wolf, 2018). Verhoeven & Duyvendak (2017) showed how the intensification of tactics and increased use of resources in a campaign against municipal amalgamation in the Netherlands turned municipal players into activists. During this campaign, the municipalities collaborated closely with activists to organise support from allies. For Schön and Rein (1994), filtered communication and selective inattention are central to what they term policy controversies. In these instances, government players resist 'facts' put forward by their opponents, disagree on which facts are relevant and interpret the same facts differently. This creates space for them to dismiss evidence presented by their opponents, produce their own evidence and recalibrate their arguments to neutralise and contest their opponents' claims. Thus, activists can collaborate with government players in such escalation dynamics, particularly if they perceive the same threat.

Thirdly, the concept of contentious politics suggests that the process of making claims leads to coordinated efforts between players with shared interests or programmes, albeit interpreted differently depending on whether the government is the target or initiator. When targeted by SMOs, NGOs, or citizen action groups, government players may eventually acquiesce. For example, this has frequently occurred with contentious claims made by environmental movements that were subsequently adopted by 'green' states (Dryzek et al., 2003). As initiators of contentious claims, government players may develop shared interests with activists because they face the same threat. In social movement literature, threats and opportunities are considered important stimulants of collective action (Tilly, 1978). Threats are theorised as 'the costs that a social group will incur from protest, or that it expects to suffer if it does not take action' (Goldstone & Tilly, 2001: 183). This two-pronged definition may, for example, apply to the costs incurred by SMOs in the anti-globalisation movement when facing a police force at global economic summits (Fernandez et al., 2011), or to environmental SMOs that take action to counter climate change before it is too late (Staggenborg, 2020). The second part of the definition may also apply to activists

[1] Note that Weible and Heikkila (2017) refer to 'willingness to compromise' instead of 'yield'.

protesting against plans to construct facilities such as landfills or prisons (Jasper, 1997).

In public policy literature, threats are related to the policy positions of government players, and defined as: The degree to which actors believe that the policy positions of others will impose costs, harm, or negative consequences for themselves or society (Weible & Heikkila, 2017: 28). In this definition, threats are not only about costs, as they are in the definition of Goldstone and Tilly (2001). This expands the concept of threat beyond a purely rational calculation of costs, to encompass more cultural interpretations of what constitutes harm or negative consequences. A further distinction is the use of the term 'believe', which refers to players' perceptions of a situation— this does not have to be tangible but can be perceived (see Rubin et al., 1994). Plans or proposals for policies can also create a sense of threat among government players. For example, when President Trump tried to coerce local law enforcement agencies in so-called sanctuary cities to comply with his plans to deport undocumented migrants, the American Civil Liberties Union acted (ACLU, 2018).

Based on these ideas, I argue that in the context of contentious governance, perceived threats may induce coordinated efforts between government and non-governmental players who jointly blame players they hold responsible for the threat. A shared sense of threat may become a force that binds their interests. Moreover, a shared sense of blame may direct their claim-making towards government or business players, which propose or implement policies that are perceived as incurring costs, harm or negative consequences.

2.2 Governance

Rather than adhering to contentious politics as a comprehensive concept, I analyse the political nature of contention as a matter of governance. This enables a more focused analysis on the collaborations and mutual dependencies between government players and activists, and emphasises the critical points of interdependence between government players within different levels of government.

Driven by the realisation that collaboration is necessary to achieve legitimate and effective governance, government bodies increasingly engage with broader networks of stakeholders to address public issues (Kooiman, 2003: 3). One reason for this is the increasing complexity of public issues such as mass migration, climate change, and cybercrime, where the benefits of collaboration include developing a shared understanding of issues, pooling knowledge, co-designing and testing solutions, and allocating financial and organisational resources (Hoppe, 2010; Kooiman, 2003). Other reasons for government players to collaborate with wider networks include the increasing legitimacy crises faced by welfare states since the late 1970s, the rise of New Public Management (NPM) from the 1980s onwards, attempts to regain coordination over public sector fragmentation in the 1990s and 2000s, and the increased level of policy integration between EU member states (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Bevir, 2010; Pollit, 2003).

In a landscape of diverse governing processes, government players increasingly act as facilitators, co-designers, co-operative partners, network managers, regulators of ground rules, arm's-length overseers, or nudgers of other players. These interactions with public and private players mean that government players are expanding and partially shifting their roles and governing repertoires (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Kooiman, 2003). However, this does not mean that traditional, hierarchical governing processes are being replaced by a shift from government to various forms of governance. Rather, the proliferation of government roles and modes of governance becomes increasingly layered, with new strata being woven into traditional Weberian hierarchies. This layered approach suggests that modern governing is a multi-paradigmatic and hybrid process, drawing on an expanded repertoire of roles, interventions, and operating procedures (Kooiman, 2003; Olsen, 2008; Osborne, 2006; Pierre & Peeters, 2020; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

A growing scholarship, attentive to theorising variant facets of the hybrid nature of governing processes, has suggested useful analytical perspectives on multiple issues: how players collaborate to produce authoritative decisions and legitimate outcomes; how they coordinate efforts across levels of governance from supranational to subnational; how they design coordinated efforts; and how they measure their effectiveness (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; Hajer, 2009). I will draw on theories of collaborative, multilevel and urban governance to develop the governance element of my contentious governance concept.

2.2.1 Contentious Governance as the Antonym to Collaborative Governance

Collaborative governance refers to government players collaborating with citizens in response to failures in policy implementation and the need to share specialised knowledge to govern 'wicked' problems. Ansell and Gash (2008: 547) argue that collaborative governance processes explicitly aim to transform adversarial relationships between policy stakeholders and unilateral top-down government decision-making into ones which are collaborative and multilateral. Based on a review of 137 case studies, primarily from the United States, Ansell and Gash define collaborative governance as follows:

> A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets. (Ansell & Gash, 2008: 544)

The initiative for collaborative governance always comes from government players or implementing agencies. While these players may invite other governments or agencies; their primary focus is to engage with citizens under conditions of voluntary participation in formally organised forums with the authority to act. Collectively binding decisions are reached through consensus-oriented, deliberative, multilateral communication processes based on mutual dependence, commitment, understanding, respect, trust, and learning (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Gash, 2016).

Contentious governance may incorporate several elements of collaborative governance. Subnational government players and activists may collaborate voluntarily, making joint decisions based on consensus and multilateral communication. However, their collaboration is not intended to design or implement policies for shared public problems. Rather, they collaborate in response to a shared sense of threat arising from the policy proposals or implementation practices of government or business players. This threat-induced collaboration is the opposite of collaborative governance in four specific ways. First, subnational government players may initiate collaboration with activists if they perceive a threat to their policy position. However, activists may also perceive threats from policy proposals or implementation practices and seek to elicit the support of subnational government players in their contentious claims (see Brewster Stearns & Almeida, 2004).

Secondly, such collaboration is likely to be based on mutual dependence. By joining forces, subnational government players and activists can combine institutional and extra-institutional tactics to increase pressure on their political opponents and improve their chances of achieving their desired outcomes (Pettinicchio, 2016). Collaborating with subnational government players can be attractive to activists, as it lends greater legitimacy to their contentious claims. Unlike activists, these players have greater access to information about contested policies and are acutely aware of important procedures, decision points, and political dynamics, which they can communicate to activists (Böhm, 2015). Furthermore, subnational government players have broad experience of negotiating with, lobbying, and utilising party networks to achieve their goals. Collaborating with activists can also be appealing because they are less bound by formal institutional rules, tend to focus on a single issue, and bring useful capacity for mobilisation and a variety of protest tactics (Pettinicchio, 2016).

Thirdly, in contrast to collaborative governance, collaborations between subnational government players and activists do not demand mutual understanding, respect, trust, or learning, nor are they immune from hierarchy, manipulation and co-optation based on a surplus of resources and authority activists do not possess (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017). Therefore, some form of distance between them is preferable for fruitful collaboration. As social movement literature has shown, SMOs rely on maintaining a distance from political elites in order to make independent decisions; retaining the autonomy that their legitimacy depends upon (Böhm, 2015). Similarly, subnational government players risk not being taken seriously by those whose policies they oppose if they work too closely with activists who are not required to play by the informal rules of the political game (Bourdieu, 1991). This reflects their reliance on strong mutual dependencies, as unlike activists, they need to maintain collaborations on policy issues other than those they are contesting. Consequently, they must be constantly mindful of how far their contention can extend without damaging existing government relations. Interactions with activists can range from open collaboration in protests to covert collaboration and symbolic and discursive alliances, in which definitions of problems or solutions are shared, but involve no further coordination of actions and tactics (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017). Monitoring the balance of these is likely to affect such interactions. Within the dynamics of contention, targeted (supra)national government players are likely to consider how dependent they are on subnational government challengers and their activist allies when making decisions.

Fourthly, the strong focus on negotiation and deliberation in collaborative governance prioritises consensus-based forms of politics over more contentious ones. This applies not only to collaborative governance, but also to comparable theories of interactive governance (Edelenbos & van Meerkerk, 2016) and network governance (Bevir, 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Keast, 2016; Klijn, 2008). Consensus is favoured in collaborative governance because it relies less on the authority and sanctions of government players (Stoker, 1998) and more on reaching a shared public purpose (Bevir, 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). This does not mean that collaborative or network governance theories ignore adversarialism and conflict as an integral element of politics and policymaking (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003), but rather that the focus is on the promotion of negotiation and deliberation as a means of its mitigation. However, primarily focusing on attempts to resolve conflict through these forms of governance can overlook the ways in which contention operates, how conflict escalates and how power and counter-power are exercised. Moreover, the significance of contingency, struggle and resistance as important drivers of governance processes, tends to be obscured. These aspects have only recently been emphasised in decentred perspectives on governance (Davies, 2011; Griggs et al., 2014; Metze, 2010). My notion of contentious governance is based on these perspectives, and places contention at the heart of governance practices.

2.2.2 *The Multilevel Dynamics of Contentious Governance*

Another important element to consider is the multilevel nature of governing practices addressed by theories of multilevel governance (MLG). Theories of MLG were originally developed to explain processes of European integration and the complex, continuous negotiations between EU institutions, national governments, and sometimes even subnational government players. Unlike collaborative, interactive, and network governance theories, MLG theories focus primarily on vertical relationships and interactions between government players (Bache et al., 2016).[2] This focus provides insight into interactions between different levels of government that may conflict with each other. Currently, MLG theories are also used to study policymaking and the changing relationships between government players operating at different levels within national states. Even in states with formal autonomy for local government, national players can still impose their will, if necessary (Pierre & Peeters, 2020), reflecting how hierarchical modes of governance are still a characteristic of traditional intergovernmental relationships. However, rescaling processes have increased the autonomy and economic self-reliance of subnational government players, making them less submissive and less dependent on cues from the national level (Brenner, 2004; Pierre & Peeters, 2020).

The possibility of hierarchical interventions, in conjunction with greater assertiveness in intergovernmental relationships, creates fertile conditions for processes of contentious governance to develop. Policy proposals by (supra)national government players or their business allies can be perceived as hierarchical interventions hostile to regional or local policies, thereby affecting the autonomy of subnational government players. As contention unfolds, all government players bring their own competencies, resources, political coalitions, institutional opportunities and constraints, and the social communities to which they belong. Literature on urban governance (Pierre, 2016) suggests that local government players are particularly exposed to public problems, while often being subordinated to (supra)national government players to varying degrees. At the same time, however, local government players often lack the institutional capacity to act unilaterally, leading them to form strategic coalitions with other players, organise resources across their jurisdiction, and pursue collective goals. These coalitions may be formed to develop and implement policies based on consensus, as in collaborative governance, or to resist policy proposals or implementation practices, as in contentious governance.

[2] However, some argue that MLG dynamics can also be observed in the involvement of non-governmental players in the production of public goods (Alcantara et al., 2016; Kaufmann & Sidney, 2020).

2.3 Defining Contentious Governance

According to Ansell and Torfing (2016), one of the strengths of governance theories is that they provide analytical lenses and tools that enable the development of specialised theories, or sets of concepts, through which they can understand governing practices. This is precisely the task my concept of contentious governance is designed to undertake. Drawing on the extensive discussion of contention and governance above, as well as some previous work (Verhoeven, 2020; Verhoeven & Bröer, 2015; Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017), I propose the following definition of contentious governance: subnational government players and non-governmental players collaborating in the contestation of policymaking or implementation initiated by (supra)national government players or their business partners.

Like all good definitions, this one is characterised by its parsimony: brevity, however, is only sustained by clarification of its various elements. One such is open-endedness regarding whether policy proposals or implementation practices will be contested (see Fig. 2.1). Policy proposals by (supra)national government players often involve new goals and methods that could impact subnational government players and the communities within their jurisdiction. Suppose for a moment, a national government player proposes building a new nuclear reactor, subnational government players and activists may oppose the proposal if they perceive negative consequences for their policy goals and communities. In addition, policy implementation practices often interfere with ongoing policy processes which may become problematic due to proposed changes, incidents or unforeseen crises that produce different outcomes. If an incident involving a nuclear reactor does occur, subnational government players and activists may start campaigning for it to be permanently shut down.

The definition of contentious governance is also open-ended about the players it concerns. The initiation or implementation of policies that trigger contentious governance is more likely to come from (supra)national government players or businesses; however, contestation can come from subnational government players or activists.[3] Continuing

[3] Theoretically the EU or another supranational player may propose a policy, which will be contested by national government players together with activists. Given the deep involvement of national government players in supranational politics and the limited jurisdiction of supranational players, I expect such cases to be rare.

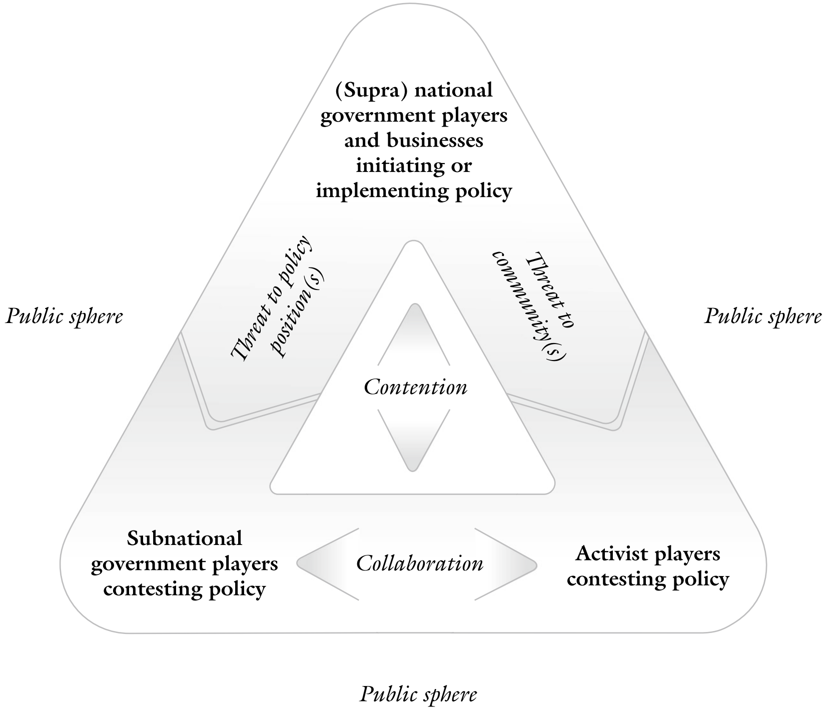

Fig. 2.1 Overview of players and processes in contentious governance

with the above example, businesses who operate nuclear reactors often do so in close collaboration with a national government player. If such players propose a new reactor, or experience incidents with the operation of an existing one, subnational government players can perceive these as threats to pre-existing policy positions; conversely activists may perceive them as threats to communities. When businesses are involved, they get sucked into the conflict in the wake of the (supra)national government players. Once processes of contention begin to escalate, a conflict spiral may develop between the proponents and the opponents of the policy proposals or implementation practices (compare Rubin et al., 1994; Glasl, 1982 on conflict spirals).

Another element of the definition is that it is open about who initiates contention. Based on Fig. 2.1, it can be argued that subnational government players begin to make contentious claims after first identifying a threat through their political or policy channels. Likewise, activists may be equally well-informed and initiate their own contentious claims. Contentious claim-making by one player thus has the potential to create awareness of the threat among the others; if they perceive the threat in the same way, they may collaborate in contention. In any case, contentious governance, as defined here, always involves open, covert, symbolic, or discursive forms of collaboration between subnational government players and activists. Without them the term governance would not apply.

Finally, the definition leaves open the question of what forms contention may take, as subnational government players and activists may use different tactics to substantiate their claims. The choice of tactics is likely to be contingent on mutual dependencies and multilevel dynamics between (supra)national, subnational government players or activists, and on the interactions between subnational government players and activists.

2.4 Contentious Governance and Related Concepts[4]

The concept of contentious governance should be distinguished from related ideas and approaches that also examine the porous boundaries between government players and activists in processes of contention. Depending on the incumbent political regime, the relationships between government players and activists may differ. One example is the close relationship between ruling political parties and social movements, which could be found in Brazil, where the Workers' Party, particularly under President Lula (2003–2010), had very close relations with SMOs regarding social and environmental policies. Many activists took

[4] In previous publications (Verhoeven & Broer, 2015; Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017) I used the concept of contentious governance as a container for various forms of boundary crossing collaborations between government players and activists, such as those discussed here and through my concept of 'governmental activism'. As my ideas became more refined, the notion of governmental activism was too suggestive that government players could be defined as activists, whereas in many ways they deployed different tactics and framing than real activists would do. Hence, I further developed the concept of contentious governance (Verhoeven, 2020) to provide a more sophisticated understanding of the phenomena.

jobs in the federal government to work on these issues, as the interests of the government and the movement converged. When activists are recruited by national government players as employees working towards shared policy objectives, they are what Abers (2019) defines as *bureaucratic activists*. In contentious governance, activists are not employed by subnational government players to work towards shared policy objectives, but close ties may underpin collaborations that form to resist policy threats. For instance, in 2015, Ada Colau, the new mayor of Barcelona and a former activist, closely collaborated with SMOs to set up the Cities of Refuge network, which welcomed undocumented and forced migrants, and contested national and EU migration policies (Bazurli, 2020; Bazurli & Verhoeven, 2026).

Close relationships might also develop across the boundaries between oppositional political parties and specific social movements, such as the peace movement and the Dutch Social Democrats in the first half of the 1980s (Kriesi et al., 1995). However, unlike these relationships, contentious governance builds on a broader political mandate, particularly from ruling parties and political majorities. This is because taking a contentious stance against a (supra)national government is an extraordinary move for subnational government players that requires political legitimacy.

Boundary-crossing relationships of a different nature emerge in what Banaszak (2005) refers to as 'state-movement intersections', where government officials are also movement activists. Government officials working at these intersections use insider tactics to support the development of social movements. In her empirical analysis of the women's movement in the United States, Banaszak (2005: 167–68) demonstrates that individual feminist officials employed institutional tactics, such as taking legal action and sharing information about political opportunities, to influence the movements' strategies and outcomes. Other conceptions of state-movement intersections can be found in the work of Pettinicchio (2012, 2016) on 'institutional activists' and Olsson and Hysing (2012) on 'inside activists'. These individual activists may work in congruence with movement goals without participating in movement activities. My concept of contentious governance does not depend on individuals providing intersections between subnational government players and activists, nor is it reliant on individuals trying to resist or transform policies within a single government body. Instead, it is based on collective subnational government efforts involving explicit political decision-making, to enter contention and ward off a policy threat attributed to (supra)national government players.

Boundary-crossing relationships can also be found in 'issue coalitions', where government players form coalitions with corporate and civil society players to address societal problems (McCarthy, 2005). Many issue coalitions have been formed on the community level in the United States to combat substance abuse. In the long-running 'War on Drugs', individual government officials, law enforcement agencies, and drug prevention agencies provide extensive funding, moral support in the form of endorsement, and informational resources to encourage corporate and civil society players to participate in campaigns to combat substance abuse (McCarthy, 2005). In contentious governance, government players are involved in such issue coalitions, mobilising non-governmental players for a common cause. The main difference, however, is that issue coalitions do not pit government players against each other.

Examples closer to contentious governance are the state-movement coalitions that developed between local government players and the anti-pollution movement in 1960s Japan. These coalitions enacted anti-pollution ordinances that violated national statutes and delegitimised the national governments' environmental politics (Brewster Stearns & Almeida, 2004). The only difference with contentious governance is that no threat was triggered by policy proposals or implementation practices from the national government that spurred them into action.

A final concept from which contentious governance should be distinguished is 'contested governance'. Like contentious governance, contested governance places contention at the centre of governance practices, but it focuses on how the governance of entire policy domains becomes contested through conflicts over the core values, institutional rules and arrangements that govern domains (Ansell & Vogel, 2006). By contrast, contentious governance focuses on conflicts over specific policy issues, rather than on conflicts over the governance of policy domains. As the book will go on to show, contentious governance involves procedural critiques of decision-making processes, but it does not challenge the fundamentals of how decisions are made.

2.5 Summary

Contentious governance builds on the work of others in the fields of contention and governance. In this respect, contention is understood as an interactive process in which players focus on their own policy positions, which acts as a catalyst for escalation dynamics based on claims and counter-claims, moves and counter-moves. Governance focuses on collaborations between government and non-governmental players working on public issues. These collaborations are based on mutual dependency, where no single player can solve issues by themselves. Based on these constitutive elements, contentious governance emerges when subnational government players and activists perceive a shared sense of threat caused by (supra)national government players, sometimes in combination with their business allies. Consequently, contentious governance can be visualised as a triangle (see Fig. 2.1), constituted by multilevel interactions between higher and lower tiers of government, as well as between higher tiers of government and activists. In contentious governance, these multilevel interactions introduce intergovernmental hierarchies, interdependencies, and the exercise of political power as important factors. The triangle also consists of additional multilateral interactions between one or more subnational government players, and one or more groups of activists, based on mutual dependencies underpinned by a shared sense of threat. These collaborations are not required to exhibit very close, trust-based relationships; in most cases some degree of distance between subnational government players and activists is mutually desirable. Clearly, the multilateral interactions between subnational government players and activists can be greatly influenced by the multi-level interactions with (supra)national government players, or their business allies. Within these complex triangular dynamics, contentious governance can be initiated by subnational government players or by activists. For subnational government players, it is a collective process requiring a broad political mandate. These characteristics distinguish contentious governance from related concepts in which the boundaries between governments and activists are crossed.

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CHAPTER 3

Contention in the Netherlands: Situating the Cases

When episodes of contentious governance erupt and subside, players will draw on contextually bound formal rules, informal political practices and discourses. In this book, these institutional elements are embedded in the specific political context of the Netherlands. Strategic interactions in episodes of contentious governance unfold within the broader context of the political system and the specific contexts of policy subsystems across different levels of government. In capturing, and making sense of, the beginning and end of these episodes, as well as developments within and potential spillovers from one to the other (see Jasper & King, 2020), the relevant elements of the Dutch political system and the specific policy subsystems in which the cases in this book are situated demand elaboration.

This chapter has two principal tasks. First, I consider three elements of the Dutch political system that are pertinent to understanding the development of contentious governance, namely: (1) rigid and overloaded intergovernmental relations; (2) hierarchical governing, market approaches, and network governance; and (3) public support for contention. Secondly, I explore the policy subsystems in which the three cases occurred by focusing on the policy domains, the key stakeholders and the episodes of contentious governance, including the most important events, before briefly summarising the key points of this chapter.

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3.1 Rigid and Overloaded Intergovernmental Relations

Understanding how contentious governance can develop demands a consideration of how subnational and national government players are embedded within intergovernmental systems. For local government players in particular, political context makes a difference. In Germany, for example, the right to self-government extends to all matters within their jurisdiction (Vetter, 2010), but in the UK, they have general powers of competence, which are rarely tested due to an assertive national government (Rogers & Staite, 2012; Sullivan, 2010). Understanding the situation in the Netherlands requires making sense of the autonomy of municipal government players within a three-tier system of national, provincial, and local government.

The concept of autonomy, understood here as the 'scope of discretion' afforded to local authorities to make decisions (Vetter, 2007), means that discretion may be wide, allowing self-government on legal, fiscal, policy and administrative matters, or narrow, whereby national government only grants self-government over a limited number of policies or administrative tasks. In 2015, Ladner, Keuffer and Baldersheim asked country experts to score municipalities on eleven different indicators of local autonomy ranging from 0 to 100 (Ladner et al., 2015). The results are captured in the Local Autonomy Index (LAI)[1] illustrated below.

The Table 3.1 shows that a group of predominantly Northern European countries and Switzerland have high levels of local autonomy, while levels for Turkey, Georgia, Malta, Moldova, and Ireland are considerably lower. The mean value of the index is 56.67 (Van Houwelingen, 2018: 191), represented by Romania, North Macedonia, and the Netherlands.

The Netherlands' score is conditioned by its intergovernmental system, which is a decentralised unitary state. This oxymoron reflects the constant tension between the national government, which exercises considerable

[1] The advantage of the LAI is that it bypasses the issue of deriving local autonomy from the formal characteristics of intergovernmental systems by, for example, using decentralisation as a proxy for autonomy. Conflating decentralisation and autonomy can lead to inaccurate and incomplete assessments of intergovernmental systems (Fleurke & Willemse, 2004). Ladner et al. bypass this problem by using the judgements of country experts who understand how local government functions in practice rather than in theory.

Table 3.1 Local autonomy index scores for 39 countries

Country	*LAI score*
Switzerland	77.10
Finland	75.96
Iceland	74.58
Denmark	71.95
Germany	71.62
Poland	71.60
Sweden	71.51
Norway	70.23
Liechtenstein	67.29
Italy	64.65
Serbia	64.30
France	63.56
Bulgaria	63.31
Lithuania	62.52
Austria	62.20
Czech Republic	61.98
Estonia	61.08
Slovakia	58.71
Portugal	58.40
Belgium	58.23
The Netherlands	57.46
Macedonia	56.83
Romania	56.40
Croatia	53.83
Luxembourg	53.20
Latvia	52.24
Spain	51.77
Hungary	48.75
Albania	47.89
Slovenia	47.23
Ukraine	46.42
Greece	45.08
Great Britain	44.71
Cyprus	40.41
Turkey	36.91
Georgia	36.62
Malta	35.59
Moldova	34.51
Ireland	33.10

Source Modified from van Houwelingen (2018: 192) authority over municipal governments by virtue of the unitary legal structure of the state, and its dependence on municipalities for the implementation of national policies through processes of co-governance (Steen & Toonen, 2010). Municipalities, however, are not only controlled by the imposition of legal duties and the handing down of guidelines, requirements, and clarifications on policy changes and implementation, but also by withholding approval for local plans, proposals, or budgets (Steen & Toonen, 2010). Co-governance involves municipalities spending a large proportion of total government expenditure on implementing national policies, leading to increased interdependence and the strengthening of municipalities' position within the Dutch intergovernmental system (Gilsing 2005; Steen & Toonen, 2010). During the first decade of this century, the tension between directing and co-governing caused the Dutch national government and municipalities to view their relationship as 'rigid and overloaded' (Steen & Toonen, 2010: 157). This tension increased in 2015 after important features of the Dutch welfare state were formally decentralised to municipalities, but the national government continued to exert significant influence over municipal policies (Kromhout et al., 2020). In the summer of 2021, hundreds of Dutch municipalities threatened to go on strike if the national government did not provide them with a larger budget for the delivery and implementation of decentralised national policies.[2]

Excessive deployment of hierarchical power over municipalities and provincial government players thus provides fertile ground for contentious governance. It will often be perceived as an infringement on the autonomy of municipal and provincial government players, and if national policies are perceived as a threat, it will inevitably provoke resistance.

[2] https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/06/17/honderden-gemeenten-dreigen-te-staken-als-rijk-niet-bijspringt-a4047830 (last checked 30 June 2021).

3.2 Modes of Governing as Triggers of Contentious Governance

3.2.1 Governing Through Hierarchy

As Max Weber observed, rational-legal authority exercised through state bureaucracies reinforces the power of national governments. The most characteristic aspect of such governing practices is hierarchical rule, based on top-down commands and bottom-up accountability (Blau & Meyer, 1987). This type of governing is marked by the central position of national bureaucracies in policymaking processes. It functions through the demarcation of politics and administration within public organisations, a division of labour between different tiers of government, and through administrative rationalism, which favours experts in the solving of social problems (Blau & Meyer, 1987; Hajer, 2009; Osborne, 2006). Although post-war welfare states were generally considered to represent the pinnacle of hierarchical governance until the 1970s, contemporary modes of governing may still rely on certain forms of hierarchy (Hajer, 2009; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). In the Netherlands, national government players can be observed making use of hierarchical rule through 'decide-announce-defend', 'override', and 'pre-emptive' approaches.

Decide-announce-defend (DAD) does precisely what it says on the tin. In the Dutch system, government players can decide on policy processes within their jurisdiction, make these decisions public, and then defend them in the hope of securing approval or acquiescence. Dutch municipalities have made extensive use of DAD, often sparking conflicts with residents who use legal and political tactics when challenging plans to construct human service facilities, such as homeless shelters, drug rehabilitation centres, and accommodation for people with psychological disorders (Karsten, 2013). National governments have also employed DAD in relation to major infrastructure projects. Examples include the development of the high-speed railway line (HSL) between Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam and the city of Antwerp in Belgium, and the construction of the Betuweroute: a 160-kilometre freight railway line between Rotterdam Harbour and the German border (Verlinde, 1996). In-depth research from the US indicates that DAD approaches are often highly technocratic, assume that local communities will either have no objections or can be convinced that the decisions are reasonable. However, such technocratic approaches often spark resistance, as local communities perceive the lack of political debate as undemocratic (Munton, 1996; Popper, 1985). In this respect, DAD can trigger processes of contentious governance.

Override is the legally sanctioned capacity of national or provincial government players to cancel or overrule local government decisions regarding unwanted facilities. The decision to override is often justified by arguments invoking the broader public good over the self-interest of local governments. In 1993, the Dutch parliament adopted the so-called NIMBY bill, which enables national government players to request changes to municipal zoning schemes in favour of a facility. If municipalities do not cooperate within eight weeks, their decision-making powers can be removed and ministers allowed to implement the desired changes (Wolsink, 1994). This bill was used in the Schinveld AWACS aircraft[3] contentious governance case discussed in the introduction. Another form of override can be found in the Rijkscoordinatieregeling (RCR, or National Coordination Regulation in English), which was introduced in November 2010. The RCR enables the Minister of Economic Affairs to take over the coordination of planning and permitting procedures from subnational governments for large windfarms, power plants, and other large energy facilities.[4] As the empirical chapters will show, the use of the RCR has contributed to contentious governance.

Pre-emption is a move by national or provincial government players to strip local government of its decision-making power, or to strike down environmental laws that restrict siting. The underlying assumption is that higher tiers of government know what is best based on superior technical and policy expertise (Munton, 1996). Since the mid-1980s, pre-emption has been used extensively in Canada and the US in cases involving waste incinerators (Munton, 1996; Rabe, 1994), and more recently by the Texas State Legislature to block local bans on fracking (Auyero et al., 2017). In the Netherlands, pre-emption was employed under the Crisis- en herstelwet (CHW, or Crisis and Recovery Law in English). To alleviate the financial crisis, the national government used this temporary law to accelerate large-scale infrastructure and construction projects related

[3] https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vereniging_STOP_awacs (last checked 5 July 2021).

[4] https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/bureau-energieprojecten/rijkscoordinatieregeling (last checked 5 July 2021).

to sustainability, energy, and innovation by preventing local government from appealing against decisions made by any government body in court (Rijksoverheid, 2010). When the financial crisis was over, this prohibition remained intact when the law gained permanent status in 2013. The prohibition allowed for citizens to take legal action, which prompted municipalities to collaborate with activists in initiating legal proceedings against national government players. This process affected all three cases of contentious governance covered in this book.

Whenever national government players deploy hierarchical control, municipalities will try to persuade ministers, civil servants and MPs to change course. They can choose to negotiate directly or use political party affiliations to influence MPs; however, this is easier said than done. All the cases in this book demonstrate the strong resistance of ministers and senior civil servants to municipal demands. Peters et al. (2014) suggest that particularly on the local level, the increased salience of local political parties over the last fifteen years has weakened national party affiliations and subsequently reduced local government players' access to national politics. Resistance from ministers and reduced access through party affiliations can create a sense that municipalities are being ignored, pushing them towards activists to ward off policy threats by engaging in contentious governance.

3.2.2 Governing Through Markets

The oil crises of the 1970s shocked the global economy and triggered stock market turbulence, inflation and high unemployment. Within this context, rising demands from citizens were perceived to have overburdened western welfare states, and with governments unable to secure economic growth and prosperity, criticisms of 'government overload' became axiomatic (Ansell & Torfing, 2016). Initially in the UK and the US, but rapidly spreading to other Anglo-Saxon and European countries, advocates of market reforms prompted a 'rolling back of the state', and the replacement of government bureaucracies with decentralised markets as providers of key public services (Bevir, 2010; John, 2011). The two principal elements of what is now termed neoliberal reform were New Public Management (NPM) and marketisation. NPM aimed to make public services more efficient by infusing an entrepreneurial logic (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992), while marketisation often took the form of privatisation, whereby the private sector buys public assets to deliver services; the contracting out of public services to businesses; or competitive tendering, which allows businesses to propose market solutions to existing or new public problems (Bevir, 2010; Domberger & Rimmer, 1994).

The Netherlands provides many examples of marketisation, particularly in energy policy, which is especially relevant to this book. In late 1995, the national government issued the Third White Paper on Energy, announcing the liberalisation of the energy sector through the reorganisation of government-owned energy utilities according to market principles. This process began in 1998 with the new Electricity Law, which initiated the privatisation of twenty-three electrical distribution companies owned by Dutch municipalities and provinces. Liberalisation also involved the gradual opening of the electricity market to different groups of users, beginning with large business users and later with households and individual consumers in 2004 (Damme, 2005). In the gas sector, a new Gas Act was adopted in April 2000. This entailed dismantling the monopoly held by the state-owned company *Gasunie* over the trading, transportation, and storage of gas. Consumers were allowed to negotiate contracts with other suppliers and traders, enabling them to purchase gas from one of eleven consortia (Correljé et al., 2003). Elements of liberalisation also dominated the early stages of the energy transition in the Netherlands. In 2001, the national government set itself the target of reducing CO_2 emissions to between 40% and 60% below 1990 levels by 2030. To achieve this, policymakers adopted an economic approach to transition pathways and experiments, considering them primarily for their market potential. Cost-effectiveness, potential economic success and business interests were the main considerations in these market-based approaches (Kern & Howlett, 2009).

National government players are attracted to market approaches and liberalisation processes because business takes the risk and bears the cost of large investments, while governments confine their role to regulatory oversight. When national government players set out tendering processes for the private development and management of facilities such as prisons, waste incinerators, or landfills, businesses not only take risks and bear costs but also select sites and secure agreements with local communities (Rabe, 1994). These agreements often involve forms of compensation, such as monetary payments or the provision of desired infrastructure, social services, or amenities like parks (Munton, 1996; Rabe, 1994). Based on such economic considerations, national politicians may find it attractive to put businesses in charge of policy development and implementation. However, such approaches also introduce substantial political risks. Businesses often have no experience of dealing with citizens' or subnational governments' concerns. Indeed, facility siting literature indicates that when businesses step in with the intention of negotiating financial compensation, they tend to spark policy conflicts by overlooking fundamental questions regarding the necessity of a facility or the safety of the technology involved (Munton, 1996; Rabe, 1994). This can be further compounded by perceived democratic deficits, when limits to market provision, or market failure, are not subject to prior forms of public accountability (Bevir, 2010). Therefore, contentious governance is likely to occur if citizens or subnational government players perceive the role of businesses as illegitimate, immoral, or lacking democratic accountability.

3.2.3 Governing Through Networks

During the 1980s and 1990s, politicians and policymakers became acutely aware of their growing dependency on other stakeholders to solve public problems (Hoppe, 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar 2003; Klijn, 2008). In response, government players began to collaborate with civil society and business players, jointly designing and implementing policies (Bevir 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Stoker, 1998) in 'governance networks' (Klijn, 2005) governed through soft policy instruments, such as negotiation, diplomacy, and mediation (Bevir, 2010; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003).

In the Netherlands, governance networks emerged during the 1980s with citizens, civil society organisations, and businesses becoming increasingly involved in policy design and implementation through interactive policymaking, public-private partnerships, and policy networks at provincial and local government levels (Michels, 2006). Many of these early governance networks focused on reconstructing public works, developing city centres, and revitalising old neighbourhoods (Michels & de Graaf, 2010). By the mid-1990s and early 2000s, several national-level ministries had begun experimenting with governance networks geared towards interactive policymaking processes (Van Tatenhove et al., 2010). At the present time, governance networks are evident in the planning of complex water projects (Van Meerkerk et al., 2015) and the climate governance of Dutch cities (Hölscher et al. 2019).

Governance networks are frequently instigated to increase the legitimacy of policy processes and restore trust in political and particularly government institutions (Van Buuren et al., 2007; Van Eijck, 2014). However, if governance networks are perceived as failing to deliver, they may act as a trigger for contentious governance. This can happen when citizens or subnational government players sense that their participation is just perfunctory (Van Stokkom 2006) and their sensitivities are being appeased to elicit agreement. The perception that network governance is failing can also be caused by ambiguous or hostile attitudes to participatory practices from civil servants and politicians (Durose & Lowndes, 2010; Munton, 1996).

3.3 The Support Potential Among the Dutch Population

Public support for political systems has been a cornerstone of public opinion research since Easton (1957: 390) defined it as ‘energy in the form of actions or orientations that promote or resist a political system’. In this formulation, support is focused on the political community, regime principles, the incumbent government and is essential for its continued operation (Easton, 1957: 391–393). This has limited import in discerning possible support for contentious governance, as current public opinion research does not directly address it. However, data on support for protest can serve as a proxy, as concrete cases of contentious governance can often involve protest by activists and subnational government players. Before looking more critically at these data, it would be useful to consider general indicators of public interest in politics and electoral participation in the context of the Netherlands.

A report by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research covering the period 2008–2018, indicated that approximately 60 per cent of the Dutch population were fairly or very interested in politics. For local voters in 2018, interest in national and local politics was 59 and 48 per cent respectively. For the population as a whole, 77 per cent followed national politics fairly closely, compared to 57 per cent for local politics (Kuyper et al. 2019).[5] Somewhat consistent with Michael Schudson’s (1999) concept of ‘monitorial citizens’, these findings suggest that large segments of the

[5] Comparative data were only available for 2018.

Dutch population keep an eye on politics. Among their other routines, monitorial citizens are concerned to follow what the government is doing and can become involved in politics if they deem it necessary. Dutch voters have demonstrated remarkably consistent participation in elections since 2009. National elections show participation rates of 75.4 per cent in 2010, 74.6 per cent in 2012, and 81.6 per cent in 2017 (Kuyper et al., 2019). Local elections are less popular but still show stable turnout: 54.1 per cent in 2010; 54 per cent in 2014; and 55 per cent in 2018 (Kuyper et al., 2019).[6]

Recent data on the propensity to protest as a form of political participation is remarkably stable. Compared to the 'protest era' of the 1970s, when those willing to protest if a proposed law was perceived to be unjust averaged between 30 and 35 percent, the last twenty-five years have seen substantially higher percentages. Between the mid-1990s and 2018, the proportion of the Dutch population hovered between 50 and 60 per cent. Over the same period, approval of protests by others is similarly high between 60 and 70 per cent compared to 30 to 40 per cent in the 1970s (Den Ridder et al. 2019). Plausible explanations for this divergence are that protest has not only become part of a broader political repertoire but also accepted as a legitimate political activity. This applies not only to progressive left-wing voters, but also to more conservative and right-wing populist voters (Den Ridder et al., 2019; Kuyper et al., 2019). Similar patterns of support for, and willingness to, protest can be found in many liberal democracies, arguably reflecting the suggestion that protest is a 'normal' aspect of politics (Jenkins et al., 2008; Meyer & Tarrow, 1998), or 'an extension of conventional politics by other means' (Dalton, 2014: 53).

I would argue that these attitudes to protest suggest considerable public support potential for contentious governance. If provincial or local populations believe that policy proposals or implementation practices threaten their lives and communities, they may support activists and subnational government players in their protest. However, the nature of the protest matters. Research indicates that Dutch citizens only support nonviolent protest activities that do not disturb public order, and not deliberately insult people (Den Ridder et al., 2019). Given that subnational government players are already behaving in 'unconventional' ways

[6] I have deliberately included turnout figures for these years, as they coincide with periods of contentious governance in the selected cases.

when they oppose policy proposals or implementation practices, they need to be particularly careful not to push the boundaries of public expectation when engaging in contentious governance.

3.4 The Policy Subsystems of the Three Dutch Cases

This book focuses on three cases: carbon capture and storage in Barendrecht (hereafter the CCS case); the nearshore windfarm project in Katwijk, Noordwijk, and Zandvoort (hereafter the windfarm case); and the earthquakes induced by natural gas production in Groningen (hereafter the gas-quakes case). Each of these cases arose in the context of overloaded intergovernmental relations, increasingly complex modes of governance, and considerable potential support for contentious governance among the Dutch population. Each has its own policy subsystem, the exploration of which provides greater contextual specificity for significant episodes of contentious governance.

3.4.1 The CCS Case (2008–2010)

3.4.1.1 Developing a Demonstration Project

Towards the end of the 2000s, the Dutch national government set a target to reduce CO_2 emissions by thirty per cent from their 1990 levels by 2020. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) was considered a promising solution for achieving these short-term goals (Vergragt, 2009: 190). The basic concept of CCS is to capture CO_2 emissions at source and store them underground in either depleted gas or oil fields or aquifers (underground layers of water). This became an appealing technology for industries under political pressure to reduce their emissions. National government players promoted the development of comprehensive CCS systems[7] to rapidly reduce CO_2 emissions and strengthen the position of businesses involved in developing such systems (Meadowcroft & Langhelle, 2009).

To secure subsidies from the European Commission Innovation Fund, the Dutch government argued that the Netherlands was ideal for CCS

[7] By the end of the 2000s, a complete collection/transportation/storage system did not exist anywhere in the world.

projects, pointing to the country's strong track record in fundamental research, the technological expertise of Dutch industry, the availability of storage space in empty gas fields, and the proximity of major polluters to potential storage sites. Gaining experience in operating a complete CCS system would also provide Dutch industry with a competitive advantage in a new market (Tweede Kamer, 2008–2009). The Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment (VROM) were jointly responsible for CCS development and adopted a stepwise approach. They began with two small-scale onshore 'demonstration projects', before intending to embark on larger projects in empty gas fields located in the three northernmost provinces. Finally, they aimed to implement CCS on a large scale across polluting industries (Tweede Kamer, 2008–2009).

The two ministries employed market-based approaches for all these steps, emphasising that the government would play a small facilitating role and that private enterprises needed to take the lead:

> Any government support for CCS will always be temporary in nature, aimed at accelerating the development and deployment of an important environmental innovation. (…) Due to scale effects, it is important to develop the infrastructure facilities already in the start-up phase on the basis of the long-term perspective for CCS. The government wants to ensure that such a long-term approach is established without compromising a market-based approach. (Tweede Kamer, 2008–2009: 3)

In May 2007, the two ministries set aside €60 million for a tendering process, inviting bids from businesses for two small-scale CCS demonstration projects. The main objectives were to learn how to: obtain public acceptance for concrete projects; set up legal procedures and regulations; monitor and verify the technology after implementation; and obtain CO_2 credits in the newly established EU Emissions Trading Scheme (Feenstra et al., 2010; Vergragt 2009). Two proposals were selected in November 2008, each of which would receive €30 million in government subsidies once the projects had been implemented. One of these was the plan by Shell to capture and store CO_2 emitted from its oil refinery in the Port of Rotterdam. After capturing the CO_2, Shell planned to transport it via a new 17-kilometre steel pipeline to two depleted gas fields under the municipality of Barendrecht where they expected to store 0.8 million tonnes of CO_2 at a depth of 1700 metres in the smaller gas field, and

9.5 million tonnes at a depth of 2700 metres in the larger one. To gain short-term experience of a complete CCS system, Shell planned to begin the three-year process of filling the smaller gas field in 2011 and begin injection into the larger gas field in 2015 which would continue until 2040. Provided that the small gas field experiment was successful, the second stage of larger demonstration projects in the north of the country would also begin in 2015 (Feenstra et al., 2010).

3.4.1.2 Contesting the CCS-Proposal in Three Episodes

The municipality of Barendrecht forms part of the wider urban agglomeration of Rotterdam in the south-west of the Netherlands, close to the heavily industrialised Rijnmond district, home to numerous large oil refineries and chemical manufacturing plants (Feenstra et al., 2010). The municipality became aware of the plans for the CCS experiment early in 2008, when Shell organised two information evenings (in February and April) to initiate the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). During the information evenings, local politicians and residents asked questions about safety and technical details, but these were not answered satisfactorily by Shell's project developers. As the two ministries were not involved at this stage, the impression arose that Shell had already been contracted. This idea was further strengthened by Shell's failure to disclose all the required information at short notice (Cuppen et al., 2015; Feenstra et al., 2010).

The first episode of contentious governance began in February 2009, when Shell's EIA concluded that CCS could be implemented safely in Barendrecht. This prompted a well-attended municipal information evening, four expert meetings, 1570 responses against the outcomes of the EIA, and a protest march organised by the GroenLinks party (GreenLeft in English, see Fig. 3.1). In the context of this, the CCS project was included in the RCR on 1st March 2009, meaning that the national government stripped the municipality of its right to deny permission according to the local zoning plan. Interpreting this as an act of coercion, the dismayed Municipal Executive responded to the hierarchical intervention, and by doing so prompted more political parties in the municipal council to critique the project and the intervention (Feenstra et al., 2010). Following the EIA committee's approval of the report in April 2009, the municipal council unanimously rejected the CCS project on 29 June 2009 (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009a, 2009b).

The municipal decision against the CCS project marked the beginning of the second episode of contentious governance (October 2009–April

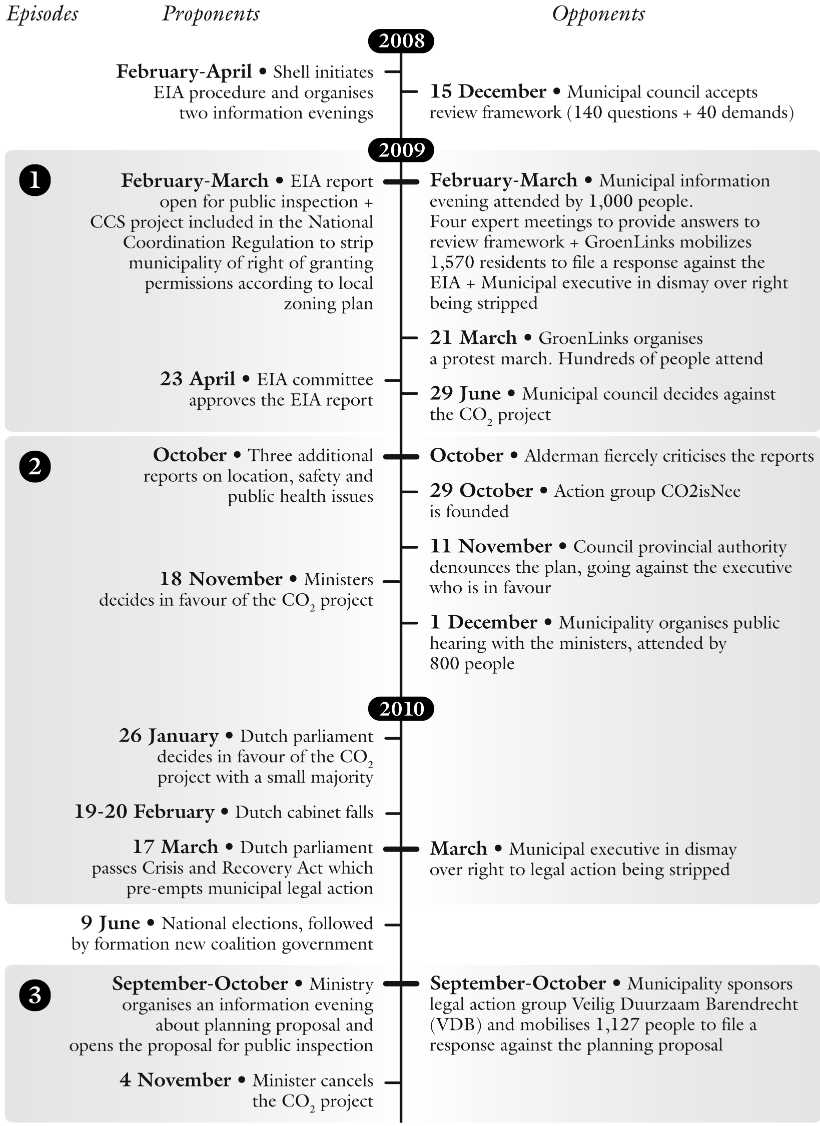

Fig. 3.1 Timeline of the CCS case

2010). Shortly afterwards, the two ministers intervened and postponed further decision-making until mid-November 2009. All municipal efforts focused on gaining support from the provincial authority that was responsible for the issue of an environmental permit, and were joined by CO2isNee (CO2isNo in English), a local citizen action group formed in October 2009. After organising a small playful action, CO2isNee focused its efforts on lobbying and making substantive arguments as the basis of their resistance against the CCS project (see Chapter 4). Together, municipal politicians and activists managed to convince provincial politicians to unanimously reject the plan on 11th November 2009. However, the two ministers ignored the province's disapproval, deciding in favour of the CCS project on 18th November 2009, followed by parliamentary authorisation on 28th January 2010. Prior to the cabinet initiating further procedures to implement the CCS project, the governing coalition collapsed following a lengthy crisis debate concerning the role of the Dutch military in Afghanistan over 19–20th February 2010. In March, less than a month after the cabinet's resignation, the Dutch parliament passed the CHW, pre-empting municipal legal action against planning proposals of national interest (see the discussion on governing through hierarchy above). The Municipal Executive responded again in dismay, over yet another hierarchical intervention from national government players.

The third episode of contentious governance emerged in September 2010 when the demissionary cabinet, in an attempt to make progress following parliamentary authorisation of the plan in January, released its planning proposal for the CCS project. In turn, the municipality lobbied the political parties who were negotiating the new cabinet after the national elections in June. After being stripped of its right to take legal action (see Fig. 3.1), the municipality joined forces with a new citizens' action group Veilig Duurzaam Barendrecht (VDB, or in English Safe and Sustainable Barendrecht) to take legal action, as citizens were still permitted to initiate legal proceedings against planning proposals. The municipality also mobilised residents to respond to the planning proposal. Ultimately, their combined efforts resulted in the cancellation of the project by the political parties negotiating over the composition of the new cabinet. Once the new coalition government had been formed, the Minister for Economic Affairs announced on 4th November 2010 that the government had cancelled the CCS project (Verhoeven, 2020). This concluded the third episode of contention, and arguably the termination of the three-step approach towards large-scale CCS technology development, which represented a major shift in mitigation strategy compared to the previous cabinet's ambitious CCS plans.

3.4.2 The Windfarm Case (2013–2016)

3.4.2.1 Planning Windfarms at Sea

Another way to reduce CO_2 emissions is to increase the production of renewable energy sources. Windfarms are one among several potential solutions, but they often encounter opposition from citizens' action groups (Breukers 2006; Ogilvie & Rootes, 2015) and occasionally from local governments (Toke, 2005; Verhoeven et al., 2022; Wolsink, 1996). For this reason, in early 2012, the Ministers of Infrastructure and Economic Affairs began to explore the possibility of constructing additional offshore windfarms outside the 12-mile zone, where they would be invisible from the coast, and by late 2012, nearshore windfarms which would be visible from the coast. This would enable the ministers to meet their CO_2 reduction target within the crowded North Sea, which is home to shipping lanes, mining platforms, nature reserves, tourist attractions, and fishing grounds (Tweede Kamer, 2012–2013). Targeting areas both inside and outside the 12-mile zone became more urgent after the national government signed an 'energy deal' with forty large organisations from the private sector and civil society in September 2013. One of the pillars of the energy deal was scaling up renewables, with a commitment to generate 3450 megawatts (MW) of wind power at sea by 2023, enough to provide electricity for 5 million households (Sociaal Economische Raad, 2013: 17).[8] This was a substantial commitment, and prompted by the 2023 deadline, the government decided to expedite the decision-making process.

To inform decision-making, ministers developed an integrated infrastructure and economic policy. This was set out in the Structuurvisie Wind op Zee, or SV WoZ (National Policy Strategy on Offshore Wind Power in English), which became the policy framework to determine the environmental and economic conditions under which wind energy could be developed at sea. Within this policy framework, a fast-track planning process to authorise areas suitable for offshore windfarm construction

[8] See also: https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2013/12/20/government-designates-new-areas-for-offshore-wind-farms.

outside the 12-mile zone was established to achieve rapid results. The associated plan for the development of nearshore windfarms took more time (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2013; Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2013: 70–73). The SV WoZ's policy rationale was a market approach with a focus on: cost-effective roll-out that provides certainty for investors, creates additional employment, spurs innovation, that reduces costs, and contributes to the competitive position of Dutch companies in this sector (Sociaal-Economische Raad, 2013: 16–17).

In an effort to stimulate interest from the energy industry, the Dutch government provided subsidies to cover the cost difference between wind energy and cheaper forms of energy, making investment in the development of windfarms at sea an attractive proposition.[9] The designation of nearshore locations for windfarms was driven not only by spatial factors, but also by the alleged cost-effectiveness of building closer to the coast, which promised to make investment more appealing (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2013).

On 17th September 2013, the two ministries further explored development options for windfarms by organising a working session for a wide range of organisations. During the session, it emerged that the ministries had identified several 'search areas' as potential sites for offshore and nearshore windfarms. In justifying the search areas, the ministries argued not only that they required all available space at sea to ensure they met their CO_2 emission targets, but also that they anticipated windfarms closer to the coast would be cheaper to construct (Dienst Landelijk Gebied, 2013: 7–8). It also became clear that municipalities, citizens, and local business communities were opposed to the plan for nearshore windfarms. In response to this opposition, the ministries suggested various forms of financial compensation through the Rural Area Service, which suggested: 'Participation is tailor-made. There are opportunities for community funds that invest in the region, discounts for residents, energy corporations that participate, and bonds' (Dienst Landelijk Gebied, 2013: 37).

[9] https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/duurzaam-ondernemen/duurzame-energie-opwekken/windenergie-op-land/subsidies-en-financiering-windprojecten.

3.4.2.2 Three Municipalities, Two Action Groups and Four Episodes of Contestation

The ministers considered the area known as 'Hollandse Kust Zuid' which lies along the coastline of the municipalities of Katwijk, Noordwijk and Zandvoort, for both offshore and nearshore windfarms. The first episode of contentious governance (January–May 2013) emerged when the municipalities became aware of plans to develop large-scale windfarms off their coast in early 2013. The municipalities adopted a vigilant stance; no doubt mindful of their exclusion from the consultation on the planning of Eneco Luchterduinen, a small windfarm[10] located between Zandvoort and Noordwijk in 2012. After receiving alarming messages from a citizens' organisation called Bewoners Leefbare Kust (BLK, or Residents' Liveable Coast in English), Zandvoort's Municipal Council adopted a general motion against windfarms, and one specifically opposed to nearshore windfarms. Within two weeks, the municipal councils of Noordwijk and Katwijk had followed suit.

To coordinate their efforts in opposing the fast-track planning for the windfarm located outside the 12-mile zone, the executives of Katwijk, Noordwijk and Zandvoort decided on 28th November 2013 to collaborate within the Platform Maritieme Windmolen Parken (PMWP, or Platform Maritime Wind Turbine Parks in English). In January 2014, the national government presented its Draft National Master Plan, designating areas to inspect for offshore windfarms. Prior to this, the second episode of contentious governance had begun (December 2013–April 2014), with the PMWP employing several tactics such as filing responses against offshore windfarms (see Fig. 3.2). The citizen action group Stichting Vrije Horizon (SVH, or Free Horizon Foundation in English) was formed on 30th April 2014. Financed by the three municipalities to support their claims through knowledge production and legal action, the SVH participated in PMWP meetings to exchange viewpoints and discuss actions with the three municipalities. However, neither the PMWP nor the SVH could prevent the national government from approving the location of the offshore windfarm on 26 September 2014. This provoked a third peak in media reporting between September and November 2014 (see Appendix A), but no contiguous episode of contentious governance

[10] This windfarm became operational in 2015 and consisted of 43 turbines, which together produced power for approximately 150,000 households. See: https://www.eneco.nl/over-ons/wat-we-doen/duurzame-bronnen/windpark-eneco-luchterduinen/.

as the PMWP and the SVH remained focused on the nearshore windfarm that would be visible from the coast.

Just four days after the fast-track decision-making process was completed; the ministers initiated a separate planning procedure for the nearshore windfarm within the 12-mile zone. Meanwhile, citizens from the three municipalities formed another action group, Ver-zet Windmolens (VW, or Resist Wind Turbines in English), which joined forces with PMWP and SVH. A third episode of contentious governance (February–September 2015) was connected to events surrounding the Range and Detail Level Note, presented by ministers on 1st April 2015, outlining the initial thoughts about planned locations of nearshore windfarms. Opponents exploited procedural opportunities to object to the note, organising several protest activities during the summer and autumn of 2015. Notable protests included mayors sitting at a table on the beach signing postcards addressed to members of parliament, and aldermen and mayors sitting on a pole on the beach to draw attention to a petition (see Fig. 3.2 and Chapter 4).

The fourth and final episode of contentious governance began in February 2016, when the PMWP organised an information evening and VW staged further protests by repeating the pole-sitting action. After a brief pause, this episode resumed in August 2016, when one of the ministers presented a draft master plan, reaffirming the intention to locate the nearshore windfarm off the coast of Katwijk, Noordwijk, and Zandvoort (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu 2016). From the end of September to the beginning of October, the three municipalities, the SVH and VW raised objections to the plan, followed by lobbying parliament. However, their efforts were ultimately made in vain after parliament voted in favour of the government's plan on 4th November 2016, bringing the fourth episode of contentious governance to a conclusion.

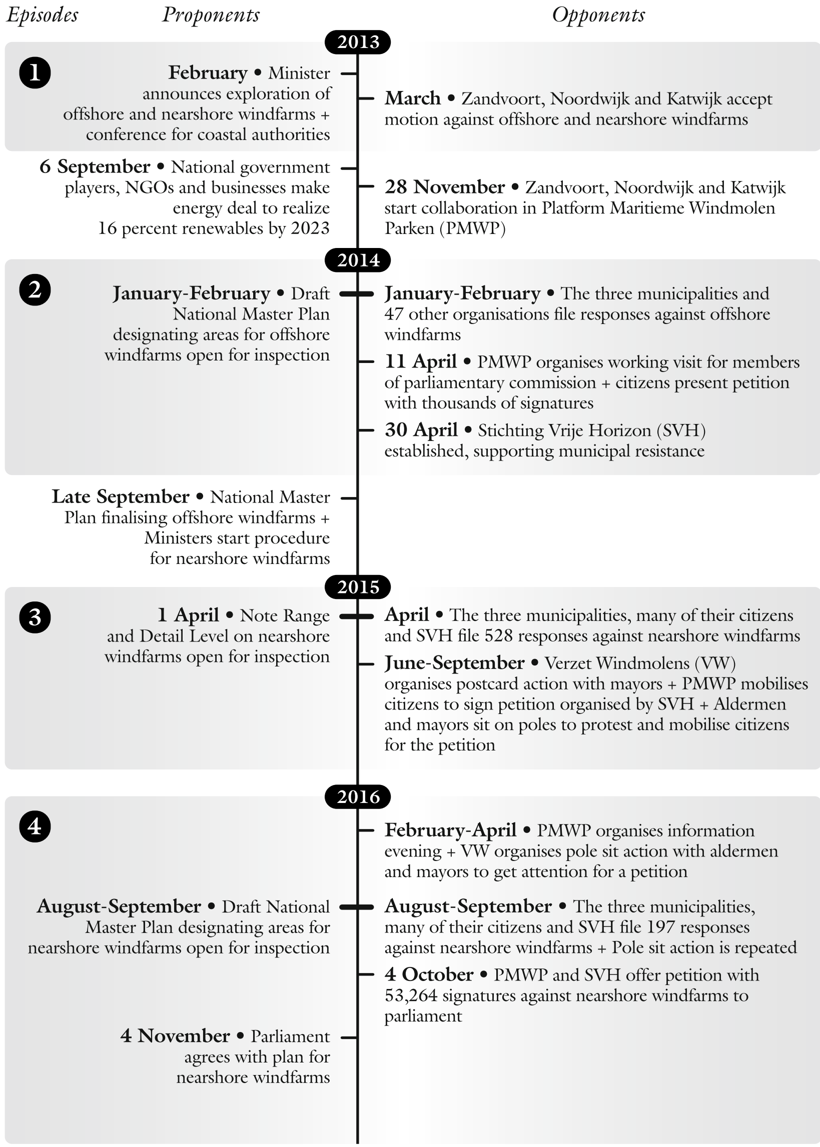

Fig. 3.2 Timeline of the windfarm Case

3.4.3 The Gas-Quakes Case (2012–2018)

3.4.3.1 The Discovery of Invisible Gold

On 19th September 1947, the Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij (now Dutch Shell) and the Standard Oil Company (now ExxonMobil Corp.) formed the Nederlandse Aardolie Maatschappij (NAM, or Dutch Petroleum Company in English), a joint venture for the identification and exploitation of oil and gas reserves in the Netherlands. Twelve years later, on 22nd June 1959, the NAM conducted test drillings in Kolham, a village situated in the province of Groningen in the north-east of the Netherlands. Natural gas was found, but it took a few more years for the NAM to discover that they had in fact tapped into the largest gas field in Europe. The field covered about a third of the province and was estimated to contain 2900 billion cubic metres of extractable natural gas (Correljé et al., 2003; Pomale, 2015; Wollerich, 2009). Gas production in the Groningen field began in 1963, connected 98 per cent of Dutch households to gas, and within a decade prompted a major shift in domestic energy consumption. Dutch industry, for example, which had been largely dependent on coal, was provided with a much cleaner energy source. In addition, gas became an important export product, making the Netherlands the second largest exporter of gas after Norway (Correljé et al., 2003; Honoré 2017; Wollerich 2009).

By the 1960s, the exploitation of the Dutch gas reserves by the NAM and the national government had evolved into an intricate and somewhat enigmatic governance system known as 'het Gasgebouw' (the Gas House in English). This governance system was characterised by strong ties and a significant overlap of interests between Shell, Exxon, and the national government. Overall, the government received a 50% share, while Shell and Exxon each received a 25% share of all profits (Correljé et al., 2003; Wollerich, 2009). This governance system was an early example of the public-private partnerships that became popular in many European countries in the 1980s (Klijn & Teisman, 2003).

Between 1963, when gas production commenced, and 2018, when the Minister for Economic Affairs announced that gas production would be terminated by 2030 at the latest, approximately 2.100 billion cubic metres of natural gas had been produced, which accounted for approximately four-fifths of the total gas reserves (Mulder & Perey, 2018). Revenues were high, with an estimated yield of 288 billion euros for the government and 29 billion euros for Shell and ExxonMobil between 1963 and

2017. These revenues were a major source of income for the national government, contributing between 3% and 6% of total revenues in most years, and peaking between 8% and 15% between 1978 and 1986. In 2018, the estimated value of the remaining 500–600 billion cubic metres of gas in the Groningen field was 100 billion euros (Scholtens, 2018).

3.4.3.2 The Huizinge Earthquake Creates a New Reality

Imagine the following scenario: it is 10.31 pm. You and your family are sitting in the living room watching TV. Suddenly, you hear an enormous growling and roaring sound. For nine seconds, your house rocks back and forth as though you are on a fairground ride. You can hear the walls squeaking and through the window you can see the landscape undulating. Everything happens so quickly that there is hardly time to do anything except stay where you are. When it stops, you panic and get up; your partner has already run outside, scared that the roof may come down. After the initial adrenaline rush, you realise that this is an earthquake. You walk around your house and notice a crack in the wall. Upon closer inspection, you see that the whole house has visible cracks. The next morning, on your way to the car, you meet your neighbour. She is still shivering as the memory comes back to her. Her house has also been severely damaged. Worse still, overnight her house has begun to tilt slightly to the left.

This stylised account describes what the inhabitants of the village of Huizinge experienced on the evening of 16th August 2012, while finding themselves at the epicentre of a 3.6 magnitude earthquake. The village is in the heart of the Groningen gas field, within the Eemsdelta municipality. While a 3.6-magnitude earthquake does not seem that severe internationally, in the clay soil of Groningen, the peak ground acceleration (PGA)[11] caused significant damage. The inhabitants of Huizinge witnessed undulating landscape and felt their houses move as though in a fairground cakewalk. The high PGA was also evident in the 2000 damage reports received by the NAM within three months of the Huizinge earthquake (Dost & Kraaijpoel, 2013). These reports proved to be the tip

[11] PGA refers to the motion caused by an earthquake as it moves upward toward the earth's surface and then horizontally across the shallow soil. This is comparable to the effect of tsunami releasing its energy when it comes ashore (Pomale, 2015). With a high PGA, an earthquake moves like a bulldozer over the shallow part of the soil and shakes the ground.

of a very large iceberg. Between August 2012 and January 2022, a total of 908 earthquakes occurred in the province of Groningen, most of them below 2.0 on the Richter scale with eight measuring between 3.0 and 3.4.[12] From September 2012 until the end of 2019, a total of 121,519 damage reports were registered. Of these, 69 percent came from addresses with previously reported damage (Postmes et al., 2020). Earlier research indicated that an estimated 170,000 people had suffered damage to their houses and that 85,000 had received multiple instances of damage by the end of 2016. The most affected area has a population of 410,000, meaning that 41.5 percent of the province's inhabitants experienced damage, and 21 per cent experienced multiple instances of damage. Researchers expected these figures to increase in subsequent years (Postmes et al., 2018). By 2018, approximately 22,000 houses were deemed to be at risk of collapse, many of those who wanted to move out of the most affected areas found that property values had decreased between two and four percent (De Kam, 2018).

The situation had a substantial and detrimental impact on people's lives. Those living in the area were concerned about risks to their property, physical injury, reduced quality of life and risks to others. All these perceived risks have increased over time (Perlaviciute, 2018). Consequently, people have lost hope, with many developing strong feelings of anger and powerlessness, often accompanied by mental health problems and various health issues (Perlaviciute, 2018; Postmes et al., 2018). Longitudinal research indicates that people with multiple housing damages in particular have developed a greater incidence of health complaints, feel less safe and have stronger perceptions of risk. All inhabitants of the area have relatively low trust in the national government and very low trust in the NAM (Stroebe et al., 2022).

3.4.3.3 David against Goliath: Contesting Gas Production in Four Episodes

Suspicions of a link between the earthquakes and the extraction of gas had existed since gas production began. In November 1963, engineer Willem Meijborg had written an open letter to a newspaper, containing the assertion that gas production caused soil subsidence and that considerable

[12] https://bevinggevoeld.nl/gasbevingen/ (last checked 18-2-2022).

funds had to be set aside to repair the inevitable damage (Brandsma et al., 2017). Two decades later, in 1986, geographer and politician Meent van der Sluis stated that there is a link between gas production and earthquakes. Both Meijborg's and van der Sluis's claims were publicly denounced by the NAM (Brandsma et al., 2017; Mulder & Perey, 2018).[13] In 1993, an expert report established that gas production can cause earthquakes with a very low chance of a maximum magnitude of 3.3 on the Richter scale, which was expected to cause only minor damage to buildings in the vicinity of the epicentre (Brandsma et al., 2017). Confirming the early warnings by Meijborg and van der Sluis, and contradicting the expert report, the September 2012 Huizinge earthquake proved that heavier earthquakes with severe damage could occur in the Groningen gas field.

The first episode of contentious governance occurred between January and April 2013. During this period, a report by the Koninklijk Nederlands Meteorologisch Instituut (KNMI, or Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute in English) indicated that the earthquakes in the region had been induced by natural gas production, and that future earthquakes measuring between 3.9 and 5.0 on the Richter scale were possible (KNMI, 2013). The Minister for Economic Affairs, who was responsible for decision-making on gas production, postponed taking any action by commissioning eleven investigations into the risks associated with gas production. This occurred even after receiving a recommendation from the Staatstoezicht op de Mijnen (SodM, or State Supervision of Mines in English) to reduce gas production in the area. Meanwhile, the NAM became responsible for settling damage claims. These were administered through complicated assessment procedures, meaning that many who had suffered damage were faced with lengthy struggles to obtain compensation from a private company. Municipalities and the provincial authority began to contest the minister's lack of action and the NAM's handling of claims by demanding compensation. The Groninger Bodem Beweging (GBB, or Groningen Soil Movement in English), which had existed since 2009, demanded a drastic reduction in gas production, financial compensation for the people of Groningen, and just and humane treatment for

[13] See also the findings of the public broadcasters' history program Andere Tijden on both Meijborg's and van der Sluis' argumentations: https://www.anderetijden.nl/artikel/598/nam-weet-sinds-1963-van-bodemverzakkingen-groningen (last accessed on 18-2-2022).

those in the region. At the beginning of 2013, a crisis on the board of GBB led two active members to resign and subsequently found the more radical action group Schokkend Groningen (SG, or Shocking Groningen in English) in April the same year. SG argued that more drastic action was necessary if the government and the NAM were to take them seriously. While GBB still exists, SG became less active at the end of November 2015 and fell apart in 2017 after one of the two active members moved abroad.

The second episode of contentious governance (November 2013–February 2014) began with the publication of a report on the future of Northeast Groningen by the Meijer Committee. The report had been commissioned in May 2013 by the provincial authority and was written by a panel of experts and politicians. The key message of the report was that additional measures were required to enhance safety, improve quality of life, and boost economic prospects in the region (Commissie Duurzame Toekomst Noord-Oost Groningen, 2013). Shortly after the publication of this report, at the beginning of 2014, the Minister for Economic Affairs, Henk Kamp, decided to reduce gas production in the town of Loppersum, which is in the middle of the earthquake area. Kamp also announced plans to invest €1.2 billion in the region for the repair and reconstruction of buildings, and citizens were to be involved in future decision-making processes via a 'dialogue table' (De Volkskrant, 18-1-2014). However, the minister's decision caused much concern; gas production was only to be reduced in Loppersum, while continuing, or even increasing, in other locations within the vicinity of earthquake activity (Dagblad van het Noorden, 28-1-2014). While municipal and provincial politicians continued to demand a reduction in gas production, GBB and SG organised protests throughout January, culminating in a grim protest when the minister visited Loppersum to explain his decision (see Fig. 3.3 and Chapter 4).

The third episode of contentious governance, from January to April 2015, followed the minister's decision in December 2014 that gas production should be temporarily reduced by a greater degree. The minister did not, however, commit to permanent reductions, referring to the ongoing nature of the investigations. In January, the minister visited the region to explain his decision, only to be met with severe criticism and a demonstration organised by GBB, who perceived his decision as a delaying tactic (Trouw, 17-12-2014). In February 2015, a critical report based on an investigation into the historical decision-making

	Episodes	*Proponents*	*Opponents*
2012		**September** • Huizinge earthquake of 3.6 on Richter scale	
2013	1	**January** • KNMI report linking gas production to earthquakes + SodM advice to reduce gas production	
	1	**February** • Minister Kamp announces 11 investigations + NAM becomes responsible for settling damages	**February** • The Groninger Bodem Beweging (GBB) demands, among other things, a reduction in gas production
	1		**April** • Radical action group Schokkend Groningen (SG) founded
			May • Establishment of the Meijer Committee by the provincial authority
	2		**November** • Publication of the Meijer Committee report recommending additional measures
2014	2	**January** • Minister Kamp visits Loppersum to explain his plan to partially lower gas production + invest €1.2 billion	**January** • GBB and SG organize several protests all over January, culminating in the grim protest in Loppersum during the visit of the minister
			December • GBB organizes first torch light march attended by 400 people. Such marches were repeated in 2016 (700 people), 2017 (4,500 people) and 2018 (see below)
2015	3	**January** • Minister Kamp decides on small reduction of gas production + visit to the region	**January** • GBB and SG organize a demonstration during the minister's visit
	3		**February** • Critical report Dutch Safety Board, leading to furious reactions by subnational politicians, GBB and SG
	3		**March-April** • Subnational government players and GBB file a lawsuit to end gas production in Loppersum. In April, the judge suspended the ministers' gas decision and in November ordered a permanent reduction of gas-production in Loppersum
2018	4	**January** • Zeerijp earthquake of 3.4 on Richter scale Minister Wiebes visits the region and talks about a government failure	**January** • GBB organizes a demonstration during the minister's visit, and a torch lights march with 12,000 people
	4		**12 March** • Two residents in hunger strike to get attention to problems of the region
	4	**29 March** • Minister Wiebes announces termination of all gas production before 2030	

Fig. 3.3 Timeline gas-quakes case

processes regarding gas production was published by the Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid (OVV, or Dutch Safety Board in English). The OVV concluded that economic interests had always prevailed in decisions on gas production, and that the safety of those living in the area had not been given sufficient consideration due to the parties involved suffering from ‘tunnel vision’. In affirming that criticisms from the province, municipalities, and citizens were ignored, the board recommended a radical change to the governance structure of gas production and sales between the state and private partners, such as the NAM (De Volkskrant, 19-02-2015). To counter the reluctant minister, subnational government players, together with GBB, SG and various other prominent organisations from the region, filed a lawsuit demanding an end to gas production around Loppersum. The lawsuit proved successful, and the judge ruled in April that the ministers’ decision had to be suspended and, furthermore, in November that gas production had to be permanently lowered (see Chapter 4).

The fourth and final episode of contentious governance (January–March, 2018) commenced on Monday 8th January 2018, when the village of Zeerijp was hit by another powerful earthquake measuring 3.4 on the Richter scale. This earthquake falsified theories that reducing gas production would prevent major earthquakes. Meanwhile, following national elections, Henk Kamp was succeeded as Minister of Economic Affairs by Eric Wiebes. With people desperate for solutions to their problems, the new minister visited the region three times during his first ten weeks in office. In a parliamentary debate, Wiebes described the lack of solutions as ‘a government failure of non-Dutch proportions’ (NRC Handelsblad, 10-1-2018). Municipal and provincial politicians, as well as the GBB, continued to put pressure on both the minister and parliament to implement more drastic solutions. At the end of January, the minister announced the remarkable decision that the national government would take responsibility for all damage caused by the NAM. This was followed on 29th March 2018 by an even more extraordinary decision, when the minister announced that the national government would terminate all gas production in Groningen before 2030 and meanwhile drastically lower gas production in the entire area to 12 billion cubic metres per year to ensure greater safety for the region’s inhabitants (NRC Handelsblad, 30-3-2018). While these decisions did not mark the end of contentious governance, they did signal the conclusion of its most intense phase (see Fig. 3.3).

3.5 Conclusions

The Netherlands provides fertile ground for contentious governance processes due to several interrelated contributory factors: rigid and overloaded intergovernmental relations; various modes of governance; and public support for contention. Rigid and overloaded intergovernmental relations form a significant factor when national government policies that are perceived as threats are also considered an infringement of provincial and local government autonomy. Modes of governance, including a tradition of hierarchical intervention by national governments, contribute to this, especially in a fiscal context where public policy matters are heavily reliant on market approaches and business involvement. Taken together, this creates the impression that policy processes are predetermined, the involvement of subnational government players and activists has been reduced to a ritual, and that substantive decisions have already been made. In such contexts, subnational government players and activists can expect support for their protests from provincial or local populations, provided they remain peaceful. Despite their differences, the dynamics of these cases are characterised by a high degree of similarity, most notably the nature of national decision-making, which subnational government players and activists responded to with resistance. As decision-making processes are often lengthy and punctuated by periods of relative calm, contentious governance processes occur in episodes of varying lengths and intensity, dependent on particularised developments and specific players within cases.

The next three chapters critically explore these cases of contentious governance through rigorous empirical analysis of the tactics, framing, and strategies of the respective players to inform a general theory of contentious governance. Chapter 4 considers the tactics employed by subnational government players and activists to influence the decision-making processes of national government players, while Chapter 5 is attentive to the analysis of how these players frame their narratives to influence the dominant framing of problems and solutions by national government players. Finally, in Chapter 6, the cases inform my analysis of the various strategies adopted by subnational government players and activists in their attempts to persuade national government players to change course. In all these thematic analyses, I provide additional details about the cases to contextualise the tactics, framing and strategies, without reconstructing the cases in detail.

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CHAPTER 4

The Use of Moderate Tactics to Persuade

In attempts to persuade each other, players involved in contentious governance processes engage in collective action to either legitimise or counter plans. Collective action is almost always undertaken as a deliberate attempt to influence other players during strategic interactions. The specific means they choose to realise this are referred to as 'tactics' by social movement and conflict theory scholars (Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Rubin et al., 1994; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). In the context of contentious governance processes, tactics can be employed by activists, subnational government players, or the (supra)national government players they oppose. This leads to the central empirical question for this chapter: *What are the most important tactics through which players try to influence each other*? In answering this, I first explore repertoires of contention, in particular the high likelihood that most players will use moderate tactics. I then consider the three case studies through an empirical analysis that is attentive to lobbying combined with scale shift, the symbolic use of knowledge, legal mobilisation, and protest. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the dynamics of tactical choices over time, before closing with conclusions.

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4.1 Tactical Choices from a Broad Repertoire of Contention

For social movement scholars, the actions of activists are drawn from a well-established and broad repertoire of contention, which may evolve gradually over time as new forms of collective action emerge (Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 2008). This repertoire may include petitions and demonstrations, as well as other routine or 'contained' actions. It may also encompass 'disruptive' actions that break with their routine, such as sit-down strikes or hacking computer systems. Finally, it may extend to 'violence' in the form of attacks, looting, sabotage, war, or terrorism (Tarrow, 2011).

In processes of contentious governance, violence is counterproductive; breaking the law jeopardises the political and bureaucratic relationships between government players who still need to collaborate on other policy issues. For this reason, subnational government players are highly unlikely to collaborate with violent activists. Depending on the specific circumstances, disruption can be found in cases of contentious governance where it is arguably a few notches down from violence. For example, Tarrow (2011: 101) argues that disruption conveys grit and determination among activists; forcing opponents to listen to demands by obstructing their routines and drawing in other players whose activities are interrupted. For the same reasons that subnational government players avoid violence, I do not expect them to engage in disruption. However, not being constrained by formal obligation and accountability, activists have greater latitude, and more radical groups may indeed choose disruptive tactics (Della Porta & LaFree, 2012; Robnett et al., 2015). Subnational government players may be inclined to tolerate disruptive behaviour if the actions put pressure on their opponents, and cannot be directly linked to them.

Compared to violence and disruption, contained collective action is the most frequently used tactic (Tarrow, 2011). According to both Tilly (2008) and Tarrow (2011), contained tactics form part of a 'strong' repertoire, whereby activists utilise existing tactics while also innovating at the margins. Studies of nonviolent action suggest that persuasive tactics such as public speeches, petitions, attracting media attention, lobbying, musical performances, marches and parades, mock funerals, protest meetings and walk-outs were in place by the early 1970s (Sharp, 1973). Some of these tactics arguably have an earlier provenance as paradigmatic change in tactical repertoires is rare; the invention of strikes and demonstrations in the nineteenth century is one such example (Tarrow, 2011; Tilly, 2008). Most of the current nonviolent repertoire, however, was instituted during the twentieth century (Sharp, 1973; Tarrow 2011; Tilly, 2008), where tactical innovation tended to occur incrementally as new elements were combined with existing basic forms (Tarrow, 2011). For instance, anti-capitalist activists protesting at European summits developed the tactic of marching in five different directions to confuse the police (Scholl, 2012), while the internet has enabled the use of online petitions to generate large numbers of signatures (Earl & Kimport, 2011). Incremental innovation has made many people familiar with contained tactics, and they know how to use them. In addition, contained tactics are low risk and require relatively little commitment to implement (Tarrow 2011). These factors may explain their popularity, which currently extends to their combination with forms of electoral participation (Dalton, 2014; Jenkins et al., 2008; Meyer & Tarrow, 1998; Norris, 2002).

In the context of contentious governance, contained collective action is most likely to be favoured by subnational government players when choosing tactics. Not least because such action is most acceptable to liberal democratic governments (Tarrow, 2011), and thus easier to facilitate and legitimise when collaborating with activists. Protest-oriented, extra-institutional, or direct-action tactics must be distinguished from institutionalised tactics that draw upon established procedures and channels of action (Davidson, 2021; Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Pettinicchio, 2016; Taylor & van Dyke, 2004). As I will show below, subnational government players primarily utilise institutionalised tactics such as lobbying, symbolic uses of knowledge, and legal mobilisation, but they can also utilise extra-institutional protest tactics. Equally, while activists are more associated with extra-institutional tactics such as petitions, demonstrations, and occupations, there is ample evidence that they also employ institutionalised tactics. This is particularly evident when they choose consensual over contentious approaches (Davidson 2021; Pettinicchio 2016; Taylor & van Dyke, 2004). Similar to how moderate and radical activists within one social movement can benefit from each other's actions to achieve their goals (Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Robnett et al., 2015), subnational government players and activists can exert greater pressure on their opponents when they combine their efforts. The advantage for subnational government players is that institutionalised tactics form part of their own and their national government opponents' repertoires of contention, while activists can benefit from greater traction of such tactics to exert influence over the latter.

4.2 Shifting the Scales by Lobbying for Support

In processes of contention, it is common for players to seek support from others by forming new alliances (Rubin et al., 1994); referred to as 'scale shift' in research on social movements (Tarrow & McAdam, 2004). During contentious governance, such alliances may be formed horizontally, with subnational government players or activists reaching out to government players at the same level or to other activists. Allies may also be sought vertically, as an 'upward scale shift' (Rootes 2013; Schaffer Boudet, 2011; Tarrow & McAdam, 2004), with local government players or activists trying to engage with provincial government players, or national NGOs and SMOs. A key objective in all forms of scale shift is to achieve 'certification', defined as 'the validation of actors, their performances, and their claims by external authorities' (Schaffer Boudet, 2011: 789). If players at the same or higher levels of governance certify claims, this lends more weight to the actions and stories of contending players. In contentious governance, lobbying is a key tactic to achieve scale shift and can occur inside or outside the executive. The former can be based on pre-existing contacts with fellow party members in parliament, ministers, and civil servants (Grant, 2001; Maloney et al., 1994), while the latter, often through media campaigns, is reflective of players' lack of approval within higher tiers of governance (Klüver et al., 2015; Maloney et al., 1994). Subnational government players are more likely to have, or gain, insider status relative to their activist allies, many of whom are seen as outsiders based on their opposing goals or ideology (see e.g., Maloney et al., 1994 for comparison).

4.2.1 Seeking Support from Other Municipalities

In the windfarm and gas-quakes cases, wider support from adjacent municipalities came naturally. The three coastal municipalities found common ground in their opposition within a few days of the Ministry announcing its plans, after BLK had raised the alarm in Zandvoort. Their collaboration was based on the recognition of a shared policy threat, forged through identical motions against the windfarm, as well as on their decision to pool their resources in the PMWP (see Chapter 3). A similar dynamic was evident in the gas-quakes case, where nine municipalities were affected by the constant threat of new earthquakes and the consequences of previous ones. Despite a history of tension and a lack of cooperation between these municipalities, the gas-quakes prompted them to join forces (GQ3, GQ8[1]). In both cases, these collaborations were formed with little lobbying, as the shared threat brought these government players together.

In the CCS case, CO_2 storage was exclusively within the municipality of Barendrecht. However, after lobbying through existing connections that had been established through regular provincial meetings between aldermen (CCS9), they did succeed in gaining the support of three other municipalities that could potentially be affected by the CCS project, in order to present a united front against the ministers and Shell (AD/Rotterdams Dagblad, 20-3-2009; AD/Rotterdams Dagblad, 24-3-2009). These municipalities informed the province of their disapproval in early spring 2009, before the Barendrecht municipal council made its final decision against the CCS plans. Ultimately, however, the support of the municipalities was not very effective for Barendrecht; one respondent stated that 'You would get a letter back saying that they supported us, but it was not much more than that. It was a kind of moral support' (CCS8). Although these municipalities certified the claims made by Barendrecht, they took no part in lobbying the province, parliament or the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

4.2.2 Getting Endorsement from Provincial Authorities

A clear lobbying process towards a provincial authority was only evident in the CCS case. Prior to the ministerial decision in mid-November 2009 but following the decision against the CCS project at the end of June 2009, the alderman responsible initiated a lobbying process with the provincial authority of South Holland, which was required to issue the environmental permit in November 2009. Political parties within the Barendrecht municipal council contacted their respective party members in the provincial council with an agreed central message, only

[1] All interview respondents have been anonymised (see Appendix A for more information). In this chapter, I use the following codes to indicate which respondents I am quoting: 'CSS' stands for respondents from the CCS case, 'WF' for respondents from the windfarm case, and 'GQ' for respondents from the gas-quakes case.

slightly modified to accommodate each party's ideological background. In addition, some factions arranged for their fellow party members in the provincial council to visit the proposed sites to see for themselves the context where the CCS project would take place (CCS2, CCS7, CCS9).

The chairs of several parties in the Municipal Council, alongside the responsible alderman, were given the opportunity to speak during a hearing of the Provincial Council Committee on Green, Water and the Environment (CCS2, CCS7, CCS8, CCS11). Several critical reports were cited to support claims that Shell, and the ministers, had provided unsatisfactory responses to concerns about public safety, and argued that there was a lack of local support for the CCS project (CCS9). Activists from CO2isNee were also given the opportunity to speak. They provided the committee members with technical and risk arguments, as well as a series of moral claims related to sustainability, and accusations that the plan would have an adverse effect on future generations (Activists' speaking notes, CCS4, CCS5). At the end of a tumultuous meeting on 11th November 2009, the Provincial Council adopted a motion against the CCS project, ordering the Provincial Executive to call upon the national ministers to cancel it (Provinciale Staten van Zuid-Holland, 2009). In this case, lobbying by the municipality led to a successful upward scale shift, with provincial politicians certifying the local arguments by calling on the Provincial Executive to reject the project at the ministerial level.

In the lobbying process during the gas-quakes case, the obverse can be seen. In early 2013, the provincial authority of Groningen immediately claimed a central role in seeking political unity within the Provincial Executive and the Provincial Council on the issues. They organised cooperation among the nine municipalities in the earthquake area to ally with the province against the minister and NAM (GQ4). In contrast to the CCS case, this resulted in what is best described as a 'downward scale shift': lobbying from the province towards the municipalities, resulting in the collaboration of government players from two levels of governance in order to apply more pressure on the ministry and NAM.

4.2.3 Changing Minds at the National Level

In all cases, lobbying national government players proved difficult. In particular, the relationships between local politicians and their national colleagues in parliament or the cabinet were revealed to be weak. This was most apparent in the windfarm case, where some cooperation was established along party lines, but the help of a professional lobbyist was required to open doors that would have otherwise remained closed. As one respondent explained: 'Our network was not such that we could come to every table, but [the lobbyist][2] could. We just used [the lobbyist] as a kind of crowbar, as an entry point' (WF4). Similarly, in the CCS case, a professional lobbyist was hired after the cabinet fell in spring 2010. This was considered a ripe opportunity to change parties' minds, especially in the wake of elections, when a new government coalition was being formed, and concessions were being sought (see Chapter 3). Prior to the cabinet's collapse, local Barendrecht politicians primarily attempted to lobby through their party connections, achieving mixed results. Access to Parliament and the Cabinet was most evident in the gas-quakes case, particularly among politicians from the provincial authority, who had strong connections.

These lobbying processes took various forms. In all cases, subnational government players frequently wrote to their national counterparts, urging them to change their position, and, where possible, engaged in private conversations with MPs, ministers and high-ranking civil servants. Gaining access to meetings in Parliament or within ministries is to be expected in any lobbying process. For example, in the windfarm case, a lobbyist helped the three municipalities arrange a roundtable discussion with MPs, representatives of science, business, civil society organisations (including SVH), and politicians from the three municipalities on 13 October 2016. However, this proved fruitless when the minister and Parliament decided in favour of the proposed locations. More successful lobbying processes were apparent in the gas-quakes and CCS cases, where their lobbying was supported by a committee report (gas-quakes case), a survey (CCS case), and media pressure (both cases).

4.2.3.1 Establishing an Authoritative Committee

In the early stages of the gas-quake case, the provincial authority's politicians struggled to get their concerns on the agenda. Despite their lobbying efforts, they failed to garner sufficient support. Therefore, in May 2013, the leader of the province decided to set up the Commissie

[2] In the original quote the person's gender was identifiable, which would make it easier to find out which lobbyist did the work. Therefore, I will add descriptions such as '[the lobbyist]' throughout the empirical chapters to ensure anonymity of my respondents.

duurzame toekomst Noord-Oost Groningen (Sustainable Future North-East Groningen Committee in English) to hold talks with residents, businesses, and civil society organisations to improve the region's prospects. The committee included several prominent former politicians from across the party spectrum, chosen to raise awareness of the region's problems at the national level (GQ9).

In early November 2013, the committee published 'Trust in a Sustainable Future', a report focusing on security, quality of life, and a sustainable economic outlook for the region (Commissie duurzame toekomst Noord-Oost Groningen, 2013). At the report's launch, the committee chairman stated:

> If everyone plays their part, we can achieve our goal with this report. This is our chance to build new trust and perspectives together. I cannot imagine the NAM or the minister passing up that opportunity. (Trouw, 2-11-2013)

In addition, on 15th November 2013 provincial leaders signed the Huizinge Declaration during a rally in Huizinge, the site of the largest gas-quake (GQ9). This declaration saw over 100 organisations back the conclusion of the committee report that the costs and benefits of gas production were seriously imbalanced. Signatories included large multinationals, small- and medium-sized enterprises, numerous civil society organisations, municipalities, and the provincial authority of Groningen.

The external pressure created by the committee and the declaration served to support the inside lobbying process, ensuring the region's issues appeared more frequently on the agenda. In January 2014, the provincial leaders reached a political agreement with the minister and the NAM. This resulted in €1.2 billion being released for repairs to damage, the reinforcement of buildings at risk of subsequent gas-quakes, and to boost the provincial economy. The NAM would cover most of the costs and take responsibility for repairing the damage. The minister also announced that gas production would be reduced in Loppersum, which is in the middle of the gas-quakes area (Dagblad van het Noorden, 18-1-2014). Ultimately, establishing the committee with political heavyweights proved valuable. Despite the good political networks of some provincial politicians, political insiders were better placed to create more pressure in the lobbying process.

4.2.3.2 Commissioning a Survey

In the CCS case, the two ministers disregarded the province's disapproval of the CCS project on 18th November 2009, swiftly followed by parliamentary authorisation on 28th January 2010 (see also Chapter 3). However, as noted above, the fall of the cabinet shortly after opened lobbying opportunities, as wider agreements between coalition parties expired, making it much less painful for parties to shift position (CCS12). During the formation of the new government, the municipality successfully convinced the negotiating political parties to cancel the CCS project.

A crucial element to these lobbying efforts was commissioning a survey to garner the views of the local population about the CCS project. The results indicated that many residents opposed the project and were deeply concerned about safety. Armed with these data, lobbyists and local politicians could argue that there was little if any support for the CCS project (CCS10). Towards the end of the lobbying process, the focus shifted to the negotiations of a new coalition government. After the new coalition government was formed, the Minister for Economic Affairs announced on 4th November 2010 that the government had cancelled the CCS project. The main reason cited for this drastic u-turn was the lack of local support (CCS8, CCS12). The cancellation of the CCS project was a successful example of an upward scale shift, with the cabinet certifying the input on lack of local support that local government players had provided through lobbying.

4.2.3.3 Applying Media Pressure

As recent scholarship suggests, insider groups use both direct access to policy consultation and outsider media tactics to apply extra pressure. While this carries the risk of being perceived as untrustworthy, it can help influence agenda setting. Media attention proves more effective if internal lobbying is unsuccessful, and less so if back channels are functioning well (Trapp & Laursen, 2017).

A prominent example of media pressure can be found in the gasquakes case. As part of their protest, activists from GBB and SG actively approached newspapers, television, and radio. At important moments in the national decision-making process, GBB often mobilised residents for protests, and sought to attract media attention to put pressure on decision-makers (GQ5). SG tried to convey their message by carrying out radical actions and inviting the media to cover them. For instance, they staged a one-man occupation of a NAM gas extraction site while many members of the press were present (Dagblad van het Noorden, 14-2-2014). Throughout the period 2012–2018, subnational politicians were often in the media. While municipal mayors generally adopted a lower profile because their role is above party politics, some of them occasionally adopted a critical tone. Provincial politicians, however, took more activist and political roles. One described how they became more animated: 'So yes, then sometimes it is with the bottle on the table, but often with the fist on the table', whilst in another comment he reflected their further inclination '(…) to use publicity explicitly as an instrument of political influence' (GQ9). Another provincial politician applied media pressure as a deliberate tactic, stating that: 'I express myself in the media, which is not without reason, of course. This also puts pressure (…) on the House of Representatives (…) at the official level' (GQ2).

Media pressure was also applied in the CCS case, although with less intensity. Action group CO2isNee mainly sought to maintain a steady stream of publications with the local newspaper De Schakel, in the knowledge that it was read by civil servants within the ministry. As one activist explained: 'We were well aware that we had to keep publishing. Is there no news? Make news' (CCS5). Local politicians only sought media attention in the final phase of the CCS conflict, when they were busy lobbying parliament and the parties involved in forming the new coalition. Despite having access to MPs through their hired lobbyist, they noticed that the media sympathised greatly with Barendrecht (CCS10). One very successful media outing was when Zembla, a highly critical investigative journalism TV programme, devoted an entire episode to Barendrecht, featuring scientists expressing concerns about the safety of the CCS project. This led to parliamentary questions in April 2010 (AD/Rotterdams Dagblad, 14-4-2010b). Reflecting on the situation, the hired lobbyist argued that media pressure, especially the Zembla broadcast, had a significant impact on the lobbying process: 'You know that after that, everyone is upset. Zembla definitely helped' (CCS12). This contradicts the findings of Trapp and Laursen (2017), who concluded that media attention is only helpful when internal lobbying efforts are unsuccessful. In this case, media pressure served to reinforce inside lobbying.

4.3 Symbolic Uses of Knowledge

The interplay of puzzling and powering—the knowledge-based formulation of problems and solutions alongside power-based political considerations—is widely acknowledged in public policy literature as the way in which policies are formulated and designed. Driven by values, beliefs and interests, players in the political arena strategically exploit knowledge for political gain (Boswell, 2009; Cordner, 2015; Hoppe, 2010; Howlett & Mukherjee, 2017; Stone, 2012). During policy conflicts in particular, political considerations take precedence over facts. Government players may employ strategies of selective attention, differing in their assessment of which facts are relevant and in their interpretation of the same facts. They dismiss evidence presented by other players and create favourable evidence to substantiate political claims. Consequently, 'reason ends up taking sides rather than building bridges of rational persuasion from one side to another' (Schön & Rein, 1994: 8). In situations like these, knowledge has mainly symbolic functions. Boswell (2009) distinguishes between a legitimising function, whereby knowledge can help players claim that their decisions are well-founded, and a substantiating function, which reinforces the credibility of players and their policy positions while undermining those of their opponents. For both functions, players often present stories in which they construct a scientific rationale according to their interpretation of the available evidence. This is particularly evident during environmental controversies, where there is high uncertainty about risks and low consensus among scientists (Cordner 2015; Hess & Belletto, 2023; Jasanoff, 1987; Sarewitz, 2004; Roth et al., 2021). Many of these issues also pertain to the three cases of contentious governance which are examined in terms of how players try to substantiate credible policy positions and how they legitimise or delegitimise proposals and decisions.

4.3.1 Substantiating a Credible Policy Position

Due to the conflictual nature of contentious governance processes, national government players and their business allies use knowledge to claim their decisions are well-founded and legitimise their policy positions. Thus, subnational government players and activists must demonstrate the credibility of their policy positions, which can be achieved by surrounding themselves with reliable experts and developing alternative plans.

4.3.1.1 Hiring Reliable Experts

The municipalities in all cases went to great lengths to hire reliable experts, but this was particularly marked in the CCS and windfarm cases. The Municipal Council of Barendrecht unanimously agreed to invest one million euros in opposing the CCS plan, because all political parties were convinced that only the best experts should be hired (CCS2, CCS9, CCS10). In the windfarm case, the three coastal municipalities were much more modest, subsidising SVH with 140,000 euros over two years. The budget allocation was broadly agreed by the three municipal councils, except for a small local party in Katwijk who was critical of spending so much money on SVH subsidies (WF1). SVH was expected to use those subsidies to commission research and inform residents about the ongoing situation (WF8).

Finding independent experts with the relevant technical or legal knowledge proved difficult in the CCS case, as many of them had links to industries or ministries. One interviewee outlined the problem: 'Actually, we were just looking for a check on Shell's plans. That is basically what it came down to, and nobody dared to burn their hands on it' (CCS7). The problem of finding neutral experts is common in the CCS field (De Coninck, 2019); it also occurs in other environmental cases (Hess & Belletto, 2023) and is deeply ingrained in policymaking processes in general (Pielke, 2007). To ensure they were hiring independent experts, municipal officials conducted a series of interviews with potential advisors and performed background checks to determine their connections within the industry and national government (CCS8). Ultimately, the municipality found the verification agency Det Norske Veritas, which was willing to provide technical advice, and hired the law firm Loyens & Loeff. By hiring these well-known experts, the municipality could demonstrate that it was addressing the CCS proposal in a credible manner. Both firms assisted in drafting a 'review framework' consisting of 90 questions and 55 demands, which the municipality used to make decisions regarding Shell's CCS proposal. If all the questions were answered satisfactorily and all the demands were met, the municipality would approve the CCS project:

> I then suggested that we establish a review framework with the help of our external advisors, in which we would set out the requirements that these plans must meet for us to approve them. So, not the other way around: a review framework to say no. (CCS9)

After the review framework was presented in December 2008, the municipality organised an information evening for 1,000 residents in February 2009, shortly followed by four expert meetings to address the questions raised. These meetings focused on safety, risk analysis, geology, changes in property values, legal matters, and the monitoring of a fully functional CCS system (Cuppen et al., 2015; Feenstra et al., 2010). The review framework and the subsequent involvement of residents and experts formed part of a strategy to use facts and numbers instead of protest to convince Shell and the ministries:

> And then I said (…) 'if we want to achieve something in The Hague [the seat of the national government], it is facts and numbers', because people do not bend to the threat of turmoil. (CCS9)

The facts and numbers had to be solid, and not only seen to be reliable but also undertaken by reliable advisors whose reputation Shell and the ministries could not question.

Finding independent expertise was also difficult in the windfarm case, not least because many advisers were working for the two ministries responsible for the planning process. When the SVH approached a consultancy specialising in spatial economic advice, the consultants initially accepted, but declined the offer a few days later because the ministry had informed them that they would be prohibited from conducting follow-up research on a project they had previously carried out for the ministry (WF1). This happened more than once when SVH approached research agencies and consultancies: 'We asked several other parties to conduct a study, but each time the answer was "no, there is too much interdependence"' (WF1). Nevertheless, several research agencies and consultants were eventually hired to provide counter-expertise and help develop an alternative plan (see below). As in the CCS case, local politicians and civil servants realised that working with research agencies and consultants considered trustworthy by the national government significantly increases the credibility of the counter-expertise. This was confirmed by more than one of the interviewees:

> It is also very important that you come with the message, 'I don't have any fabricated information here. These are just professionals.' In consultation with the SVH, I always said, 'Listen, I would rather have a professional party that can be taken seriously for research than a party that is in a

> suspicious corner, because that is no use to me; then it gets pulled back into politics.' (WF4)

> But it had to be [taken seriously], (…) because you are up against a huge apparatus. In that respect (…) you had to put something up against it. (WF6)

By sticking to a very factual approach, municipal politicians and civil servants expected to avoid a political exchange of arguments with the national government. Yet they failed to realise that relying on facts and numbers is inherently political, and moreover, that establishing counter-expertise was likely to initiate a political manoeuvre within the symbolic use of knowledge (Stone, 2012, 2020). The problem of finding reliable expertise is not unique to the CCS and windfarm cases. Similar issues have been reported by Hess and Belletto (2023) in their research on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline conflict in West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina in the US, and by Roth et al. (2021) in their study of conflicts concerning shale gas extraction and water management in the Netherlands.

4.3.1.2 Developing Alternative Plans

Credible policy positions can also be substantiated by developing alternative plans, rather than trying to prevent proposed projects from going ahead. Typical examples can be seen in both the windfarm and gas-quakes cases.

Realising that it would be difficult to argue against windfarms given the generally high level of public approval for renewable energy (Ellis & Ferraro, 2016; Rand & Hoen, 2017; Wüstenhagen et al., 2007), SVH and local politicians floated the idea of developing a plan for 'IJmuiden Far', a more northerly location almost 34 sea miles off the coast that had been developed by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment at an earlier stage (WF1). Until 2009, IJmuiden Far was the Ministry's preferred site but was abandoned in favour of the five dispersed sites in the National Policy Strategy on Offshore Wind Power. This was because IJmuiden would incur a €1.3 billion deficit to the business case (De Graaf, 2016), and more significantly, approximately €3 billion more in government subsidies.

When the SVH and the three municipalities revisited the IJmuiden Far plan, they did not contribute anything new to the original idea, instead they focused on the discussion about the €1.3 billion disadvantage to business. The SVH commissioned Energy Research Centre Netherlands (ECN), a prominent energy research institute frequently hired by the Ministry, to conduct a study comparing the cost differences between IJmuiden Far and the nearshore location proposed by the Ministry. ECN's analysis showed that, based on economies of scale, the additional costs of IJmuiden Far could be reduced from €1.3 billion to €1.0 billion (Lensink, 2016). In addition, the SVH hired wind energy expert Ardo de Graaf to validate the ECN study and ensure they could present robust findings to the ministry. Based on his calculations, de Graaf concluded that IJmuiden Far was the better business case, requiring an investment of around €435 million less than the nearshore location, and yielding revenues of €566 million more due to stronger winds (De Graaf, 2016). Based on these studies, SVH wrote a white paper on the cost differences and called upon the cabinet and parliament to abandon the plan for the nearshore location and opt for IJmuiden Far (Stichting Vrije Horizon, 2016).

In the gas-quakes case, the Minister of Economic Affairs ordered eleven reports following the Huizinge earthquake, yet took no decisions regarding the damage or the level of gas production. This inaction was unacceptable to the subnational government players, GBB and SG. To force the minister to act, the provincial authority set up the Sustainable Future Committee North-East Groningen (see above). Based on research among the population, entrepreneurs, interest groups, and administrators, the commission produced a future perspective for the region within five months. The report focused on repairing the damage, improving residents' safety and quality of life, and creating a sustainable economic future for the region (Commissie duurzame toekomst Noord-Oost Groningen, 2013).

Developing alternative plans enables subnational government players and activists to establish credible policy positions. In the case of the IJmuiden Far windfarm, the proposal constituted a clear policy position, backed up by data from reliable experts who had also worked for the national government. However, as noted previously, this proved to be unsuccessful as the minister and parliament disregarded their input, despite the fact that some of it came from an established and credible source (WF1, WF3). This illustrates that the minister was unlikely to be shifted from the decision to develop the nearshore locations, and the knowledge used to justify it was primarily for symbolic purposes. The restatement of basic facts and the disregard of new data are not unique to the windfarm case (see e.g., Hess & Belletto, 2023 above) and illustrate the frequency with which political reasons take precedence over the use of knowledge in policymaking (Boswell, 2009). The alternative plans in the gas-quakes case received a less lukewarm reception, largely due to the lack of concrete policy development at the national level. The recommendations made by the Sustainable Future Committee North-East Groningen supported the policy position of subnational government players and activists, and were given critical impetus at the national level with successful lobbying by influential national and provincial politicians.

4.3.2 *Legitimising and de-legitimising Proposals and Decisions*

In addition to employing reliable experts and developing alternative plans, players frequently use knowledge to either legitimise or delegitimise plans and decisions. All players deploy knowledge symbolically, either to convey that their decisions are well founded, or to suggest others are not (Boswell 2009). In the cases explored here, two dynamics were at work in the symbolic use of knowledge. The first, present-react-defend/neglect, is apparent when national government players or their allies present legitimising knowledge, to which subnational government players and activists react. This knowledge is subsequently defended or neglected by the proponents of the policy. The second dynamic is present-counter-resist/neglect/accept, in which the proponents present legitimising knowledge, which is then countered by opponents' knowledge that legitimises their claims. The proponents subsequently resist, neglect or accept the knowledge claims by the opponents.

4.3.2.1 *Present-React-Defend/Neglect*

This dynamic is predominant in the gas-quakes case. Most of the knowledge about gas production and repairs to damages came from national agencies such as State Supervision of the Mines (SodM), the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI), or the NAM. This knowledge, typically presented by the minister to inform his policy position, was often highly technical. Subnational politicians found it difficult to counter such knowledge, as it mostly came from established credible advisory boards or the NAM, who as the operator of the gas fields, was the only party privy to specific data. Opposing parties were not equipped to counter such knowledge (GQ2). At best, subnational players could only urge singular actions, by countering new technological knowledge with extant political demands (GQ9). For instance, subnational politicians and activists drew on previous advice given to the minister by the SodM in 2013, that gas production ought to be reduced on grounds of public safety (De Volkskrant, 5-02-2013). However, the minister was able to effectively neglect such demands and proceeded as he saw fit.

Examples of the present-react-defend/neglect dynamic can also be found in the CCS case. After Shell presented the EIA report for public inspection, experts living in Barendrecht, who would later become activists, reacted very critically. As one activist explained, their concerns were ignored:

> Then the EIA report was released. It was flawed in many ways. It was so dramatic. I contacted DCMR [the Rijnmond environmental department], but they refused or were unable to talk to me. I said, 'Do you want to know what I think about it or not?' So, how are we going to do that? 'Just put it on paper.' I wrote DCMR a nice letter and never heard back. Those were their tactics. (CCS3)

The Co2isNee action group were later able to rely on a network of technical and economic experts to verify all reports issued by the proponents. With credible expertise, they would often question the knowledge or methods used in reports, arguing that the conclusions were predetermined by those who had commissioned them (CCS4). Nevertheless, such criticism could easily be dismissed by Shell or the national government because it was not about the content, but rather about the independence of the research.

The municipality of Barendrecht also adopted a reactive approach to reports and information provided by Shell and the Ministries. Based on their review framework, they were able to repeatedly ask critical questions about the reports and facts underpinning them. One example was the three reports ordered by the ministers to address the local unrest after the municipality opposed the CCS project at the end of June 2009. The reports respectively focused on: the choice of Barendrecht as a location; the risks of CO_2 storage; and psychosomatic complaints and unrest among the population. After the reports were released in early November 2009, municipal politicians and civil servants carefully read them in search of arguments against the CCS project. They discovered that one of the reports identified a highly suitable alternative offshore location in an empty gas field in the North Sea. In a letter to a national newspaper, the mayor and an alderman called on the ministers to consider this alternative location (Reformatorisch Dagblad, 6-11-2009). There ministers offered no response and neglected all reactions to the reports.

The two cases reveal an important difference in the present-react-defend/neglect dynamic. In the gas-quakes case, subnational government players always used political reasoning when confronted with new knowledge. By contrast, both the activists and the municipality in the CCS case adopted the proponents' technocratic approach, critiquing the knowledge and highlighting details that could work in their favour. While this does not alter the dynamic, it shifts the focus of the arguments in a depoliticised direction.

4.3.2.2 Present-Counter -Resist / Accept / Neglect

The present-counter-resist/accept/neglect dynamic was prominent in the windfarm case, but hardly present in the other two cases. An example of this was the alternative IJmuiden Far plan (see above), but several other examples from the windfarm case also illustrate this dynamic in more detail.

Among other things, the minister commissioned ZKA Consultants and Planners to survey Dutch and German tourists to assess the impact of windfarms within the 12-mile zone on tourism and recreation. The three municipalities and SVH reacted very critically to this study, arguing that the photographs used did not accurately reflect the size of the wind turbines or the scale of the windfarm (WF1, WF4, WF5). Consequently, the three municipalities commissioned a report of their own to assess the impact of a negative tourist perception of a windfarm within the 12-mile zone on the coastal economy. Depending on the proximity to the coast, the study found that the presence of windfarms could negatively impact tourist spending by between 40 and 150 million euros, and as a consequence the loss of between 1500 and 4700 jobs (Buck Consultants International, 2014).

At the same time, the Minister of Economic Affairs had commissioned a social cost-benefit analysis of the costs of building the windfarm inside or outside the 12-mile zone relative to their effects on fisheries, ecology, tourism, recreation, and other factors. The report concluded that the business case for building inside the 12-mile zone was more favourable, had limited ecological effects, but the project would have substantial negative effects on day-trip tourism. The report did, however, recommend that the impact on employment in coastal municipalities should be carefully considered (Decisio, 2014). In response, the SVH argued that the report was flawed. They rejected the estimated numbers of tourists per year as outdated and inaccurate (WF1, WF4, WF5) and countered by commissioning their own study on the impact of a nearshore windfarm on nature, the landscape, tourism, and sustainability. This report concluded that the Ministry's social cost-benefit analysis systematically underestimated the impact on the landscape. The authors argued that there could be negative spending effects in the coastal region amounting to €370 million per year and the loss of 3,800 jobs, with the potential for larger economic impacts. They also claimed that the revenue loss would far outstrip the additional costs of building IJmuiden Far (Salman, 2015).

In this example, a cascade of reports that largely confirmed the opponents' policy positions was evident. The reports generated by the municipalities and the SVH focused on the effects on local and provincial economies, while the ministry prioritised the national level. Consequently, the minister did not specifically oppose the reports produced by the municipalities and SVH, although his civil servants did attempt to discredit the findings by questioning the calculations or casting doubt on the researchers. According to two aldermen, the ministerial civil servants acted in this way to keep their own substantive proposals on the table (WF8). Similar dynamics were reported by Hess and Belletto (2023), who found that government players may discredit, suppress or neglect counter-expertise, and by Roth et al. (2021), who found that incumbent players largely ignore commissioned reports by opposing players.

4.4 Legal Mobilisation

Another tactic that subnational government players and activists may use to contest plans or decisions is legal mobilisation. Lehoucq and Taylor (2020: 168) define this as 'the explicit and conscious use of the law through the invocation of a formal institutional mechanism'. This refers to 'the use of a venue within the state to file a claim against another actor', and can include administrative procedures, quasi-juridical procedures, and litigation (Lehoucq & Taylor, 2020: 179). Administrative procedures refer to situations in which citizens assert their rights by invoking existing rules to which government players are bound. Quasi-juridical procedures involve players making formal complaints that are assessed by the office of the ombudsman or commissions. Litigation entails people filing legal claims to courts of justice. Administrative procedures were used to file responses against policy proposals in all three cases, while litigation was attempted unsuccessfully in the CCS and windfarm cases, it had a tangible impact on gas production in the gas-quakes case.

4.4.1 Filing Responses

The procedures that national government players and their business allies had to follow were very important to subnational government players and activists. Spatial planning processes, such as those involving CCS and windfarms, are subject to public inspection for six weeks. Some proposals are linked to an EIA, the final report of which is also open to public inspection. Proponents must publicly announce the proposal and explain where the documents can be found and who will be given the opportunity to express their views. This procedure enables opponents to submit their concerns and present facts, arguments and questions. Similar procedures were evident in the gas-quakes case relating to the annual decision of the Minister for Economic Affairs regarding gas production. Based on the responses received, national government players consider all interests and facts presented, as well as whether the project proposals or the EIA report requires amendment. In a 'memorandum of reply', they explain how the responses have affected the final decision. Such decisions can often be legally challenged in court. In all three cases in this book, subnational government players and activists seized the opportunity to express their views on the proposals as part of a broader range of tactics.

In the windfarm case, three such opportunities arose. The first was the presentation of the Draft National Master Plan in January 2014 that designated areas for offshore windfarms not visible from the coast. In response, the three affected municipalities and 47 other organisations submitted their opposition. The second, more than a year later in April 2015, was the presentation of the Range and Detail Level Note outlining the national government's initial ideas for the locations of nearshore windfarms. As these would result in windfarms within sight of the coastline, the municipalities and their activist allies, the SVH and the VW, filed responses, urging the ministers to refrain from locating a windfarm within the 12-mile zone. As noted above, they cited the significant negative impact on the provincial economy, the adverse effect on the distinctive open sea landscape, and suggested IJmuiden Far as an alternative (Gemeente Katwijk, 2015; Gemeente Zandvoort, 2015). They also mobilised concerned residents to file responses. The municipality of Zandvoort made an appeal on their website, and all three municipalities sent letters to residents (Haarlems Dagblad, 13-04-2013; De Telegraaf, 02-06-2015). The SVH, with its task of acquiring knowledge and initiating procedures, was particularly active in this mobilisation process. One of their activists outlined how they made it easy for residents to file responses:

> To support people who wanted to submit a response, we made sure that the arguments were posted on the website. This way, you could pick and choose what you wanted and supplement it with your own words and ideas. (WF1)

To avoid the potential for the national government to treat responses as one rather than many, it was important to ensure that residents did not file identical responses. These mobilisation efforts resulted in 528 responses, 82% of which came from citizens in the three municipalities (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2016a). The final opportunity to submit responses arose in July 2016, when the national government presented its Draft National Structure Vision on Wind Energy at Sea, detailing concrete plans for locations. By the end of September 2016, the three municipalities, SVH, and residents had filed a total of 197 responses against this draft vision for nearshore windfarms (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2016b).

In the CCS case, two opportunities for public response arose. The first, as noted above, was the EIA report in March 2009. In their response, the municipal executive argued that serious procedural mistakes had been made by placing Shell in charge of the EIA procedure instead of the ministry. They also argued that the types of risk considered were too narrowly drawn, and that the safety of injecting and storing CO_2 had not been sufficiently proven. Finally, they argued that the choice of Barendrecht as the best location for the project had not been justified adequately enough (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009). The EIA report coincided with the GroenLinks party taking an activist approach against CO_2 storage, mobilising 1,570 residents to file responses against the CCS plans (Feenstra et al., 2010). The second wave of responses stemmed from the Minister of Economic Affairs overruling the municipality of Barendrecht by invoking the NCR (see Chapter 3), which stripped their power to plan and issue permits for energy projects. In their place, the minister assumed responsibility for coordinating the planning process, working towards a national zoning plan for the project (Reformatorisch Dagblad, 25-04-2009). The preliminary version of this was made available for public inspection in October 2010. Six political parties, together with CO2isNee and the legal action group Safe and Sustainable Barendrecht (see below), mobilised Barendrecht residents to file responses against the plan. Similar to the windfarm case, residents could utilise example responses available on websites, they also made it possible for residents to visit the town hall and compile and sign their objections (CCS5). As in the windfarm case, the organisers worked to ensure that residents did not simply sign prepared responses. In total, 1127 residents submitted a response to the ministerial plan, as did the executive itself (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2010a).

Filing responses became standard practice in the gas-quake case, since the Minister of Economic Affairs had to make a public decision on the level of gas production annually. When these were made known, the municipalities, along with the provincial authority, the GBB action group and other concerned citizens, filed responses. This not only allowed them to express their dissatisfaction with decision-making, but also to present arguments as to why they disagreed with the Minister's specific decision that year. Their continued objections ultimately enabled them to appeal to the Council of State (see below on litigation).

In processes of contention such as these, the sequence of announcement, response and reply has deep political resonance. The filing of responses by those who oppose plans or decisions, as well as the way in which national government players respond, is always subject to strategic considerations. Those who oppose need to be precise and legally sound in their responses to prevent national government players from declaring their objections inadmissible. Likewise, the fact that national government players can judge the arguments against their plans themselves creates room for political manoeuvring. They can decide who will be considered legitimate stakeholders, and whether arguments, remarks, and questions are admissible. Such judgements can reduce the number of responses to which they must react in a memorandum of reply, thereby decreasing the likelihood of actual adjustments being made as a result of counter-arguments.

4.4.2 Litigation

Subnational government players and activists also use litigation as a tactic, objecting to national government players through judicial action. The opportunities to litigate varied in the cases under discussion here. In the CCS and windfarm cases, municipalities leaned on activists to take legal action, while in the gas-quakes case, joint initiatives were pursued.

In the CCS case, the municipal council had voted unanimously in favour of spending €1,000,000 on litigation against the decision-making process (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2010b), but their strategy was destabilised by the Crisis and Recovery Law, which took effect in March 2010, and was to have a significant impact on legal proceedings. Politicians in Barendrecht expressed their anger at what was perceived as a cynical manipulation of the law, stating: 'The central government cannot be trusted. It's like a banana republic (…) We are going to find a way to go to court, no matter what' (AD/De Dordtenaar, 18-03-2010). However, while the law prohibited local governments from appealing against decisions made by the national government, it crucially neglected to prohibit citizens from taking legal action. In light of this, local politicians asked a resident with the necessary expertise to establish a legal action group against the CCS project. The resident in question confirmed: 'The municipality then asked me to set up a foundation—Veilig Duurzaam Barendrecht—which I did' (CCS4). In addition, a local politician became a member of the foundation's board (AD/Rotterdams Dagblad, 01-09-2010). CO2isNee were also keen to join the legal action, but the politicians felt they were too activist-oriented to do so (CCS10). Safe and Sustainable Barendrecht (SSB) was entirely financed by the municipality and received support from the law firm Looyens & Loeff, which had previously advised the municipality on their review framework. Ultimately, the case never came to court because the new cabinet cancelled the CCS project on 4th November 2010 (see Chapter 3). What the case reflects, however, is that local government players, along with residents' public support can galvanise themselves to adjust their tactics to accommodate political changes.

The windfarm case also fell under the remit of the Crisis and Recovery Law, leaving the three municipalities with no legal recourse. Anticipating this situation, the SVH was explicitly founded to circumvent the legal prohibition on appealing decisions made by the national government. One of the SVH activists argued that:

> We are setting up a foundation to continue the legal proceedings when you are unable to do so. The foundation has also been established with the aim of taking legal action. This is clearly stated in the statutes. (WF1)

The three municipalities did not openly support the legal action to avoid the impression that they were behind it (WF4, WF6). When the Minister of Economic Affairs made two separate decisions on specific plots for the windfarm, SVH filed lawsuits against each one. They argued that the decisions were not based on sound facts, that the alternative location of IJmuiden Far was never seriously considered, that the provincial economy would be adversely affected, and that local ecosystems would be damaged. The Council of State ruled that the appeal in both lawsuits was both inadmissible and unfounded.[3] Despite an unsuccessful litigation process in the windfarm case, it similarly reflects players' willingness to be tactically reflexive in the face of obstacles.

There are successful examples of litigation in the gas-quakes case, which did not fall under the Crisis and Recovery Law. In 2015 and 2017, subnational government players, GBB and others, filed successful lawsuits against gas decisions made by the Minister of Economic Affairs. The first legal procedure, began in March 2015, issued on grounds of public safety. This imposed a temporary injunction to stop gas production around the town of Loppersum, at the heart of the gas-quakes area. In a preliminary ruling in April 2015, the judge found in favour of the municipalities, deciding that gas production in Loppersum should only continue if extraction in other locations was insufficient. He also suspended the minister's ability to make decisions until a final ruling was given.[4] As noted previously, the final ruling, issued in November 2015, limited gas production in the entire area, stopped gas production around Loppersum and annulled the minister's decision.[5] This confirmed to the subnational government players and activists that their demands to lower gas production were not unreasonable and required the minister to devise a new gas

[3] The court ruling on the first appeal is from 6-12-2017: https://linkeddata.overheid.nl/front/portal/document-viewer?ext-id=ECLI:NL:RVS:2017:3354. The second court ruling is from 17-04-2019: https://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:RVS:2019:1205.

[4] https://www.raadvanstate.nl/uitspraken/@99647/201501544-2-a4/#highlight=Gaswinning%20Groningen.

[5] https://www.raadvanstate.nl/uitspraken/@102047/201501544-1-a4/#highlight=Gaswinning%20Groningen.

production plan. This was further corroborated in November 2017, when the court annulled a decision of September 2016, and an amended May 2017 decision, because the minister had not adequately considered the safety risks to residents. The minister was given one year to make a new decision.[6]

The opponents also filed lawsuits against the NAM. GBB had been conducting a criminal case against the NAM since September 2015, accusing them of deliberately destroying buildings, structures, and places accessible to the public, thus putting lives at risk through its gas production. Initially, the Public Prosecutor's Office did not want to litigate, but after an appeal in April 2017, the judge ordered it to prosecute the NAM. However, in March 2021, following a lengthy investigation, the Public Prosecutor decided not to proceed due to the inability to sufficiently demonstrate deliberate culpability on the part of the NAM. This particular case is still ongoing, as the decision of the Public Prosecutor is currently being discussed in court.[7]

Overall, different outcomes can be observed when opponents employ legal mobilisation as a tactic during contentious governance processes. Subnational government players and activists need strong legal arguments pointing to an unlawful act by the government or a violation of citizens' individual rights if they are to stand a chance in court (Backes & Eliantonio, 2017). This assumes that the national government has not pre-empted subnational government players from undertaking litigation against their policies. If activists act alone against national government players, it is significantly harder to gain standing in court. They need to prove their interest in an unlawful act by the national government, or that there has been a violation of their individual rights (Backes & Eliantonio, 2017). The dismissal of SVH's appeal in the windfarm case is a *prima facie* example of this. This illustrates the difficulty of gaining standing where a case is based upon anticipated harm, such as the CCS and windfarm cases, rather than in cases where harm has already occurred, such as the gasquakes case. It is important to note that litigation poses risks to all players involved. Court cases need to be considered as just one tactic in processes of contentious governance that are constantly in flux, moving back into

[6] https://www.raadvanstate.nl/uitspraken/@109356/201608211-1-a1/#highlight=Gaswinning%20Groningen.

[7] https://www.rechtvoorgroningen.nl/rechtszaken/.

or operating in parallel with the political arena and other arenas in which players contend with each other. During court cases, judges establish facts that then become immune to contestation, since they were acknowledged by the independent judiciary (Flynn, 2011). Depending on which facts are established, proponents or opponents of contested policies may gain the upper hand in the struggle over facts in other arenas.

4.5 Protest

During episodes of contentious governance, lobbying, the symbolic use of knowledge, and legal mobilisation often do not stand alone. Instead, subnational government players and activists tend to combine or substitute them with protest tactics such as petitions, poster campaigns, demonstrations, or acts of civil disobedience. While the CCS and windfarm cases predominantly witnessed playful actions and some demonstrations, the gas-quakes case was characterised by demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience.

4.5.1 Playful Actions to Create Awareness and Make People Say 'No'

The first playful action in the CCS case occurred at an early stage, when the municipality of Barendrecht organised an information evening in February 2009. During the event, which was attended by around 1,000 people, a well-known activist, who was often in conflict with the municipality, came on stage wearing a mask and an oxygen cylinder used by firefighters to express his opinion about the CCS project. He argued that all Barendrecht residents should buy such a mask to prepare for the possibility of CO_2 escaping from underground storage. His act was picked up by the media and became the talk of the town for a while, raising awareness of the risky nature of CO_2 storage (CCS3, CCS6). More than six months later, after the establishment of CO2isNee, activists argued that, in the event of an escape, CO_2 would initially remain close to the ground, where it would be detected first by pets. They therefore organised a guinea pig race for children in a local pet store to inform parents about the risks of CO_2 storage (CCS4, CCS6). Another playful action involved the distribution of 5000 stickers depicting Barendrecht with a Shell petrol pump handle inserted into it, spraying skulls into the ground. The text at the bottom read: 'Shell fills up Barendrecht completely'. Finally, a poster campaign was launched to encourage people to sign an online petition against the plan. Despite much effort by CO2isNee, the petition did not really take off, largely they believed, because many residents are conservative and not so well disposed to activism (CCS5).

Playful actions were also evident in the windfarm case. One example was the 'postcard' action, as it is known among the activists. In June 2015, VW organised a protest event in which the mayors of the three municipalities, accompanied by the mayor of neighbouring Wassenaar, sat on the beach and wrote postcards to members of parliament. The front of the postcards featured a photograph of the horizon from each municipality's beach, accompanied by the text 'Greetings from…'. On the reverse, the mayors urged parliamentarians to relocate the nearshore windfarm to the IJmuiden Far location.[8] After signing 225 postcards addressed to each individual member of the House and the Senate, the mayors rolled up their trouser legs, stepped through the mud to a large gulley and sat down, supposedly to deliver the postcards by sea to The Hague, the seat of government. This scene attracted a lot of media attention, as the mayors were dressed in full regalia and would not usually present themselves in such a frivolous manner (WF3, WF6). Another example is the series of pole-sit actions organised by VW between September 2015 and September 2016. Aldermen, mayors and other prominent people from the municipalities would sit on a large pole on the beach for six hours to draw citizens' attention to a petition against the nearshore windfarm. The petition was called 'Verzet Windmolens', which in Dutch has the double connotation of 'verzet' (resistance) and 'verzetten' (replace) windmolens (wind turbines). The petition text states that those signing are not against wind energy, but against the planned location within view of the coast, and in favour of the alternative IJmuiden Far location (Verzet Windmolens, 2015). In addition to these playful actions, the municipalities sent letters to all residents, placed adverts in local and provincial newspapers, and campaigned on social media, calling on citizens to sign the petition. In the end, 53,000 people ended up signing the petition, which was presented to members of parliament on 4 October 2016, ahead of the final decision in November 2016 (WF1, WF3).

[8] https://www.rd.nl/artikel/620284-burgemeesters-protesteren-op-blote-voeten-tegen-windmolenpark-in-zee.

4.5.2 *Staging Demonstrations*

Demonstrations in the traditional sense involve marches and large gatherings of people to put pressure on governments over matters such as extending civil rights, developing more ambitious climate policies, ceasing their involvement in wars and many other causes (Jasper, 1997; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011). In processes of contentious governance, we see more modest demonstrations, often organised by activists with the backing of subnational government players, which aim to change the minds of (supra)national government players or businesses.

Demonstrations are usually connected to important moments in the decision-making process, or sudden events that prompt action. Many examples can be found in the gas-quakes case in the period preceding the gas decision by the minister of Economic Affairs in January 2014. Some demonstrations were small, such as GBB's first protest event that mobilised 50 people to occupy a crossroads in the 100-inhabitant town of Doodstil (Dead Silent) (NRC Handelsblad, 15-01-2014), a demonstration outside the New Year reception of the NAM (Dagblad van het Noorden, 07-01-2014), and when GBB mobilised 200 people in Stedum who shouted 'Our gas, our gas, our gas' and sang the Groningen anthem (Trouw, 20-01-2014). Other demonstrations in January 2014 were larger, with hundreds of cars driving slowly along the A7 motorway from Groningen to Zuidbroek, honking their horns and displaying banners bearing the slogan 'Gas Terug', which literally means 'throttle down' but can also be interpreted as 'lower gas production'. The route symbolically passed the location where the first gas was found in 1959 (Trouw, 20-01-2014).

When Minister Kamp of Economic Affairs came to explain his decision to Loppersum, a town in the middle of the gas-quake area, announcing the deal he had made with the province (see Chapter 3 and lobbying above), SG mobilised a few hundred people to demonstrate outside. After learning they were not allowed inside, a grim atmosphere ensued. Protestors pounded on the windows where the minister was speaking, pelted them with eggs and tomatoes, let off heavy fireworks, confronted the police and blocked all surrounding roads with 25 tractors (De Telegraaf, 18-01-2014; De Volkskrant, 18-01-2014). The next day, when the minister spoke at the provincial authority's office, people demonstrated again, but in a friendlier atmosphere (NRC Handelsblad, 20-01-2014). Similar demonstrations were organised jointly by GBB and SG during

Minister Kamp's visit in January 2015, and by GBB during his successor's (Wiebes's) visits in January 2018, shortly after the Zeerijp gas-quake had caused additional damage to the area (see Chapter 3). The largest demonstration relating to the gas-quakes was organised in January 2018, following the Zeerijp gas-quake. GBB mobilised over 12,000 people for a torchlit march through the city of Groningen. Three more such marches had taken place in 2014, 2016 and 2017, but with much lower turnouts of 400, 700 and around 4,500 participants, respectively[9]. The most confrontational demonstration was a hunger strike by two residents that began on 12 March 2018 in a caravan on the side of the road in Appingedam to draw attention to the ongoing problems residents were experiencing (Dagblad van het Noorden, 19-03-2018).

Demonstrations were scarce in the CCS case. Some examples, such as the 'walk against CO2'[10] organised by the GroenLinks party in March 2008, were attended by about 300 residents of Barendrecht, and one after the meeting with the two ministers on 1 December 2009 after they had already decided in favour of the CCS project. Earlier, the ministers had promised to visit Barendrecht to explain their decision, but by this time they were reluctant to do so. However, the municipal players took a bold step by booking a local theatre and just informing the advisors of the ministers about the date. Fearing further reputational damage, the ministers agreed to attend on the condition that local politicians would not engage in a debate with them (CCS7, CCS11). The Barendrecht municipal council sent a letter to all residents, encouraging them to attend the theatre (CCS11). On the evening of 1st December, the theatre was packed with 500 residents. The ministers were addressed by the resident who later founded the legal action group Safe and Sustainable Barendrecht (see above) and by two members of CO2isNee, who argued that the plan was unsafe and lacked local support. The audience often roared loudly in disagreement to make life difficult for the two ministers. Another example of official meetings being used for demonstrations can be seen in the windfarm case, where an information evening organised by one of the ministries in May 2015 was taken over by around 100 activists, local entrepreneurs, municipal councillors, aldermen, and

9 (https://groninger-bodem-beweging.nl/gbb/successen-gbb/)

10 The GroenLinks party deliberately framed the demonstration as a walk to prevent the already dutiful and law-abiding population from not showing up at all (CCS11).

mayors. The protest signs and speeches made it clear that they were opposing the nearshore windfarm, but all went in good order (De Telegraaf, 20-05-2015).

All these demonstrations have certain things in common: they take place outside in locations chosen by the demonstrators, or at places where ministers, civil servants or business players are likely to visit. However, examples can also be found in all cases, where activists mobilised residents to protest at parliamentary debates. This occurred at least three times in the gas-quakes case and at least once in the other two cases. People would first demonstrate outside parliament, often presenting a petition, before listening to the debate from the public gallery. During one of the parliamentary debates on the gas-quakes case, GBB mobilised all the churches in the province to ring their bells and sound the alarm to national politicians (NRC Handelsblad, 13-02-2015).

4.5.3 Performing Civil Disobedience

Civil disobedience belongs in a category that goes beyond other forms of protest. Celikates conceives civil disobedience as:

> …an intentionally unlawful and principled collective act of protest (in contrast to both legal protest and "ordinary" criminal offenses or "unmotivated" rioting), with which citizens – in the broad sense that goes beyond those recognized as citizens by a particular state – pursue the political aim of changing specific laws, policies or institutions (in contrast to conscientious objection, which is protected in some states as a fundamental right and does not seek such change). (Celikates, 2016: 39)

This definition is helpful in identifying examples of civil disobedience in the gas-quakes case.

At the time of the small demonstrations, mid-January 2014, just before the ministers' gas-decision, several acts of civil disobedience were performed. Anonymous activists defied prohibitions on unauthorised access and removed well covers from high-pressure gas pipelines on NAM property—by any metric, a very dangerous act (De Telegraaf, 16-01-2014). During the same period, an SG activist 'occupied' another NAM installation by climbing the fence and riding a bike onto the premises. The activist was arrested by the police for trespassing and was detained for a short period; the NAM later pressed charges against the activist (AD/

Algemeen Dagblad, 16-01-2014). At the invitation of SG, who hoped to raise awareness of the issues, many media outlets were present, and the police intervention ensured the wider media picked up the story (GQ7). In the following days, several other NAM locations and installations were occupied, or had access roads to these locations blocked (De Volkskrant, 14-01-2014). In mid-February 2014, SG trespassed on another NAM gas extraction site, attracting widespread media attention (Dagblad van the Noorden, 14-02-2014c).

Acts of civil disobedience serve a symbolic purpose. According to Celikates (2016: 43), civil disobedience can only function as a symbolic form of protest when activists confront the authorities through blockades and occupations. By blockading and occupying NAM locations, SG knew that the police would show up and that their unlawful action would attract media attention. This made civil disobedience an effective tactic for conveying their message to a wider audience and raising awareness of the issues.

4.6 Tactical Dynamics

Having examined the range of tactics employed in the three cases, a closer look at their dynamics over time gives greater nuance to understandings of how contentious governance can take shape. The schematic summary in Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 reveals five striking patterns of how these dynamics play out over time. The first pattern is that project proposals, reports or decisions by national government players, and/or their business partners, were structurally opposed by the filing of responses throughout entire conflicts. Whenever proponents of CCS, windfarms, or natural gas production were legally obliged to disclose their proposals, EIAs or gas production decisions, subnational government players and activists seized these opportunities to contest them. The extensive use of responses indicates the importance of the procedural aspects of conflict (Wolf, 2021) and suggests that subnational government players and activists are keen to exploit formal rules as part of their resistance (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013).

Fig. 4.1 Overview of tactical dynamics CCS case

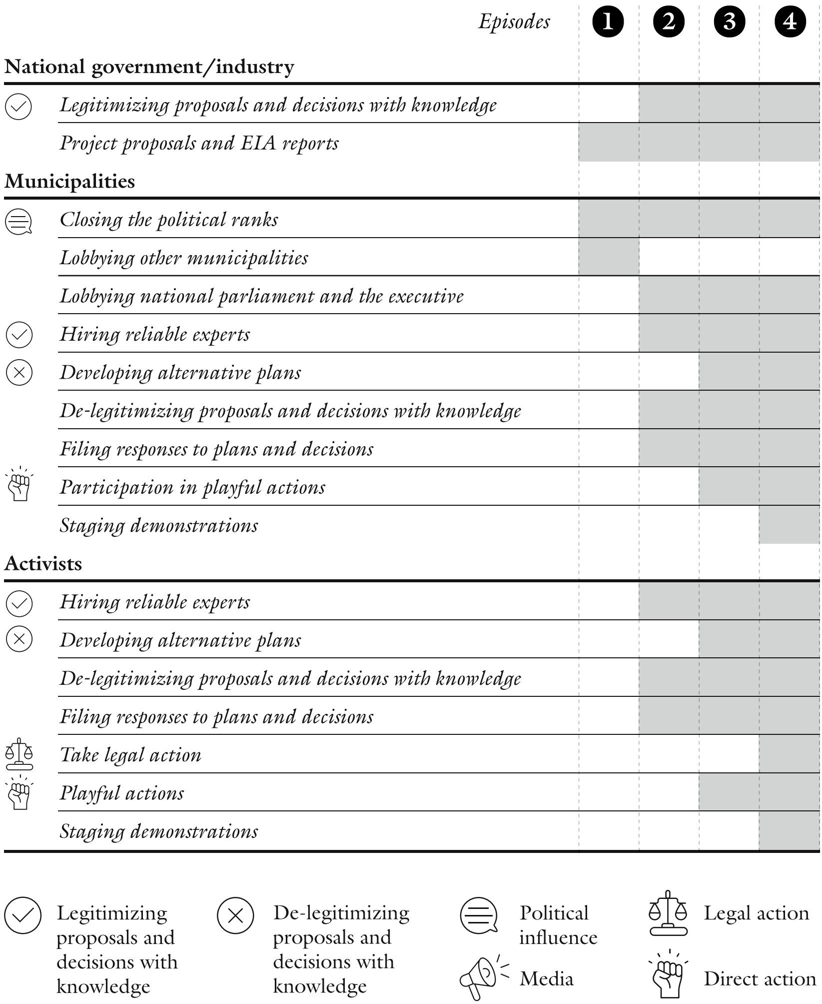

Fig. 4.2 Overview of tactical dynamics windfarm case

Fig. 4.3 Overview of tactical dynamics gas-quakes case

Secondly, national government players and/or their business partners used knowledge to legitimise their proposals and decisions. In both the CCS and windfarm cases, this knowledge was produced throughout the entire conflict, and countered by knowledge that sought to undermine their legitimacy. Additionally, the municipalities in both cases hired reliable experts to bolster the credibility of their counter-knowledge, a tactic also adopted by the activists in the windfarm case. Another tactic used to counter the knowledge employed by national government players was the development of alternative plans by the municipalities and activists in the windfarm case, and by subnational government players in the gas-quakes case. Except for the alternative plan, competition on knowledge was largely absent in the gas-quakes case. Most of the knowledge came from credible institutes and third parties and was difficult to refute.

Thirdly, lobbying was a constant tactic employed by subnational government players. Some efforts focused on garnering support from other municipalities, while others were directed at the provincial level to elicit support from the province (CCS case). In all cases, subnational government players' lobbying processes focused on the national parliament and the executive to persuade them to change course. To strengthen lobbying at the national level, these players applied media pressure (in the CCS and gas-quakes cases), commissioned a survey (in the CCS case) or established an authoritative committee (in the gas-quakes case). In the CCS case, activists joined governmental lobbying efforts by addressing the province directly, and later the national parliament and executive. They did this by applying media pressure. In the gas-quakes case, activists applied media pressure but did not participate directly in lobbying by the province and municipalities.

A fourth pattern in tactical dynamics was the very limited use of protest in the CCS and windfarm cases. Most of the protest in these cases consisted of playful actions. Demonstrations only occurred when the parties involved felt cornered during the final stages of the national decision-making process. The gas-quakes case was different. Demonstrations were organised throughout most episodes of contentious governance, and civil disobedience was briefly apparent. While subnational government players tend to avoid protest, politicians often participated in playful actions (in the windfarm case) or demonstrations organised by activists (in the gas-quakes case).

Finally, litigation featured in all cases; either supported by subnational government players and prepared by activists (CCS case), performed by activists without any subnational government support (windfarm case), or jointly undertaken (gas-quakes case). In the CCS and windfarm cases, the preparation or use of litigation was directly related to the national government's use of override and pre-emption in the National Coordination Regulation, which limits local governments' jurisdiction over planning and permitting procedures (override), and in the Crisis and Recovery Law, which prevents local governments from taking legal action against decisions made by the national government (pre-emption) (see also Chapter 3). These measures pushed subnational government players to encourage activists to take legal action, since they were still permitted to litigate against proposals or decisions by national government players. The gas-quakes case does not fall under any of these hierarchical measures, which is why both government players and activists took legal action.

4.7 Conclusions

Except for the limited use of civil disobedience, the tactics employed in all three cases draw upon well-established repertoires of contained action familiar to liberal democracies. National government players and their business allies mainly relied on proposing projects, filing EIA reports, and making decisions, backed up by the symbolic use of knowledge to legitimise their actions. In opposition, subnational government players provided strong resistance by filing responses to plans or decisions, using knowledge symbolically, lobbying or litigating. Activists only added very contained forms of protest to this repertoire of action. For the cases examined in this book, the collective actions through which participants in contentious governance processes tried to influence each other were predominantly institutionalised, with few extra-institutional tactics.

In addition, the findings suggest that there was a division of oppositional labour among opponents of unwanted policies when it came to protest. As expected, activists were the drivers of protest. Contrary to arguments in some of my earlier work (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2017), this division of oppositional labour does not apply to all tactics used during the three cases of contentious governance. In fact, activists adopted many of the institutional tactics employed by their government allies. Sometimes subnational government players engaged in protest and occasionally even orchestrated it. This suggests that the boundaries between institutional and extra-institutional forms of collective action were somewhat blurred (Verhoeven et al., 2022).

The way divisions of labour play out, and which boundaries between tactics are blurred or observed, depends to a large extent on strategic considerations, as well as the ways in which these are influenced over time by the actions of proponents, contextual factors and events.

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CHAPTER 5

Arguing Against a Dominant National Government

Players involved in contentious governance processes interpret each other's framing of the substantive, procedural, relational, and emotional dimensions of their conflict (Verhoeven & Duyvendak 2015; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022; Wolf, 2021). These dimensions of conflict are used to gain leverage and persuade each other and to establish ownership over how problems are defined, as well as the pertinence of solutions proposed to solve them (Gusfield, 1981; Schön & Rein, 1994). To analyse these interpretive activities, I adopt an interactional framing perspective (Dewulf et al., 2009; Gray, 2003; van Hulst & Yanow, 2014) that focuses on framing rather than frames; a subtle but significant difference if contentious governance is to be understood in its fullest sense. A frame commonly refers to investigating static representations of meaning produced at specific moments in time, in contrast framing is concerned with tracing the dynamics of interpretive processes that unfold over time as part of the strategic interactions between opposing players. Taken as a verb rather than a noun, framing becomes an interpretive activity involving continuous construction and reconstruction, through which the meaning of what is being contested is revealed. The central research question addressed in the following empirical analysis is: *what are the most important forms of framing through which players try to influence each other?* In unpicking this question, I begin with a discussion of the interactional framing perspective, before moving on to the empirical analysis which focuses on what I argue to be the dynamics underlying

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the framing processes at work in the three cases. In particular, I explore framing through players' attempts to: counter economic rationalism; marshal safety as both reassurance and a mantra for change; make claims on an unwilling national government; escape the NIMBY label; and the conjuring of emotional storylines to counter rational policy. Finally, I will analyse the main framing dynamics over time before offering my conclusions.

5.1 An Interactional Framing Perspective

This Chapter is grounded in interpretive policy analysis. In this approach, policymaking is a deeply political process that emerges as a struggle over what is true, valuable, and likely to happen, as well as how ideas, proposals, implementation programmes, procedures, events, and the legitimacy of other players' actions are evaluated. These struggles stem from the ambiguity of language, the conjuring of what Edelman suggests 'is the political spectacle', allowing for multiple interpretations reflecting different values, beliefs, and perceptions (Edelman, 1971, 1988; Fischer & Forester, 1993; Majone, 1989; Schön & Rein, 1994; Stone, 2012). Building on this, framing is understood as an interactional process whereby meaning is negotiated and co-constructed by players. Moreover, reinforcing the distinction made above, an interactional perspective focuses on 'framing' as the activities of players, and is distinguished from cognitive perspectives which study 'frames' created as knowledge structures (Dewulf et al., 2009; Dodge & Metze, 2017; van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). Cognitive perspectives predominate both in social movement studies (Benford, 1997; Snow et al., 2014) and public policy literature (see e.g., Boswell, 2009; Cuppen et al., 2015; Fischer, 2003; Hoppe, 2010). The former focuses on frames that explain movement mobilisation, instead of considering how frames are constructed, negotiated, contested, and transformed while the latter emphasises various types of frames, such as the action and metacultural frames elaborated in Schön and Rein's (1994) influential work.

To stay close to framing as an interactional process, my empirical analysis is principally attentive to the 'framing dynamics' of contentious governance. Consistent with interpretive analysis, I define these as the various ways in which players construct, negotiate, and transform competing ways of framing, with the aim of persuading others in exchanges of contentious claims. These competing framing processes are permanently under (re)construction according to the evolving interpretations of the players during their strategic interactions. Strategic efforts by other players or new events may disrupt pre-existing framing dynamics, causing one or several players to construct new framing processes or transform older ones. A good example might be when national government players use economic framing to legitimise, say, the construction of a new highway—presenting it as a boost to the economy—while subnational government players and activists harness noise and pollution framing to highlight the burden placed on their communities. This dynamic may change, for instance, if a minister decides on a proposal without consulting provincial or local communities. In response, this event is likely to prompt the replacement of their original framing with one citing procedural justice. This, in turn, could mobilise the national government to counter with knowledge and expertise framing to manage the conflict (Gray, 2003).

Such framing dynamics are underpinned by 'the work of framing', which, according to van Hulst and Yanow (2014), consists of sense-making; selecting, naming, and categorising; and storytelling. Sense-making involves players, either explicitly or implicitly, asking themselves Goffman's question: 'What is it that's going on here?' (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014: 6). Selecting involves players deciding what to include and exclude in their framing, naming provides labels through which problems can be identified and coloured while categorising involves making distinctions, for example, between allies and adversaries, or morally just and unjust behaviour (Gray, 2003; Schön & Rein, 1994; van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). Finally, framing involves storytelling, which brings all these elements together into narratives through which players can reflect on the past, present, and future; define problems, suggest solutions, and reflect on other players or events (Schön & Rein, 1994; van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). Through stories, players take a stance by attributing how and why things happened, who is responsible, and what possible solutions there are (Gray, 2003).

In tracing and labelling the framing dynamics of players, I will use the concept of 'storyline', which according to Hajer (1995: 56), 'is a generative sort of narrative that allows people to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena'. Storylines serve as condensed statements that allude to patterns or connections in issues, relations, interactions, and events, providing a shorthand construction that suggests unity in discursively varying and complex narratives. Storylines serve to position social actors and institutional practices within ongoing, competing narratives (Fischer, 2003: 87) and to organise and re-organise their understanding of the situation (Hajer, 1995: 56). In a context of contentious governance, such storylines can be expected to focus on persuading other players to view policy problems and their potential solutions from a different perspective. The advantage of the storyline concept is that it is based on a relational ontology, viewing storylines as products of relationships and interactions (Hajer, 1995), which aligns with the strategic interaction perspective employed throughout this book.

Three elements tend to stand out in storylines intended to persuade. First, they may contain 'propositions of fact', which Jones and Simons (2017: 272) define as 'belief claims about what is true or false, for which factual evidence is needed'. Such fact-driven belief claims are often directly connected to how players define problems (Gusfield, 1981), and in conflict processes, these are likely to concern substance, evidence, and incompatible policy objectives (Wolf, 2021; Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017). Secondly, storylines may encompass 'propositions of value', defined by Jones and Simons (2017: 272) as 'debatable assertions that assert beliefs about what is good, bad, moral or immoral'. According to Gusfield (1981: 9), such moral judgements are 'what makes alteration or eradication desirable or continuation valuable'. In conflicts, propositions of value are likely to concern players' incompatible procedural objectives, expressed in different perspectives on decision-making, or incompatible personal objectives in players' relationships (Wolf, 2021). Prior or new developments may lead to perceptions of other players as either good or bad, trustworthy, or untrustworthy (Deutsch, 1973).

Thirdly, players' storylines 'express emotions' by serving as vehicles for their own emotions, or interpretations of those of others. More precisely, I argue that storylines symbolically capture and condense players' emotional interpretations of what is going on around them. Players develop storylines through sense-making that carry joint expressions of emotions (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022), which can be conceived of as collective emotions '(…) that are shared by large numbers of individuals in a certain society' (Bar-Tal et al., 2007: 442). The relational ontology of storylines allows for a sociological and anthropological approach, viewing emotions as socially constructed by players within cultural boundaries (Jasper, 2011; Lutz & White, 1986; Turner & Stets, 2005; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). During these processes of social construction, players interpret and signify emotions by determining the emotional meaning of a situation, as well as the relevance and appropriateness of emotional concerns in relation to the circumstances (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). Building on Wolf's (2021) distinction between the substantive, procedural, and relational dimensions of conflict, I argue that emotional storylines can relate to all of these. In this sense, players construct emotional storylines about their interpretation of knowledge and evidence (Wolf & Van Dooren, 2017), their perception of procedures (Verhoeven & Duyvendak, 2015), and how they are treated in their relationships with others (Furtak, 2020). The emotions captured in storylines can be conceived as 'ways of coping and adapting to the social situations that life presents' (ten Houten, 2007: 3). This definition suggests that emotions are often acute and episodic, forming short-term responses to events and information that affect players' relationships with their surroundings. Additionally, players may express long-term feelings about others or objects in the form of affective commitments or sentiments. They may also voice long-term feelings of approval or disapproval in the form of moral emotions (Jasper, 2018).

Taken together, propositions of fact, propositions of value, and emotional expressions operate in complex intersections within players' storylines. Here, I have separated them solely for analytical purposes, to distinguish the different layers of meaning and interpretation that players may use in persuading others to adopt their arguments. The empirical analysis below shows how these propositions and expressions colour players' storylines when tracing their framing dynamics.

5.2 Countering Economic Rationalism

Since the liberalisation of the energy sector in the mid-1990s (see Chapter 3), Dutch national government players relied heavily on investment from businesses to achieve policy objectives. Consequently, national government players utilised market framing when justifying the necessity of CCS, nearshore windfarms and gas production. Moreover, market framing is often combined with the framing of cost efficiency, a perspective that has emerged in many countries as part of New Public Management (NPM) thinking (see Chapter 3). Both market and cost efficiency framings have become deeply ingrained components of Western governments' economic rationalisation of environmental discourses since the late 1970s (Dryzek, 1997). In all three cases, subnational government players and activists were obliged to present an alternative to such economic rationalism. As I show below, they countered market framing with procedural criticism and cost framing with adverse local consequences and alternative plans.

5.2.1 The Difficulty of Going Against the Market

5.2.1.1 The Market Is Fundamental

Market framing can be seen in the storylines of national government players, who aim to create favourable conditions for business investment. Key aspects of these conditions include stimulating technological innovation and creating opportunities for the large-scale deployment of such technologies. An example of this can be seen in the national governments' white paper on CCS, which stated that:

> Technological development and economies of scale should reduce costs. That is why the government wants to accelerate technological development and encourage large-scale practical experience, so that costs and revenues (...) converge more quickly. (Tweede Kamer, 2008–2009a: 3)

This illustrates how national government players claim to understand economic development by presenting propositions of fact: costs will be reduced if technologies are developed and deployed on a larger scale. Similar propositions can be found in other national policy documents, which assume that CCS development is subject to a lifecycle comprising various phases that must be completed for the technology to mature and progress towards large-scale deployment:

> Because CCS will be a multi-billion- euro business process in its regular operating phase from 2020 onwards, it is essential that the initial phases of the life cycle are completed as quickly and carefully as possible. Not only for the business community itself, which will have to pay these billions, but also for the government, which has a directing, perhaps obligatory and, in part, co-financing role (in the initial phase). (Tweede Kamer, 2009–2010: 4)

In addition to creating favourable investment conditions, market framing can also focus on generating competitive advantages for the Dutch industry, helping them grow their market share:

> An additional advantage of accelerated application of CCS in our country is that Dutch suppliers of technology and know-how can build up a knowledge and experience lead (first mover advantage) that they can also exploit elsewhere in the world. (Tweede Kamer, 2008–2009a: 2)

Market framing focused strongly on creating favourable investment conditions and developing a competitive advantage because CCS was a new technology that had never been applied in all facets of CO_2 capture, transport and storage worldwide. Consequently, market framing provided a robust justification for conducting small-scale CCS experiments, as in Barendrecht.

A different form of market framing occurred in the gas-quakes case. At the time, the Netherlands already held an important position in the European gas market. Consequently, the focus of the framing was on the potential impact of interventions on gas-production. The Minister of Economic Affairs provided the following example:

> All people in the Netherlands, Germany, France and Belgium who use gas for cooking and heating their homes have an interest in this. I would also mention the importance of industry. Natural gas is used on a large scale by industry, with billions of cubic metres being used every year. This creates jobs and is used to manufacture products. In other words, it generates income. (…) The enormous amount of money that gas-production contributes to the national budget is something we all benefit from every day. (Tweede Kamer, 2012–2013a: 15)

Through propositions of fact, the Minister created a storyline that the export of gas could not be altered, that Dutch citizens needed gas for heating and cooking, and that Dutch industry was dependent on gas-production. Intervening in the market would have serious financial consequences for the state budget. Market framing thus serves to justify a defensive position for not reducing gas-production.

5.2.1.2 Countering with Procedural Critique

Market framing is hard to counter. If subnational government players argued against the virtues of the market, they could be easily criticised for failing to understand how current national energy policies work. Activists who argue directly against market framing risk being seen as representing an extreme political view that can be dismissed as marginal. To avoid such risks, subnational government players and activists engage in procedural critiques, focusing instead on the concrete behaviour of their opponents, rather than the underlying market logic.

The most prominent examples of framing such a procedural critique can be found in the CCS case when Shell, rather than the national government, initiated the required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). After organising information evenings for residents and politicians in Barendrecht, it was revealed that they had failed to disclose all the required information at short notice. This enabled the municipality to frame procedural criticism of the EIA process:

> The investigation shows that the decision-making process has procedural and substantive shortcomings. An important conclusion is that the choice of Barendrecht as a location for underground CO_2 storage is not properly justified. This choice of location was determined by Shell on the basis of commercial considerations rather than being the result of a proper spatial and environmental assessment at national level. (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009a: 10)

Here, the municipality's framing of procedural critique relies on propositions of value in terms of good and bad: a lack of justification for Barendrecht as the project's location; Shell's considerations are questionable; and the national government should have taken the lead. In other words, both business and national government players failed. A few months later, the two responsible ministers acknowledged this critique to some extent:

> Over the past year and a half, the municipality of Barendrecht has been confronted with a proposed project whose consequences for you were difficult to foresee. It happened in a way that made you feel ambushed. This was an unpleasant start. We have already informed you of this and will take it into account as the process progresses. (Ministerie van VROM, 2009: 1)

Some traces of procedural critique can also be found during the early stages of the gas-quakes conflict in 2013, when activists critiqued the market framing that the minister used to justify non-intervention in gas-production:

> The sad conclusion is that gas-production will continue unabated in the national interest. For the cabinet, money takes precedence over safety. We are waiting for a major earthquake and a serious accident. Then you shore up the church, but a life is lost. That cannot be repaired. We must be vigilant and stand up for the region. (…) Groningen heats the Netherlands, and what we get in return are loud speakers who bravely proclaim that the Netherlands cannot afford to lose the 10.5 billion euros it earns annually from gas sales. (Dagblad van the Noorden, 21-02-2013)

The activists' storyline was grounded in propositions of value, depicting the Dutch government as immoral for prioritising economic motives over the safety of the provincial population. This storyline contrasts sharply with the minister's defensive form of market framing, which is based on propositions of fact.

5.2.2 Cost Efficiency as an Elusive Rationale

5.2.2.1 Developing Projects as Cheap as Possible

In addition to market framing, national government players also employed cost-efficiency framing. Some examples of this were evident in the market framing employed in the CCS case, where technology development and economies of scale were expected to reduce costs. This type of cost framing was even more central to the national government players in the windfarm case:

> Offshore wind energy is currently still one of the more expensive options. Our minister would prefer to achieve the target without imposing excessive costs on the public. Hence the preference for the most cost-efficient solutions: on land or close to the coast. (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2013: 4)

> The Cabinet aims to achieve the most cost-efficient installed capacity possible. This is an important precondition when weighing up the various interests involved. (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2014a: 8)

This perspective relates to the energy agreement signed by national government players and 47 private and civil society partners in September 2013. The agreement established plans to increase the share of renewables from 4 to 14% by 2020. A key assumption was that the cost of offshore wind would be reduced by around 40% (Sociaal Economische Raad, 2013: 17), instituting cost efficiency as the primary objective of offshore wind power. Focusing on cost efficiency implies that 'achieving a goal at the lowest cost' became a core value in national government decision-making, rather than a means of achieving other objectives such as equality, freedom or security (Stone, 2012: 63). In their search for the cheapest solution, national government players unsurprisingly veered towards the view that windfarms within the 12-mile zone were an attractive option, as the following quotes illustrate:

> The cabinet has calculated whether there are cost differences between building windfarms in different areas of the North Sea. It shows that, in general, the costs of building, managing and maintaining windfarms increase as the wind turbines are placed further from the coast. (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2014a: 2)

> Due to lower construction and operating costs, the business case for parks in the search areas within the 12-mile zone is more favourable in all cases compared to the average for parks outside the 12-mile zone. These differences are so significant that they outweigh the negative effects on other functions. (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu, 2014b: 28)

Clearly then, national government players developed storylines that presented the construction of windfarms within the 12-mile zone as unquestionably self-evident. These storylines contained propositions of fact, namely, the cost of building windfarms further from the coast would increase, and that any negative externalities related to building within the 12-mile zone were outweighed by substantial cost savings of €1.2 billion (Tweede Kamer, 2014–2015a).

5.2.2.2 Economic Consequences in the Local Context

As cost efficiency was such a prominent theme for national government players in the windfarm case, counter-framing logically emerged through the adverse economic consequences of building a windfarm within sight. From the early stages of the conflict, the three municipalities framed the economic consequences through the lens of tourism. The storyline of how essential tourism was to the local economies of all three municipalities, and how it would be seriously affected, continued through most episodes of contentious governance, by using propositions of fact based on commissioned reports:

> Furthermore, our research shows that the alleged benefit of placing wind turbines within the 12-mile zone is completely offset by the negative effects on recreation and tourism along the coast. Within the 12-mile zone, 3,000 MW is expected to yield a cost benefit of €130 million per year (...). On the other hand, the aforementioned economic damage could amount to more than €210 million per year in lost tourist spending. This would also lead to a permanent loss of 5,900 jobs. (Stuurgroep Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2014: 2)

Here, propositions of fact juxtaposed the cost savings for the national government with the economic damage and job losses inflicted on the three municipalities. Storylines surrounding the effects on tourism thus created a counter-framing to cost-efficiency framing by disputing the efficacy of locating the windfarm within the 12-mile zone. However, as noted in previous chapters, the minister successfully argued that the higher costs of building further from the coast would outweigh the impact on the local and provincial economy.

5.2.2.3 The Meaning of an Alternative Plan

Another way of countering the cost-efficiency framing was to present an alternative plan for the IJmuiden Far windfarm (see also Chapter 4). SVH deployed the following argument:

> Are there alternatives? Yes, build beyond the horizon, for example IJmuiden Far, about 50 kilometres off the coast. (…) The benefit for the Netherlands is the preservation of employment in the tourism sector and the development of jobs in the wind industry. (Haarlems Dagblad, 30-01-2014)

In this quote, SVH presented their argument of the economic benefits of the alternative as propositions of fact. While these 'facts' remain largely speculative, SVH did produce research-based cost estimates targeting the €1.2 billion that the Ministry claimed IJmuiden Far would cost compared to nearshore construction:

> The additional costs of constructing windfarms at IJmuiden Far (...) are substantially lower than the minister's estimates. (...) IJmuiden Far has sufficient space to develop three times the number of wind turbines (6600 MW). The additional 4500 MW is enough to supply energy to five million households! Converted to net present value, the additional yield is €566 million. SVH therefore calls on the Cabinet and the House of Commons to fully commit to the development of large-scale windfarms at IJmuiden Far. (Stichting Vrije Horizon, 2016: 2)

Based on such propositions of fact by SVH, the three municipalities also urged national government players to opt for IJmuiden Far:

> With the area of IJmuiden Far we have an excellent alternative at our disposal: a sizable and extremely suitable location (…) with more wind and more space for locating two-and-a-half times as many turbines as is possible in front of the coast. (…) There is a choice. The coastal municipalities are of the opinion, that insisting on supposedly cheaper locations close to the coast is a typical example of penny-wise pound foolish. (Platform Maritieme Windmolen Parken 2016: 2–3)

The framing of an alternative plan through the IJmuiden Far storyline disputed the national government players' storyline of cost efficiency. Unlike the economic consequences framing, which added another factor to the weighing of interests, framing an alternative plan challenged the core of the minister's arguments. Ultimately, the minister responded by claiming that the facts presented in the alternative plan were riddled with errors and distorted the cost differences between IJmuiden Far and construction within the 12-mile zone (Tweede Kamer, 2016–2017: 4).

5.3 Safety as Reassurance and as Mantra for Change

Whenever governments or businesses introduce new energy technologies, especially when considering sites for their implementation, conflict is arguably inevitable. This is largely explained by the notion that new technologies are always accompanied by uncertainty, risks, and questions about safety. Policy conflict literature is replete with examples of framing dynamics whereby government and business players attempt to reassure communities by asserting the safety of a new technology or production site in their area, while activists resist the idea based on their own counter-interpretation of risks and evidence (Dodge & Metze, 2017; Griggs & Howarth, 2023; Laws & Rein, 2003; Metze, 2014). Safety framing almost always displays weaknesses that elicit a limited shelf life when compared to risk and evidence framing. Such a dynamic was observed in the CCS case. However, in the gas-quakes case, rather than being used for reassurance, safety framing was also used by subnational government players and activists to call for action in unsafe situations.

5.3.1 'Your Are All Safe' vs 'This Is Risky'

5.3.1.1 Reassuring Through Safety

In the CCS case, the two ministers representing the national government sought to reassure the residents and municipality of Barendrecht that safety was guaranteed from the outset. They argued that permission would only be granted for the project if sufficient assurances were provided regarding human and environmental safety. Throughout the conflict, the ministers used both propositions of value and propositions of fact to support their safety framing. The first citation below is an example of a proposition of value in which one of the ministers emphasised that a good project is a safe project. The second contains a proposition of fact, in which the ministers draw upon research and safety authorities to ensure that facts have been considered. Both examples are from the period when the ministers made their decision on 18th November 2009:

> I would like to emphasise that, for me, the most important thing is that the project is completely safe. This applies equally to CO_2 storage in sparsely populated rural areas. The residents of villages in Groningen or Drenthe are just as dear to me as you are. If it cannot be done safely, then there will be no CO_2 storage. (AD/De Dordtenaar, 01-12-2009)

> We have always stated that the safety of the storage project is a crucial condition for our decision on whether the project can go ahead. Based on the comprehensive safety assessment drawn up under the supervision of the DCMR Milieudienst Rijnmond [Rijnmond Environmental Protection Agency] and to which the various safety and supervisory authorities involved have contributed, we conclude that the project can be carried out safely. (Tweede Kamer, 2009–2010: 7)

These storylines suggest that safety framing was a key priority for the ministers, as the requirement for safety builds on the assumption that residents will be protected from accidents, and moreover, that this value will guide all considerations in the decision-making process (compare, e.g., Stone, 2012: 129).

5.3.1.2 Risks Abound and Evidence Is Shaky

Since the beginning of the CCS conflict, neither the municipality nor the activists were reassured by these safety storylines. The municipality presented the risks in a matter-of-fact manner, as the following examples illustrate:

> The risk of, for example, falling ill is not included in the analyses. Without this risk analysis, it is not possible to make an adequate assessment of the safety risks of the project. (AD/Rotterdams Dagblad, 05-03-2009)

> The guarantees in the field of safety and how CO_2 will behave in this subsoil are largely based on model calculations. These do not offer any hard and fast guarantees. Model calculations are just like forecasts or scenario analyses: in reality, things often turn out slightly differently. (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009a: 3)

The storyline that not all the risks can be adequately assessed, and that the evidence—in this case, the calculations—cannot fully capture how CO_2 may react once it is pumped into the ground. The municipality therefore tried to stick to propositions of fact to undermine the safety claims made by the two ministers. Throughout the conflict, their focus shifted towards the evidence rather than the risks, due to the three reports commissioned by the ministers to address the unrest among the Barendrecht population (see Chapter 4):

> What has been the point of all these studies? (...) No one knows whether this is safe; there are no examples anywhere in the world. Experts are still debating how this should be monitored. (AD/Rivierenland, 19-11-2009)

Action group CO_2isNee also took a factual approach, thereby mirroring the municipality's framing of risks and evidence:

> Many experts have expressed their opinions on the safety of CO_2 storage. Given that we still have very limited experience with underground CO_2

> storage, and even less with its long-term effects, we must conclude that there are no experts yet. (CO_2isNee 2009a)

By proposing fact-oriented storylines on risks and evidence, both CO_2isNee and the municipality adapted their approach to align with the technocratic safety framing adopted by the ministers. While the latter used this framing to justify their decisions, CO_2isNee and the municipality used it to delegitimise the ministerial decision-making process, arguing that the evidence was lacking and the expertise of specialists was questionable.

5.3.2 Safeguarding Safety

In the gas-quake case, safety was a key theme used extensively by subnational government players. They consistently emphasised the importance of safety as a precondition for finding solutions to the problems caused by gas production. In the early stages of the conflict, politicians sought to emphasise the importance of ensuring the safety of the population, and addressed the growing sense of insecurity as gas-quakes continued and further damage occurred:

> We are committed to the safety of the population. This must not be compromised in any way during gas-production (Dagblad van het Noorden, 30-01-2013)

> As some of you may have noticed from your own experiences, this unrest in the soil is translating into increasing unrest among our residents. Feelings of unsafety in the area are substantial and growing. Damage is piling up on damage. (Bestuurders provincie Groningen, 2013: 1)

Central to this framing of safety are propositions of value that distinguish the positive aspects of safety from the negative aspects of gas-quakes and damage. However, as the quotations below suggest, the tone changed as the conflict endured, and the measures were perceived to be inadequate by subnational politicians:

> Is the government paying sufficient attention to the safety of the people of Groningen? (...) Is our safety in good hands in The Hague [the Dutch political capital]? As politicians, we are seriously concerned about this. (NRC Handelsblad, 02-11-2013)

> The national government must take our side; after all, gas production in Groningen provides the country with money and heat. It is not the treasury, but the safety of the people that must come first. (De Telegraaf, 06-01-2015)

These examples reveal how propositions of value underpinned a critical storyline. Here, safety was used to criticise national politics by suggesting a distinction between us, meaning the people and politicians from the Groningen region living in unsafe conditions, and them, the national politicians who underestimate safety and prioritise money over safety. Making a distinction between us and them is a well-documented element of collective action framing, social movements utilise it to create a consensus about a problem and then mobilise a population to protest (Klandermans, 1997).

GBB activists also used safety framing, but only to convey the effects of gas-quakes on people in the region. Here are two examples of activists voicing their concerns through storylines that build on propositions of fact based on their direct observations of the experience of gas-quakes and their effects on people:

> We are no longer safe in our homes. (…) When the severe earthquake struck on 16 August, the carillon in Loppersum began to play spontaneously, and we saw the landscape undulate in Garsthuizen. With the coming earthquakes, this will become much worse. (NRC Handelsblad, 28-01-2013)

> I have spoken to many people and seen what it does to them. It paralyses them. They can no longer do anything. They no longer feel safe. Gradually, it takes over their entire lives. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 09-04-2013)

Safety was framed so consistently by subnational politicians and activists that it became a tangible mantra for change. To enable solutions, the safety of the area had to be put on the national political agenda. It took almost two years from the emergence of the conflict until the minister in charge began to use safety framing, and this only emerged after the OVV published a critical report concluding that economic interests had always taken precedence over the safety of people in the region (see Chapter 3). Initially, the minister's safety framing focused on acknowledging the safety problem:

> In the area where earthquakes occur (frequently), the sense of a safe living environment is compromised. This has a profound impact on the daily lives of residents. (Tweede Kamer, 2014–2015b: 1)

In addition, the minister's safety framing used a proposition of value to indicate that the government now intended to prioritise safety by embracing it as a necessity for the people in the region:

> Safety is now paramount, and the government will do everything in its power to ensure a safe and pleasant living environment for the residents of Groningen. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 03-04-2015)

Three years later, under the direction of a new minister, the government decided to stop gas production by 2030 at the latest. In a statement of intent, the new minister made it clear that safety was now to be prioritised over financial gain by stating that: 'This is not a day for finances, this is a day for safety.' (NRC Handelsblad, 30-03-2018).

5.4 Making Claims on an Unwilling National Government

Another aspect of framing dynamics is framing claims against resistant national government players. As discussed in Chapter 2, contentious governance involves subnational government players and activists making claims when they perceive policies as a threat. In the social movement literature, framing is central to such processes of claim-making (Benford & Snow, 2000). In the CCS and windfarm cases, the claims were stable and predictable: the subnational players wanted to get the CCS proposals and the plans for the nearshore windfarm off the table. However, a different picture emerged in the gas-quakes case, where the termination of all gas-production in Groningen was not an issue until 2018. Therefore, the case lends itself to an analysis of the claims put forward by subnational government players and activists, which centred on two issues: (1) financial compensation for the region and (2) reduced gas-production.

5.4.1 Demanding Financial Compensation

In addition to causing material damage, the gas-quakes reduce the region's attractiveness to businesses, militating against economic and job growth. People also moved away from the area, increasing the pressure on public facilities such as libraries and schools. This was the crux of the 'decline' storyline developed by subnational politicians to justify demands for compensation. These demands focused on how the region became disadvantaged compared to the rest of the country:

> My call for at least €1 billion in compensation from the government was a deliberate signal. It is unacceptable that this area should be sacrificed in the national interest. "Business as usual?" No way. Pay up! Invest in the area. That can already be done from the margin of gas revenues. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 27-04-2013)

The wording of the demand built on propositions of value in which the region incurs all the public bads while the rest of the country reaps the goods. The call for compensation was grounded in principles of distributive justice, whereby resources, as well as harms and risks, are shared equally (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015; Williams & Doyon, 2019); the region claimed at least €1 billion to restore the balance. Alongside this claim, the Sustainable Future North-East Groningen Committee was established (see Chapter 4), to provide advice that would increase pressure on the national government to meet the demands. Following the presentation of the committee's report, the provincial authority used it to reinforce their demand for compensation:

> One of the committee's conclusions is that the benefits and burdens of gas-production are unevenly distributed and that the balance needs to be restored. The committee has focused on measures that address the aforementioned imbalance between benefits and burdens. (Provincie Groningen, 2013: 1–2)

Again, the imbalance of goods and bads was central to the framing of demands for compensation. By emphasising this imbalance as a finding of the committee, subnational politicians could call upon the Minister for Economic Affairs and the NAM to offer compensation for all their profits and the region's losses. As one player put it: 'The least they can do is give the area, which has been a source of finance and warmth for decades, a chance to develop' (Trouw, 28-12-2013). These demands proved to be successful, as an agreement was reached to provide €1.2 billion for repairs, to reinforce buildings at risk of subsequent gas-quakes and to boost the provincial economy (see Chapter 4).

5.4.2 Demanding to Lower Gas Production

For subnational government players and activists, the reduction of gas production was an important issue. They argued the direct link between gas production and the frequency and intensity of gas-quakes made the logical solution to reduce it. Provincial action groups were the biggest advocates of this reduction. Initially, GBB was cautious about articulating this demand:

> Kamp should also ensure that gas is extracted from the Groningen field in measured doses. This would limit the consequences of extraction. The tap must be turned off. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 26-01-2013a)

One year later, after Kamp had decided to lower gas production around Loppersum, the tone of the demands changed, as this measure was clearly insufficient for the activists. Here we see SG's reaction:

> He might as well have turned the tap on further; this is of no use to us (…) Reduce Loppersum? What effect will that have? This is not enough. We will continue! (De Telegraaf, 18-01-2014)

Similar reactions were observed from GBB following the minister's announcement of the minor measures:

> These are all good intentions, but how will they be implemented? What is Kamp actually doing? Safety is the key issue. If the government is committed to the people of Groningen, then something must be done about the volume of gas extraction. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 03-04-2015)

After closing their deal with the national government for €1.2 billion compensation, subnational government players joined activists in demanding a reduction in gas production. One provincial politician, for example, argued: 'For the province, it is crystal clear that gas extraction must be reduced as much as possible' (Dagblad van the Noorden, 06-02-2015). All these demands, characterised by the use of propositions of value, distinguished between the good of lowering gas production and the bad of maintaining current production levels. However, the framing of demands to lower gas production was less fruitful. While the minister did lower gas production several times, this was mostly in response to successful lawsuits filed by opponents. While the framing of the demands clarified the intentions of those involved, it was the outcome of lawsuits which forced the minister to adjust his approach (see Chapter 4).

5.5 Attempts to Escape the Nimby Label

Whenever plans for the construction of, for example, highways, landfill sites, or the disposal of things like radioactive waste are announced by government players or businesses, it is almost axiomatic that nearby residents will oppose them. Politicians, policymakers and businesses tend to assume that residents' opposition to their plans is conditioned by a Not-In-My-Back-Yard (NIMBY) syndrome. For national government players, residents are assumed to be: (1) calculative, striving for utility maximisation; (2) lacking knowledge, leading to an overreaction to plans; (3) motivated by self-interest based on parochial and localised attitudes; and (4) unreasonable or irrational, and led by emotional assessments of what has been proposed. However, empirical research strongly indicates that these assumptions are largely inaccurate: no overarching NIMBY syndrome has been shown to exist; the best argument of this type amounts to: some residents express some of these characteristics some of the time (Benford et al., 1993; Burningham, 2000; Freudenberg & Pastor, 1992; Futrell, 2003; Wolsink, 1994).

Despite being inaccurate, the NIMBY label remains a popular tag among politicians, policymakers and businesses looking to dismiss opposition to their plans (Devine-Wright, 2010; Wolsink, 2007). Using the NIMBY label is a strategic framing technique that both dismisses the opposition as irrelevant, while simultaneously reasserting one's own righteousness. This type of strategic framing has become so commonplace that opponents of policy proposals often respond with NIMBY-escapist framing, attempting to demonstrate to proponents that their motives are not NIMBY-driven (Gordon & Jasper, 1996; Verhoeven, 2020). These framing dynamics were evident in both the CCS and windfarm cases, albeit in different forms. In the CCS case, NIMBY framing was pitted against NIMBY-escapist framing, while in contrast, the opponents in the windfarm case anticipated NIMBY framing that never materialised.

5.5.1 To NIMBY or Not to NIMBY

Until they defended their decision to proceed with the project at the end of 2009, the two ministers in the CCS case applied NIMBY framing to defend their proposals. In their white paper on CCS in the Netherlands, they emphasised that residents may be concerned about the potential impact of the project on their living environment, implicitly suggesting that resident resistance may be motivated by parochial and local concerns. Therefore, they deemed it important that:

> (…) residents are informed about the specific project in a timely manner by initiators, licensing authorities and the central government so that they can form a realistic picture of the content of the plans based on factual information. (Tweede Kamer, 2008–2009b: 4)

Here, the ministers used propositions of fact to solidify the case for their approach, while simultaneously suggesting that residents were uninformed. By providing residents with factual information, the ministers hoped to generate a 'realistic picture' of the plan and avoid any overreaction typical of the NIMBY syndrome. The ministers' use of NIMBY framing was quite subtle; they never directly accused the municipality or residents of being NIMBYs, instead simply alluding to aspects of the syndrome.

In response, local politicians worked hard to avoid being framed as NIMBYs. Their approach highlighted Barendrecht's involvement in major national projects, including the construction of a new neighbourhood consisting of 10,000 homes, the Betuwe railway line for heavy goods traffic, a high-speed line for passenger trains and a nearby highway expansion. By emphasising their contribution to these projects, the municipality hoped to protect itself against accusations of NIMBY-ism. One politician put it this way:

> Ms Cramer [name of the minister], we would rather not. (…) Barendrecht has already faced a lot in the past ten years. (…) As far as we are concerned, you start a project on the North Sea where oil fields and gas fields also become available, but (…) if the implementation of your policy does come

> our way, we will judge based on facts and figures. (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009b: 3)

Besides avoiding the NIMBY label indirectly, the quote also shows the municipal council's factual approach. By basing its decisions on facts, the municipality was able to counter criticism that it was acting without knowledge. In addition to these indirect methods, the municipality created storylines that explicitly rejected claims that they were driven by NIMBY motives:

> Some of the most important objections by the municipality of Barendrecht against CO_2 storage in an empty gas field concern the choice of location. In such situations of course, quick references are made to the NIMBY, or perhaps in this case NUMBY (Not-Under-My-Back-Yard), phenomenon. As pointed out in the introduction of this response, it is beyond any doubt that the municipality of Barendrecht has proven in the past not to back out of the realization of supra-municipal spatial planning projects that have a significant negative influence on the living conditions of the inhabitants of Barendrecht. (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009c: 7)

Here, the municipality was using propositions of value, clearly connecting all the national projects that they had willingly cooperated with for many years, even when plans negatively affected their population. After the minister approved the project, the municipality employed NIMBY-escapist framing in a similar manner:

> Enough is enough (…) We have an accumulation of safety risks here due to the convergence of railway tracks, highways and inland waterways. (…) So, they cannot accuse us of a Not-In-My-Back-Yard story. Barendrecht is just burdened to the max. We will fight to the bitter end. (De Telegraaf, 19-11-2009,)

Action group CO_2 isNee also used NIMBY-escapist framing. For instance, their mission statement explicitly framed their struggle against CCS as a national issue: 'we strive to safeguard the Dutch terrain from the storage of hazardous wastes in general and CO_2 in particular' (CO_2isNee, 2009b), indicating they did not want CCS in anyone's backyard (Schaffer Boudet, 2011). Similarly, the chairman of CO_2isNee tried to upscale the CCS problem from a seemingly parochial local issue to one of national import, by commenting that:

> The fact that we do not want CO_2 storage is not a matter of not in my backyard. If this project goes ahead here, resulting in a nasty legacy for our offspring, then every municipality in the Netherlands with an empty gas field is doomed. (AD/Rivierenland, 27-10-2009)

Propositions of value were used here to support CO_2isNee's framing, by arguing that implementing CCS may be a bad for the whole country. CO_2isNee also addressed the alleged emotionality of the residents and the municipality. In their newsletter they put it in this way:

> On Thursday 19 November, Minister Maria van der Hoeven (Economic Affairs) stated during a committee meeting in the House of Representatives that the objections of the Barendrecht population were based purely on "emotionality". She stated that the safety of the proposed project had been deemed sufficient by TNO. An incorrect representation of the facts (CO_2isNee 2009c: 1)

CO_2isNee not only attacked accusations that people were being too emotional but also argued that the ministers' NIMBY framing was inaccurate, thus portraying the ministers as somewhat immoral or bad.

5.5.2 Anticipating NIMBY Allegations

Subnational government players often use NIMBY framing in conflicts with their own residents over contested technical, infrastructural or social facilities (Burningham, 2000; Munton, 1996; Rabe, 1994). These players have become so experienced in using NIMBY framing themselves that they have learnt to anticipate being strategically framed as such by national government players. Similarly, activists have long been accustomed to NIMBY accusations that they too anticipate such framing by government players. Anticipating NIMBY framing was evident in the windfarm case, where a crucial element of their strategy was to avoid being seen as opposing wind energy at sea. The following examples are from PMWP politicians and VW activists respectively:

> To avoid any misunderstanding: we support the development of sustainable energy sources, including offshore. However, the measures you are currently implementing to achieve the energy targets (...) are by no means necessary. (Stuurgroep Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2014: 2)

> VW is not opposed to wind energy as such. (...) The Netherlands wants to meet the European standard of 16 per cent renewable energy by 2023, and wind energy is one of the pillars of the Energy Agreement. Fine. But why not place the spinning contraptions beyond the horizon? (NRC Handelsblad, 27-08-2015)

What municipalities and activists were keen to oppose was the loss of an unobstructed view of the sea. Initially, the municipalities drew extensively on propositions of value when defining the problem. At the outset they used strong language, referring to 'structural horizon pollution' (Gemeente Zandvoort, 2013) to negatively connote that windfarms were bad; a suggestion which can also be found in protests against onshore windfarms (Breukers, 2006: 90). This framing could be interpreted as clear opposition to windfarms per se. Within a year, however, the municipalities and some activists adopted a less strident invective, such as 'a free horizon that was obstructed by 'a fence of wind turbines' (Platform Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2016: 3), or 'an iron curtain off the coast' (NRC Handelsblad, 27-08-2015):

> The cabinet prefers locations close to the coast. This option will result in a fence of wind turbines – a fence that is visible from the coast during a large part of the year. (…) Because of that, the current emptiness of the free horizon will get an industrial appearance along the full length of the Dutch coast. (Platform Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2016: 3)

The municipalities realised that by framing their opposition as support for a free horizon, made it much harder for national government players to accuse them of being anti-wind turbine. Another advantage of adopting this approach is that it opened a window of opportunity to propose positive ideas. Seizing such opportunities, the municipalities and activists connected the free horizon to the Dutch national identity, and to Rembrandt's famous painting The Night Watch, which is considered a centrepiece of Dutch culture:

> After all, our national identity is inextricably linked to the North Sea and its unobstructed horizon. The transformation of this view into the sight of a maritime industrial estate is a fundamental erosion of this value. (Stuurgroep Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2014: 1)

> Who has never gazed thoughtlessly out to sea? The sound, the rhythm and the tranquillity of those endless waves. Placing windfarms in plain sight is like sticking advertising stickers for the Rijksmuseum on The Night Watch. (Leidsch Dagblad, 08-04-2014)

In this free horizon storyline, the municipalities and activists upscaled their arguments against the nearshore windfarm. By linking their opposition to preserving 'our national identity' and the 'Night Watch in the Rijksmuseum' ('Rijks' meaning national in Dutch), they framed local consequences in the context of the national interest, thus foreclosing potential accusations of parochialism. However, a notable exception to this usage of the free horizon storyline can be found in the framing by action group VW, which continued with more negative 'horizon pollution' storylines and accused the minister of committing a 'hori-sin' (Verhoeven, 2020: 15).

5.6 Emotional Storylines Countering Rational Policy

Politicians and policymakers typically portray policymaking as rational processes based on sound decisions and an orderly policy cycle moving through various phases (Stone, 2012). This emphasis on rationality primarily serves to legitimise power by appealing to expertise and evidence (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Majone, 1989). Rational policymaking is thus an image, or, as Peter John (1998: 27) eloquently put it, 'the shell of policy presented for public and media consumption'. However, during processes of contentious governance, this shell serves as a strategic means to keep opponents of policies at bay. As Majone (1989: 23) has argued, rationality serves to relegate 'values, criteria, judgements and opinions to the domain of the irrational or the purely subjective'. The same argument can be made for emotions: emphasising rationality can lead to emotions being neglected or dismissed as irrational (Stone, 2012).

Emotional storylines can also be observed in framing by action groups, social movement organisations, NGOs as well as politicians and policymakers engaged in policy conflicts (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). When attention is critically focused in the right direction, emotional storylines are revealed to be hidden generators of engagement and contestation (Halperin, 2016; Jasper, 2018) that convey collective emotions that are able to energise people, carry messages about context-specific harms, or relay benefits connected to them (Bar-Tal et al., 2007; Lazarus, 1991). Neglecting or suppressing emotional storylines in the name of rationality means that the associated harms or benefits are also given insufficient attention, which can further escalate a conflict.

The tension between rationality and emotions is first examined through the ways in which national politicians used rationality framing in the CCS and gas-quakes cases, before analysing the specific framing by subnational players and activists. The latter will take a finer grained look at how anxiety and fear, anger and contempt, and distrust were leveraged in storylines countering the national government's rationality framing. This was especially marked in the gas-quakes case, where an intriguing framing dynamic emerged, when national politicians began to recognise emotions, and linked harms and benefits as legitimate claims within the conflict.

5.6.1 The Cloak of Rationality

In the CCS case, the decision-making process was presented by the minister as rational and guided by an emphasis on facts over emotion. She commented that: 'It is therefore important to get the facts about safety straight, because they determine the emotion in the end' (AD/Rivierenland, 06-03-2009). Nonetheless, after the ministers made their decision and visited Barendrecht on 1st December 2009 to explain it, one of them remarked: 'I can refer to ten independent reports (…) but we have moved beyond the facts; distrust prevails' (De Volkskrant, 05-12-2009). This strongly suggests an acknowledgement that emotions had taken precedence over rational policymaking. The ministers used propositions of fact to affirm their own position and propositions of value to criticise emotions. However, beneath their cloak of rationality, the ministers were clearly uncomfortable with the expression of emotions, as the following comment illustrates: 'We have little knowledge of the matter to understand the emotions you are experiencing' (Energeia, 02-12-2012).

The gas-quakes case was also dominated by rationality framing by national government players, particularly during the first two years. Throughout this time, the minister consistently justified his actions by emphasising facts and knowledge (see also Chapter 4), while disregarding the emotional narratives of subnational government players and activists. When a journalist asked the minister what he wanted to say to the people in the region, he replied:

> I fully understand that they are uncertain and worried, and that it is my responsibility to do something about this. It is important that we gather all the information as quickly as possible and make it public. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 26-01-2013b)

Another example can be found in an interview conducted a year later, in which the minister reflected on his commitment to basing his decisions on facts:

> I needed more information; I didn't feel for a second that I could already make a decision. I knew emotions would run high. But I think it was the right decision (...) It would be very foolish of me not to make a rational decision, wouldn't it? If I turn off the tap on emotional grounds, we'll have to cover 5 or 10 billion euros. (AD/Algemeen Dagblad, 25-01-2014)

In response, subnational politicians criticised the minister for his rational approach and for neglecting emotions:

> Emotion, a little empathy, (...) that is so desperately needed. The minister is unshakeable. Like a satellite dish that doesn't receive a certain channel. A connection that just isn't being made. That makes conversation very difficult. (Trouw, 13-02-2015)

As discussed below, the minister later replaced rationality framing with a recognition of emotions, but only after being confronted with an abundance of emotional storylines from subnational politicians and activists.

5.6.2 Stories of Anxiety and Fear

In all cases, subnational politicians and activists used anxiety–and fear-based storylines. This is not surprising, given that policy proposals involve changes that are perceived as a threat to communities. These storylines expressed expectations of imminent threat or risks that may or may not materialise (Jasper, 2018; Svendsen, 2008; ten Houten, 2007). In the context of Western democracies, freedom from fear is closely related to perceptions of state legitimacy, which, as Svendsen (2008: 108) asserts, '(…) fundamentally rests on its ability to protect citizens from violence, military interventions, illnesses, and other health risks'. In these three cases, however, national government players did not protect against fear; rather, they induced anxiety and fear by proposing projects or implementing risky technologies in collaboration with businesses.

The extent to which anxiety and fear were employed in the storylines of subnational politicians and activists differs across the cases. In the CCS case, anxiety-related storylines only appeared occasionally, with activists more likely to use indirect references for anxieties surrounding CCS. For example, alluding to people generally feeling unsafe, or metaphorical references to the unsinkability of the Titanic. One activist asserted that: 'The Titanic was also one hundred per cent safe. We all know how that ended' (AD/Algemeen Dagblad, 02-12-2009). Conversely, local politicians were more inclined to directly identify and explicitly name the emotions they observed among residents in their occasional references to anxiety. The following is a good example:

> We do not want to be guided by gut feelings, but this is a signal that I cannot ignore. People may develop complaints due to fear of CCS, due to fear that CO_2 will escape, even though that may not be realistic. (...) Fear has a major impact. (AD/Rivierenland, 06-03-2009)

Anxiety-related storylines were employed infrequently in the windfarm case, and only by politicians from the three municipalities. Interestingly, anxiety was not mentioned directly but offered in the form of words and metaphors that subtly suggested it. For instance, they referred to jobs 'at risk' of being lost or to wind turbines that were so tall they evoked a 'frightening or haunting' image, leading to 'concern' or 'shock' (De Telegraaf, 25-02-2015; De Volkskrant, 07-02-2014; Haarlems Dagblad, 07-12-2013). Activists mostly refrained from using emotional storylines, which is unusual given the prominence of emotions in protest (Jasper, 2018). One possible explanation is that they focused considerable time and resources on producing knowledge and creating a proposal for an alternative location (see Chapter 4).

In contrast to the windfarm and CCS cases, where anxiety was occasionally mentioned, subnational politicians and activists frequently employed anxiety storylines in the gas-quakes case during the first year and a half of the conflict. The examples below reflect the general tenor of subnational politicians' anxiety storylines:

> I am scared by the risks for North-Groningen. Earthquakes of 5 on Richter's scale. That is quite something. (…) The minister should come

> to explain why North-Groningen is exposed to these risks. He should take away the anxiety among people that things get out of control (Dagblad van the Noorden, 26-01-2013c).

> With eight earthquakes in five days, turmoil amongst our inhabitants increases. The feelings of unsafety are substantial and growing. (Dagblad van the Noorden, 13-02-2013)

These are good illustrations of the tone with which subnational politicians expressed the emotions of people in the region. Their anxiety storylines highlighted the dangers of gas-quakes and were designed to show national politicians the impact of gas-quakes on the local population. Action groups adopted a similar approach, using storylines such as:

> You become afraid. After every tremor, people run around their houses and sit in the crawl space. Has that crack gotten bigger? Have new ones appeared? It's enough to drive you mad. It can become an obsession. (Dagblad van the Noorden, 05-12-2013)

In addition to addressing anxiety directly, activists also employed the emotional language of 'not feeling safe' to convey how people in the region were feeling.

> I have talked a lot with people and seen what it does to them. It paralyzes them. They cannot do anything and do not feel safe any longer. Gradually it controls their whole life. I know people who sleep with their clothes on, and who run into the street when they feel something. (Dagblad van the Noorden, 09-04-2013)

Here, the activists emphasised the ominous expectation of something bad happening (the fear of earthquakes) and illustrate how this affects people (sleeping in their clothes) (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). One year into the conflict, the activists replaced anxiety with fear-based storylines. Three videos created by GBB argued that gas production induces severe earthquakes; each one focused on a different person affected by fear: a young girl who feels unsafe, a man whose house has become unsaleable and therefore cannot leave the area, and a woman who cannot sleep due to emotional problems caused by gas-quakes. These individuals' personal concerns were all linked to fear in the videos. In the following example, a young girl's story was told:

> This is Mieke. Mieke does not sleep well. Not due to hunger, sadness or loneliness, but due to fear. Fear of earthquakes through gas extraction in Groningen. (YouTube, accessed 07-02-2017)

Replacing anxiety-related storylines with fear-related ones contributed to the growing intensity of the wording in the conflict. Low-to-moderate expressions of emotional intensity, such as concern and being scared, were replaced by fear, harbouring the imminent threat of personal or familial injury or suffering (Svendsen, 2008; ten Houten, 2007; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022).

5.6.3 Narrating Anger and Contempt

Anger-related storylines only occurred in the CCS and gas-quake cases. These can become prevalent if subnational politicians or activists take offence at what is said or done, or what isn't, because they perceive national government players to be exploiting their hierarchical status in unjust ways. In such cases, they blame these individuals and develop anger storylines to restore justice and the associated moral order (see ten Houten, 2007; Turner & Stets, 2006).

In the CCS case, anger storylines appeared when national government players used the Crisis and Recovery Law to restrict subnational government players' ability to appeal against their decisions (see Chapter 3). The following is an example of a politician indirectly addressing anger:

> X [anonymised] feels cheated, because CO_2 storage was 'hidden' in the law. "The ministers kept saying that communication was so important to them, but they didn't consider this important enough to mention. (...) The national government cannot be trusted. It's like a banana republic. (AD/Rivierenland, 18-03-2010)

The politician, feeling conned by the ministers' secrecy, indicated the unjustness of the action taken, equating them to a 'banana republic' and suggesting the national government was abusing its power, thus violating the established moral order as well as the rule of law.

The gas-quakes case was replete with instances of perceived moral violations. Subnational politicians and activists responded by conjuring emotional storylines that captured the anger of the local communities. The examples below illustrate such direct use of emotion:

> People are angry because they feel they are not being taken seriously. Angry also because, in their view, the central government reaps the benefits while the region bears the burden. Your home should be your safe haven, but for many people that is no longer the case. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 10-01-2015)

> There is a great deal of anger and frustration here about the lack of action. All of the Netherlands must know that gas-production can only continue if it is safe, if we are compensated for all our losses, and if the region gets jobs in return. (NRC Handelsblad, 15-01-2014)

Subnational politicians and activists expressed anger about a broad range of issues that they considered to be unjust, including the unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of gas-production, not being taken seriously, and the absence of compensatory measures. However, what evoked the greatest level of anger was a report released in early 2015 by the OVV, which starkly concluded that economic interests had always taken precedence over safety (see Chapter 3). This time, subnational politicians expressed anger through their own emotional storylines. For instance, one politician argued that the people in the region were being 'shamefully misled' and called for a parliamentary investigation (De Volkskrant, 19-02-2015), while during an interview, another said:

> The report's conclusion is nothing short of shocking. It is therefore a gross scandal that a record amount of gas was extracted from the underground in 2013. (AD/Algemeen Dagblad, 18-02-2015)

Both storylines clearly reflect an indirect approach to addressing anger, criticising the unjustifiable actions of the national government and the NAM. A direct approach can be seen in GBB's reaction to the publication of the report:

> We are steaming with anger, but we do not want to descend to the level of foul language. (...) The report shows that our feelings over the past few years have been correct. (...) As far as we are concerned, the time for stopgap measures is now over. We residents will no longer accept this, and we will make that very clear to Minister Henk Kamp. (Trouw, 12-01-2015)

In addition, storylines echoing contempt emerged among activists; primarily the radical action group SG. From early 2014 onwards, SG judged that national politicians and the NAM director ought to be looked down upon, asserting that they had been immoral and unwilling to correct their wrongdoings. These are the typical elements of contempt that are often cited in the literature (Fischer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016; Jasper, 2018; ten Houten, 2007). For instance, politicians were targeted at a parliamentary committee hearing in Groningen by a core SG member who cried out: 'Help people with problems, and first help people with psychological problems. Do you want to have it on your conscience if people are driven to suicide?'[1] A similar contempt storyline was expressed during a parliamentary debate in The Hague, when an SG activist screamed from the public gallery: 'Henk [the minister's first name], if you want my wife's death on your conscience, you'll have a problem' (Dagblad van het Noorden, 13-02-2015). Both examples linked suicide or death with the national government's immorality, presenting it as something that nobody would want on their conscience. SG's contempt storylines also addressed the NAM when their CEO, Bart van de Leemput, was about to leave. SG wrote him an email, part of which read:

> There are pending crime reports against you and Henk Kamp [the minister], how about those? Have you been to a police station? Did they interrogate you? If so, how does it make you feel? Do you feel guilty as well? Do you sleep well? It is the sleep of the innocent?[2]

Unlike expressions of anger, contempt storylines like this do not encourage a call for powerholders to address their wrongdoings, rather the clear intent was to portray NAM's CEO as incompetent and immoral, not to elicit remorse, but to affirm his guilt in putting many lives at risk. When players express contempt, they are no longer engaging in a process with the belief that problems can be solved; instead, they distance themselves from powerholders and issue threats (Fischer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016).

[1] http://www.hskrant.nl/evenementen/19848/john-lanting-beloofd-nieuw-onheil-tijdens-hoorzitting-vankamercommissie/ (accessed 07-02-2017).

[2] http://schokkend-groningen.nl/website/nieuws-uit-de-media-2014-deel-2 (accessed 07-02-2017).

5.6.4 Tales of Distrust

Distrust-related storylines were highly prevalent in the gas-quakes case. Subnational politicians and activists commonly grounded these storylines in their expectations of how national government players and NAM ought to resolve the problem of property damage and the threat of future earthquakes. These expectations reflect the fundamental definition of trust as 'a bet about the future contingent actions of others', in a relationship where A trusts B to perform action X (Sztompka, 1999: 25). In social movement studies, trust is a particular long-term sentiment predicated on the belief that '(…) others will act as we expect or as norms say they should' and people relying '(…) on others' good intentions' (Jasper, 2018: 113). The opposite arises when others are perceived to not be acting as expected, or when their intentions are perceived as malicious.

Feelings of distrust came to the fore when the Sustainable Future North-East Groningen Committee presented their aptly named report, Trust in a Sustainable Future, in December 2013 (see also Chapter 4). One of the committee's goals was a 'restoration of trust between residents, entrepreneurs and administrators on the one hand and the central government and NAM on the other hand' (Commissie Duurzame Toekomst Noordoost Groningen, 2013: 6). By that time, it had become clear to subnational politicians that a breach of trust had been caused by the national government's lack of concrete measures. One politician summed it up as follows:

> The breach of trust only grows the longer the answer by the government to uncertainties concerning the safety of gas production and proposals to maintain liveability fail to appear. It feeds the thought that nothing will come from safety and compensation. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 21-12-2013)

The longer concrete measures were not forthcoming, the more often subnational politicians expressed distrust. This occurred regularly around decision-making on gas-production. For example, when politicians felt that a decision to slightly reduce gas-production was insufficient, a subnational politician remarked, 'Why temper it? More gas has just been taken out of the ground. This has strengthened the feeling of distrust among the population' (Dagblad van het Noorden, 28-01-2014). A similar example followed another gas-production decision in early 2015, when a politician asserted that: 'To restore trust, more is needed than delays. Gas-production must be reduced further' (NRC Handelsblad, 10-02-2015). Subnational politicians also employed distrust narratives to emphasise the need for extensive measures to rebuild trust. One, for example, suggested: 'There is a breach of trust, and you only repair it by taking a firm step' (Dagblad van het Noorden, 19-02-2015), while another said:

> I am gloomy about regaining residents' trust. A lot has to be done to still offer prospects. The area's tensile strength is under enormous pressure. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 09-04-2015)

Subnational politicians only changed their storyline about distrust after the minister announced in March 2018 that gas-production would end by 2030 at the latest. They saw this decision as a tentative restoration of trust, as evidenced by the following statement:

> Very much needed also to restore trust. Finally, some form of recognition and in time an end to the misery. I did not expect Minister Wiebes to come up with this already. (Dagblad van het Noorden, 30-03-2018)

In this case, the idea of distrust originated entirely from sub-national politicians, because it gave them leverage with which to persuade national government players to take more extensive measures.

5.6.5 Some Recognition of Emotional Storylines

Clearly then, emotional storylines tend to originate with subnational politicians or activists. In the CCS and windfarm cases, the responsible ministers did not react, instead, they remained behind a cloak of rationality to manufacture an image of legitimate decision-making. In the gas-quakes case, the minister did finally give way to pressure from subnational government players and activists and demonstrated a little more empathy and some understanding of emotions. At various points, the minister acknowledged the levels distrust and recognised the need to repair it:

> Understanding, recognition, meaningful action, concrete improvements, a willingness to listen and to engage in realistic consultation are all needed to regain the trust of the Groningers. (Tweede Kamer, 2013–2014a: 9)

> The trust of the inhabitants of Groningen must be earned anew by the government, NAM and other parties involved in gas production. (Tweede Kamer, 2014–2015c: 2)

After the minister announced in March 2018 that gas-production would cease by 2030, he addressed the breach of trust: 'Of course, it is: first see, then believe. (…) Confidence is not yet back. That is a fact' (NRC Handelsblad, 29-03-2018). Prior to the ministers *volte face*, MPs had already responded on numerous occasions to subnational politicians' and activists' framing of emotions. Addressing the breach of trust, one MP argued that:

> In the path of restoring the damaged trust, the safety of the people of Groningen must now be the priority. (…) Damage has been done to the trust in your own home, your own village. Damage has been done to the trust in NAM and damage has been done to the trust in the Dutch government (Tweede Kamer, 2012–2013b: 1)

The longer the conflict persisted, the growing realisation that drastic measures were needed became more pervasive, and in turn emotional storylines by MPs became not only more frequent but also stronger in tone. In addition, the MPs also addressed the growing anger on several occasions, as this instance from a parliamentary debate on gas production illustrates:

> The Minister knows by now how angry the Groningers are. The political question of this debate is: why has the Minister allowed the anger in Groningen to escalate so far? (Tweede Kamer, 2013–2014b: 10)

It was only after MPs pushed him that the minister finally recognised the feelings of anxiety and anger. This quote is from the same debate:

> We saw that in that one-year period, the anxiety that was already there (…) increased further. This is also very understandable. It has now reached the point where people in Groningen are no longer just worried. They are angry, they are outraged. (Tweede Kamer, 2013–2014b: 23)

What is so striking about the minister's recognition of emotional storylines is that it played out in the context of a parliamentary debate, not through the media where the image of rational policymaking remained largely intact.

5.7 Framing Dynamics

As the above cases illustrate, several striking framing dynamics can be discerned where players use storylines to oppose each other: market storylines were countered with procedural criticism; cost efficiency with economic consequences or alternative plans; safety with risks and evidence; NIMBY accusations with NIMBY escapism; and rationality with emotional storylines. In addition to these opposing storylines, some subnational government players and activists also made demands that were not countered. For example, in the gas-quakes case, demands for financial compensation and a reduction in gas production were eventually met, albeit partially, but notably the storylines attached to these were not countered by national government players. It was also the case that subnational government players and activists developed stories in anticipation of NIMBY allegations. These storylines also stood alone as national government players did not employ NIMBY storylines.

Behind these relatively visible framing dynamics, others were more obscured but become observable through the schematic summary in Figs. 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3. Examining the storylines of national government players across the cases reveals a consistent use of cost efficiency in the windfarm case, and of market, cost, and safety in the CCS case. In the gas-quakes case, the storyline concerning markets, costs and rationality, as seen in the first episode of contentious governance, was followed in subsequent episodes by some recognition of emotions and safety. Hence, the framing was scattered. This difference can be explained by the fact that the first two cases were more structured by planning and decision-making processes, where national government players can demonstrate greater ownership of framing by virtue of their identification of problems and solutions (Gusfield, 1981; van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). In contrast, the gas-quakes case involved contested implementation, and many unpredictable events that disrupted the interpretations of all players. Although market, cost, and rationality storylines during the first episode of contention were indicative of national government players demonstrating ownership of the problem, this changed in subsequent episodes when emotional storylines of subnational government players and activists became predominant. When the dynamic shifted, national government players began to react through storylines that recognised emotions and safety, in an attempt to regain ownership of framing processes.

Another striking feature of national government players' storylines was their lack of responsiveness. While these players are proficient in initiating their own framing processes, they generally do not react to those initiated by subnational government players or activists; some exceptions in the later stages of the gas-quakes case were however apparent. In every case, this lack of responsiveness can be explained by the position of national government players, because decision-making powers were ultimately the reserved domain of the executive branch and parliament. Consequently, ministers and MPs could afford to focus on their own framing and not yield to opponents' storylines. This powerful position is further corroborated by the fact that national government players ceased framing altogether during episode three of the CCS conflict, adopting an 'ostrich tactic' of burying their heads in the sand and waiting for the difficult situation to pass (Dear, 1992).

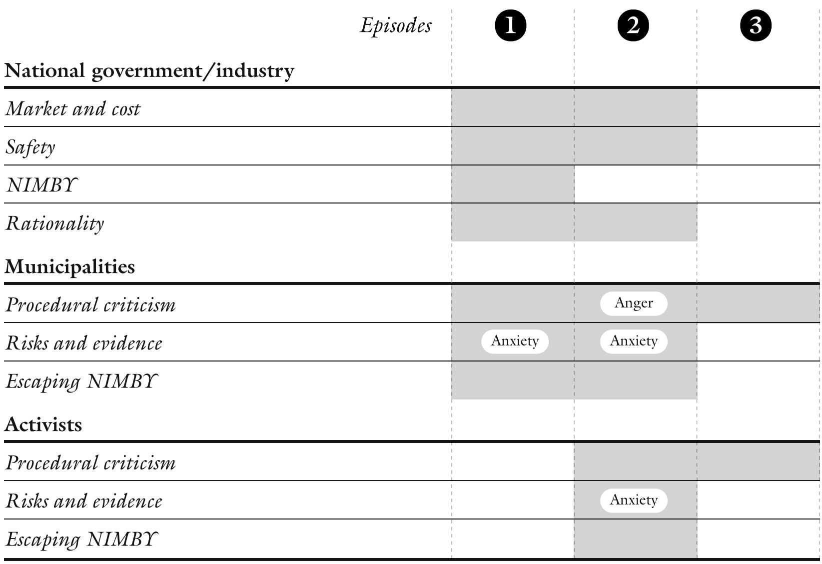

Fig. 5.1 Overview of framing dynamics (CCS case)

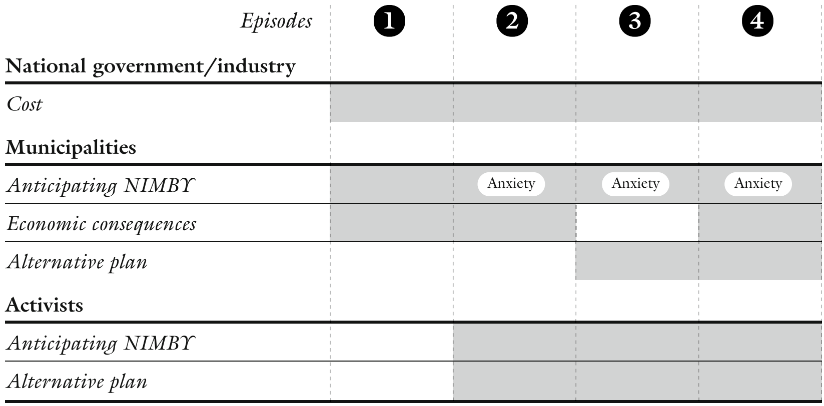

Fig. 5.2 Overview of framing dynamics windfarm case

In looking particularly at subnational government players, there was always one overarching theme of meaning production in each case: anticipating NIMBY in the windfarm case; procedural criticism in the CCS case; and safety storylines, combined with various demand—and emotion storylines, in the gas-quakes case. Interestingly, the NIMBY, safety, demand and emotion storylines all originated with subnational players, indicating that they tended to stick to their own stories and claims. In addition to these themes of meaning production, subnational government players did venture into other storylines, almost all of which were reactive to those of national government players. In the windfarm case, for example, economic consequences storylines opposed cost efficiency, while in the CCS case, procedural criticism countered market storylines, risk and evidence countered safety storylines, and NIMBY escapism countered NIMBY accusatory storylines. In the gas-quakes case, most emotion storylines reacted to market, cost, and rationality framing during the first episode of contentious governance. However, these emotion storylines also reacted to a lack of action by national government players rather than to their explicit framing.

Fig. 5.3 Overview of framing dynamics gas-quakes case

In the windfarm and CCS cases, the storylines of activists lagged behind those of subnational government players, largely because action groups were formed after the first episode of contentious governance. The most important interpretive work had already been carried out by subnational government players, who made sense of the situation and identified problematic aspects of it (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). This was evident when the activists adopted anticipatory NIMBY storylines in the windfarm case and effectively copied storylines in the CCS case. An exception to this was the alternative plan storyline in the windfarm case, which originated with the activists and was adopted by the three municipalities. The gas-quakes case was different, with activists making strident demands for gas production to be lowered from the beginning. Like subnational government players, activists also employed safety and emotional storylines in response to the same actions, or lack thereof, by national government players. To all of this, the activists added procedural critique storylines, that could not be found among the subnational government players in this case. Emotional and procedural critique storylines are well-known aspects of activism for mobilising protest (Benford & Snow, 2000; Jasper, 2018; Klandermans, 1997). In contrast, emotional storylines were almost entirely absent among the activists in the windfarm and CCS cases because they believed that being labelled as overly emotional, would undermine the legitimacy of their claims.

5.8 Conclusions

The most important forms of framing through which players try to influence each other are manifold and complex. National government players often employ powerful market, cost efficiency, safety, NIMBY and rationality storylines, to which subnational government players and activists mainly react with storylines on economic consequences, alternative plans, procedural criticism, risk and evidence, NIMBY escape, safety, specific demands and various emotions.

Storylines from national government players in all three cases were difficult to refute as they relied heavily on propositions of fact that aligned with common perceptions that government players are knowledge-based, fact-driven, and rational decision-makers (Flyvbjerg, 1998; John, 1998; Majone, 1989; Stone, 2012). Subnational government players and activists opposed this by making conspicuous use of their own counter propositions of fact in storylines about economic consequences, risks, safety, and alternative plans. However, these storylines could easily be overlooked or countered with more facts and evidence by national government players. The framing of national government players was also difficult to resist, because ministers and MPs could draw upon deeply ingrained economic rationalist environmental discourses that favour the market in achieving public goods (Dryzek, 1997). This context made the development of counter storylines especially challenging; stepping outside the logics of liberalisation and privatisation that are such strong components of Dutch energy politics and policies (see Chapter 3) runs considerable risks for subnational government players and their allies.

In addition to fact-based storylines, subnational government players and activists frequently used propositions of value reflected in NIMBY escape and anticipation, as well as in procedural criticism, safety and demand storylines. Each of these emphasised values and morality to tap into discursive registers related to procedures and relations (Wolf, 2021), connected to debates on procedural and recognition justice (Williams & Doyon, 2019). Focusing on procedural justice is a well-documented discursive strategy for shifting the focus from difficult substantive claims and displacing accusations of NIMBYism (Gordon & Jasper, 1996). Recognition justice becomes important when the needs of groups and organisations are not recognised by those in power, or when they are not treated with respect (Williams & Doyon, 2019). Both forms were particularly evident in the CCS and gas-quake cases, where the decision-making processes, as well as the conduct of ministers and MPs, were heavily criticised.

A final aspect of subnational government players' and activists' framing was variation in how emotional storylines were used in and across the cases. In the windfarm and CCS cases, emotion words were used more often in the framing of propositions of value and morality. For instance, anxiety formed part of the NIMBY anticipation framing in the windfarm case, whereas anxiety was attached to risk framing in the CCS case. In the latter case, anger was linked to the framing of procedural critique. While such braiding of emotional storylines with propositions of value and morality occasionally occurred in the gas-quakes case, the framing of anxiety/fear, anger/contempt, and distrust mostly stood alone as distinct discursive registers that prompted responses from national government players. Arguably, the differences in the CCS and windfarm cases were underpinned by the awareness that the use of overtly emotional storylines could delegitimise their position, as subnational government players and activists were working against a firewall of rationalism and fact-based framing. As the plans could still be redressed, it made sense for these players to stick to rational argumentation in the hope that their factual claims would resonate with national decision-makers. In the gas-quakes case, the implementation of natural gas production was clearly failing, while national government players and the NAM were making substantial profits. Emotional storylines were therefore more effective when they focused on human tragedy as a means to break through strong rational and technocratic claims.

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CHAPTER 6

The Various Uses of Strategy

While older conflict literature paid attention to the role of strategy in conflict (Schelling, 1960), this is seldom explored in more recent work. While acknowledging that strategy is important, scholars attentive to contentious politics or policy conflicts often equate it with collective action and tactics (see for instance Tilly & Tarrow, 2015; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Drawing on social movement scholarship that distinguishes between strategy and tactics (Jasper, 2006; Maney et al., 2012; Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012; Staggenborg, 2020), strategy can be defined as evolving plans of action designed to achieve goals that inform choices about tactics, framing, opponents, and allies, which are made while interacting in specific contexts. By focusing on the choices that players make, this definition of strategy is helpful in deepening understandings of the complex dynamics between players during contentious governance processes. It also retains the focus on interactions as the locus of strategy development, while acknowledging the planned nature of action by government players. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this definition places strategy at the heart of contentious governance processes, connecting the tactics discussed in Chapter 4 with the analysis of framing in Chapter 5 that are central to the persuasion that runs through these processes. Drawing on this definition, the following question guides my empirical analysis in this chapter: *How do players use strategies and engage in strategic interactions to influence each other?* Answering this question demands a focus on various key elements: unifying the troops around a common goal; approaches to contention;

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strategic dilemmas; and strategy as an emergent process. The chapter then analyses strategic dynamics, before drawing conclusions. First, however, I want to deepen the discussion on strategy by further unpacking the definition provided above and linking it to matters of time, events, and processes of adaptation.

6.1 Unpacking Strategy

This book draws on a modified version of the Strategic Interaction Perspective (SIP) (Jasper, 2015). While a detailed elaboration of this is outlined in the introduction, a brief restatement of the key elements is salient here. The SIP distinguishes between players who interact strategically in arenas to get what they want, or to prevent others from doing things they do not want them to do. During these interactions, players imagine themselves in the position of others to figure out their next move, how new events may affect them and what mistakes they may make. Players then make strategic choices, informed by goals and their interpretations of each other's actions, meanings and feelings. While the SIP highlights strategy as something that emerges from the interactions of players, I add the element of strategy as a plan, emphasising the conscious and deliberate processes of setting goals and designing actions. Conceiving of strategy as either emergent or planned allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between government and activist players involved in contentious governance. I also incorporate insights from third phase institutionalism. In this respect, strategic interactions and choices are influenced by the way players draw on and reproduce formal and informal rules and discourses in specific arenas. This avoids attributing too much influence on interaction as a source of players' strategic choices. Adding this Giddensian solution to the agency–structure problem makes it easier to account for the opportunities and restrictions that all players face when engaging in contentious governance.

By seeing strategy as evolving plans of action designed to achieve goals that inform choices about tactics, framing, opponents, and allies, which are made while interacting in specific contexts,[1] allows the capture of its emergent, as well as plan-based, qualities. Choices thus consider both opponents and allies; reflecting how players closely monitor others

[1] See the definition presented in the introduction of this chapter.

by imagining what they would do in their position, to work out how to influence them. The centrality of choices in this definition opens the possibility that players will face strategic dilemmas: situations where choices need to be made between options that carry their own risks, costs and potential benefits, and where no single right answer is apparent (Jasper, 2006). Interaction remains central, thus enabling strategy to be viewed as governing the ebb and flow of conflicts that are so integral to contentious governance processes (compare Ackerman & Kruegler, 1994: 47). Contexts—or arenas, as Jasper calls them—provide the institutional conditions that enable or constrain players when they invoke formal and informal rules and discourses during contentious interactions. Based on this perspective, the importance of time, events, and how they lead to strategic adaptation becomes essential to the consideration of strategy.

Time is important because interactions unfold in various ways during processes of contentious governance (Jasper et al., 2022): put simply, these processes are bound by time. Contentious governance begins when subnational government players recognise a threat to their policy positions, or when activists identify a threat to their communities. Once the threat has been overcome, the contentious governance process terminates. Strategic interaction between beginning and end is likely to be episodic rather than continuous and linear (Jasper & King, 2020). Consequently, like the ebb and flow of the sea, episodes of contentious governance also rise and fall, albeit less predictably than the tide, with each new wave of contention building on the previous one (Jasper & King, 2020). Within each episode, the chain of actions and reactions unfolds sequentially over time (Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018). During these sequences of contentious governance, players engage in turn-taking or waiting for others to act or react, the timing of which is largely bound by procedural schedules; each setting the pace and tone of decision-making by national government players. As Jabola-Carolus et al. (2018: 4) argue, reaction times can range from immediate to planned, with delays and surprises in between. This ensures that timing makes the crucial difference between effective moves that yield strategic advantages and ineffective moves leading to strategic failure.

Such episodes can be greatly affected by events. As Ackerman and Kruegler (1994: 23, 47) argue regarding nonviolent conflict, strategic choices are largely determined by the pressure of events. Equally, research on social movements and policy conflicts also suggests that events can disrupt and mark the progression of strategic interactions (Jasper, 1997;

Metze, 2010; Staggenborg, 1993; Verloo, 2015; Wagner-Pacifici, 2017; Weible & Heikkila, 2017; Yuana et al., 2020). According to Staggenborg (1993), events can be categorised as large-scale socioeconomic and political events, natural disasters and epidemics, accidents, critical encounters, and strategic initiatives to advance goals and policy outcomes. Such events can alter the process of contention by affecting perceptions of threat, arousing emotions in players and their constituencies, focusing or distracting attention from the issue at hand, constructing or reconstructing interests, bringing new players into the process, changing policy positions, and allowing players to reframe the policy issue. They can also lead to further escalation or de-escalation of the conflict (Jasper, 1997; Metze, 2010; Staggenborg, 1993; Verloo, 2015; Weible & Heikkila, 2017; Yuana et al., 2020). Staggenborg (1993: 332) identifies several other possible effects of events on social movements which are also highly relevant to government players and activists involved in contentious governance. She argues that events may create or remove tactical opportunities, render targets of contentious claims more or less vulnerable, generate or exhaust resources, facilitate or impede coalition building, and amplify or diminish perceptions of grievances (Staggenborg, 1993: 332). Research on events and conflicts consistently shows that these effects depend on how the stakeholders interpret and respond to them (Metze, 2010; Staggenborg, 1993; Verloo, 2015; Wagner-Pacifici, 2017; Weible & Heikkila, 2017; Yuana et al., 2020).

The unfolding of both strategic interaction sequences and events can lead to strategic adaptation (McCammon et al., 2008; Staggenborg, 1993). During these sequences, (supra)national government players can say or do things that prompt their opponents to reconsider their strategic efforts or plans. Moreover, events external to the flow of strategic interactions can be exploited by certain players to gain a strategic advantage and legitimise strategic adaptation. In general, processes of strategic adaptation involve four steps: 1) listening for and considering cues from other players; 2) assessing these cues in relation to one's own claims and actions; 3) being willing and able to adjust a course of action; and 4) acting on the basis of the new course of action (McCammon et al., 2008). Strategic adaptation often goes hand in hand with tactical adjustment (McCammon et al., 2008; Taylor and van Dyke 2004). For example, it can lead subnational government players to switch tactics from lobbying to protest, or prompt their activist allies to stop protesting and take legal action. Ultimately, the flow of actions and reactions, as well as the events that punctuate this flow, can be observed over time as elements of a 'strategic dance' (McCammon et al., 2008: 1139), in which adaptations are made to keep the tactical ballet going.

6.2 Rallying the Troops around a Unifying Goal

To operate strategically in relation to national government players or their business allies, it is important for subnational government players to create internal political unity around a shared goal that guides all actions and meaning-making. In coalition systems, achieving political unity prevents political struggles over every strategic choice, but is complicated by internal party discipline, which often requires municipal or provincial fractions to remain loyal to decisions made by higher echelons of their party at a national level. In all three cases considered in this book, subnational government players did close ranks around a shared goal at some point, but not without considerable political effort.

6.2.1 A Quick and Lasting Unity

The least effort required to achieve political unity can be seen in the windfarm case, where the municipalities had initially overlooked the plan for another small windfarm entirely and missed the opportunity to influence the decision-making process. Nevertheless, the plans for large offshore and nearshore windfarms had not gone unnoticed. In early February 2013, the Municipal Council of Zandvoort received a letter from BLK. The letter stated that building a windfarm visible from the shore would deter tourism and spoil the residents' view of the open water. Consequently, BLK urged the municipal council to 'do everything in your power to stop the construction of nearshore windfarms off the coast of Zandvoort' (Bewoners Leefbare Kust 2013). They also called for collaborative efforts to fight the national planning process: 'Of course, we at BLK will gladly fight shoulder to shoulder with you, but without your involvement and commitment, we will not be able to make a fist' (Bewoners Leefbare Kust, 2013). In early March, BLK had the opportunity to clarify their position at a municipal council meeting in Zandvoort. They spoke of a 'wake-up call' and tried to create a sense of urgency, saying: 'In short, it is time to act, and that time is now—not tomorrow, not in a month or a week; that time is now' (audio recording municipal council meeting 5 March 2013).

In response the Zandvoort Municipal Council quickly passed two motions unanimously opposing windfarms. In the first, they argued that an unobstructed view from the coast was of equal importance as wind energy; its loss would adversely affect impact residents' quality of life and tourism (Gemeente Zandvoort, 2013a). The second, focused on the detrimental effect that windfarms within the 12-mile zone would have on the local economy, in particular, the negative impact on tourism and living conditions (Gemeente Zandvoort, 2013b). Both motions cited how their concerns had been neglected in the construction of other windfarms, providing grounds to oppose the planning process for both offshore and nearshore windfarms. Consequently, the Municipal Council called upon the executive to collaborate with other coastal municipalities and stakeholder organisations to oppose the construction of any more visible windfarms (Gemeente Zandvoort, 2013a, 2013b). The goal was clear: stop visible windfarms through a collaborative oppositional effort. Within two weeks, the municipal councils of Noordwijk and Katwijk unanimously adopted identical motions.

Political parties in all three municipalities were quickly united by the shared threat of the windfarm. Reflecting on this process one politician argued:

> (…) I think politically we all agree that we do not want this. So that helps, we do not have to talk about it locally anymore. In Zandvoort they think the same way and in Katwijk too. But what we need to be well aware of is how is the game being played in The Hague? (WF2[2]).

By depoliticising the issue internally, the three municipalities were able to direct their focus on influencing national government players. Their unified response created legitimacy for contentious governance; enabling the municipalities to collaborate with each other—as they did in the PMWP and with activist organisations, as they did with the SVH and VW. As I explore below, while SVH and VW shared the same goal as the three municipalities, the latter did not always make the same strategic choices.

[2] All interview respondents have been anonymised (see Appendix 1 for more information). In this chapter, I use the following codes to indicate which respondents I am quoting: 'CSS' stands for respondents from the CCS case, 'WF' for respondents from the windfarm case, and 'GQ' for respondents from the gas-quakes case.

6.2.2 Mostly Speaking with One Voice

After the KNMI report linked earthquakes to gas production and suggested that more severe quakes were likely to occur, subnational government players closed political ranks quickly. The gas-quakes created a multifaceted problem, not least the damage to houses that needed to be repaired and the need to reinforce buildings such as churches, schools, and monuments to mitigate the risk of future gas-quakes. Recognising this complexity, subnational government representatives swiftly realised that they had a significant role in safeguarding the interests of their constituents against the substantial economic interests of the NAM and national government players (GQ1, GQ4, GQ9). To do this effectively, depoliticising the issues related to gas-quakes within councils and executives was essential.

In the nine municipalities affected, political unity became so strong no deviation was tolerated: 'The moment a party puts out a different message, it is not taken up or accepted' (GQ3). In addition to the municipalities, the provincial authority became increasingly involved. Despite having no formal jurisdiction, it managed to establish itself as the spokesperson for the people in their attempts to persuade the minister to act differently (GQ2). The need for political unity was recognised early on: 'What do you want to convey in the end? Do you want to show that we are heavily divided and give The Hague all the room to play? Or do you want the other thing, the game?' (GQ4). In early 2013, the provincial authority spoke with one voice with the unanimous adoption of a motion that made a range of demands to the minister (Provincie Groningen, 2013a; see also Provincie Groningen, 2013b). Similar processes took place in the nine municipalities, resulting in a shared set of goals that formed the basis for all opposition.

Throughout the conflict, the nine municipalities remained politically united because they shared responsibility for implementing preventive reinforcement measures for buildings, and were able to negotiate better deals by speaking with one voice (GQ8). This period of political unity lasted until the political landscape changed after the provincial elections of March 2015. Parties that had been in opposition at a national level assumed greater power, and brought approaches that were much more critical of Minister Kamp's policies with them. The new coalition shifted their efforts to focus more on parliament than the minister by coordinating party members to oppose or agree with their national MPs (GQ4, GQ8). Despite the initial political unity eventually crumbling, it arguably left an important legacy as the provincial authority's goals remained unchanged.

6.2.3 Working Hard to Forge Local Depoliticisation

From the moment that Shell initiated the EIA procedure early in 2008, until the Municipal Council unanimously decided against the CCS project at the end of June 2009, it took local politicians almost 18 months to decide in the CCS case. Forging political unity was a gradual process as the parties were divided in their appraisal of the project from the outset (CCS2). On 2nd June 2008, the Municipal Council adopted a motion regarding the decision-making process for the project. All parties agreed that the council would first decide in principle before any cooperation would be granted (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2008). Consistent with this, a leading politician convinced the other parties that any decision on the project must be based on facts and answers to their questions. The executive followed suit by creating a 'review framework' consisting of 90 questions and 55 demands that underpinned decision-making (CCS2, CCS9).

After the EIA report came out in March 2009, this technocratic approach to decision-making was not enough for the progressive environmentalist GroenLinks party (see chapter 3). The report concluded that CCS could be safely implemented in Barendrecht, prompting the GroenLinks party to question how seriously Shell and the ministers took the risks of CCS under Barendrecht (CCS11), and decided to firmly politicise the CCS project by calling on local residents to take action.

> The review framework became (…) the direction the municipality wanted to proceed from by doing it administratively nicely. We as GroenLinks said (…) we are going to mobilise citizens because if we only want to stop it as an executive then we are just not going to succeed in the long run (CCS11).

Suffice to say, members of the executive and senior civil servants regarded this as disruptive to the delicate process of reaching a consensus against the CCS project within the divided Municipal Council. Conservative parties, in particular, found it harder to join the NAE camp if that meant they would be aligning themselves with activist parties, or because they felt a politicised decision-making process would be more appropriate (CCS7). A further concern was that if GroenLinks were to act alone, the opposition against national government players would be weakened:

> We also said 'no, you should not do that'. (…) You all get your turn, but if we now go to the House of Representatives separately as GroenLinks and not with all the parties, you are played off against each other and you have no chance (CCS7).

After some mobilisation of residents (see Chapter 4 on protest), the GroenLinks party rejoined the technocratic review framework process. Meanwhile, the CCS project was incorporated into the NCR, meaning that the national government assumed responsibility for all necessary permissions, and deprived the municipality of its right to grant permissions in accordance with the local zoning plan (see Chapter 3). The Municipal Executive responded angrily to this override, interpreting it as an act of coercion (Feenstra et al., 2010). When the EIA committee approved the report in April 2009, many of the municipal review framework's questions were left unanswered, and many of their demands conspicuously unmet. Taken together, these events convinced a greater number of political parties in the Municipal Council to oppose the CCS project (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009a), culminating in their unanimous rejection on 29th June 2009 (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009b). This decision implied that the municipality would 'convince the other authorities of its standpoint and the correctness of the arguments used' and 'use all legal possibilities to stop the initiative to store CO_2 under Barendrecht' (Gemeente Barendrecht, 2009c: 6). The goal was to do everything possible to prevent the CCS project from going ahead.

6.3 Approaches to Contention

Despite sharing broadly similar goals, subnational government players and activists regularly made different strategic choices. As indicated in previous chapters, goals are neither the only factor to inform choices that players make about tactics and framing, nor indicative of how to oppose opponents and collaborate with allies. The way in which players approach contention affects their strategic choices; in all the cases subnational government players adopted what I call administrative approaches, while activists employed various activist approaches.

6.3.1 The Administrative Approach

When subnational government players develop administrative approaches, they seek to remain in dialogue with their opponents, and thus avoid actions that could be perceived as outside the informal rules of political conduct (CCS12). Key informal rules include acting rationally rather than emotionally (see Chapter 5) and using tactics commonly employed in collaborative governance, such as the symbolic use of knowledge and lobbying, rather than legal mobilisation and protest (see Chapter 4).

There is little doubt that subnational government players are resisting policies when they impose these informal rules on themselves, but they are nonetheless conducting politics in a manner they have been socialised into. By adhering to the informal rules of politics, subnational government players hope to establish credibility with their opponents. The following quotes illustrate this point in the context of the CCS and windfarm cases:

> So we have very deliberately said as municipal politics: (…) we will take a position (…) after the whole review framework has been completed. (…) So that you can really show: we have been informed, we have been advised, this is what we see. And not on the underbelly (CCS10).

> What I think we have done as politicians is always question the correctness of central government's narrative. Are those reports correct? Is the story true? Also on technology? (WF4).

By sticking to rational, evidence-based approaches, subnational government players were seeking to demonstrate that their opponents' proposals were flawed, rather than simply rejecting them based on gut feelings. They wanted to appear as if they were showing as much attention to detail when arguing against policies as they would be if they were arguing in favour of them.

Gaining credibility among opponents was not the only reason subnational government players adopted administrative approaches, they also believed that this approach was consistent with their empathy for the political roles of their national opponents. Like their adversaries, they were accustomed to serving the public interest and weighing the relative merits of conflicting interests. They were also pragmatic; well aware that they will be working together, not only within the context of decisions made on the opposed policy, but also on other policies and in different policy domains. This awareness is reflected in the following three quotes, respectively from the CCS, windfarm and gas-quakes cases:

> We are the government (…) and that means you simply have to realize that you are in a different position in that process. (…) Because we also see a number of other interests, which we are also involved in (CCS7).

> No, we disagree with the decision, and we make our voices heard, but we do so in a politically correct manner. (…) Especially because we understand the role of the ministry and occasionally assume that role ourselves (WF5).
> Ultimately, I believe that as a government, you have a common binding interest, and that is the public interest. (…) My motto is: consult where possible, confront where necessary (GQ9).

Consistent with their formal approach to governing, subnational government players fit into the formal and informal 'pattern' of the administrative approach as if it were a bespoke tailored suit. Just like sleeves being cut too long, or a waistband that is uncomfortably tight, they intuitively understand that adopting approaches that fit poorly with expectations is likely to be ineffective, because like politicians and civil servants they understand what looks best to get things done within government. Subnational government players are therefore wary of deviating from their roles as politicians or civil servants. An important aspect in maintaining role consistency is language. As soon as coarse language is used, their opponents take them less seriously, as illustrated by the following quote from the CCS case:

> A mayor or council member should speak proper Dutch. So, when they descend to a level that, while not quite foul language, is heading in that direction, I think that as a medium, as a messenger on behalf of your municipality, you will no longer be taken seriously on that issue (CCS12).

6.3.2 Two Activist Approaches

Activism is a key element of research on social movements. Essentially, activists put issues on the political agenda, or express dissatisfaction with undesirable policies or social situations, to effect change (Benford & Snow, 2000; Klandermans, 1997; Tarrow, 2011). Activists always look to confront those who need to be influenced. Unlike subnational government players, they can afford to confront, because they tend to focus on single issues, and have little need to consider any ongoing relationships with their opponents (Verhoeven and Duyvendak 2017). Compared to the players enmeshed in the context of the administrative approach, informal rules play a considerably smaller role. Over time, activist groups can develop their own informal rules in relation to their constituencies, but they still have a broader basis for collective action and framing.

In processes of contentious governance, activists exercise their freedom in different ways. Rather than targeting government players to raise issues on the political agenda, contentious governance creates a form of alignment—and sometimes even cooperation—with subnational government players. At the very least, activists and subnational government players share common goals in opposing national government players and their business allies. Depending on the nature of these relationships, activist approaches to opposition are likely to vary, and this was evident across the three cases where two types of activist approaches were observed: a very outspoken form of opposition, as described in social movement literature, and a more restricted form, sensitive to the concerns of government allies and opponents.

The outspoken form is characterised by forms of contention where activists want to distance themselves from subnational government players. Although they share the same goals, they have very different ideas about how to achieve them, and consequently collaborate very little with government players. An example of this can be seen in the gas-quakes case, where SG aligned with the demands by the municipalities and the provincial authority to reduce gas production. However, they felt strongly that this was not going to be achieved through reasonableness and consultation (GQ7). As discussed in Chapter 3, SG emerged from a split from GBB when both founders became frustrated with advocacy-based action and opted for a more assertive approach. The following quote about GBB captures the nature of the disagreement:

> What are their objectives? I have no idea. Yes, they represent the residents. Yes, but in what way? Talking? Participating in a dialogue? We immediately said: 'you're letting yourself be put on a leash'. That turned out to be true. Then they couldn't do anything anymore (GQ7).

SG did not believe in dialogue and was therefore opposed to both GBB and the administrative approach of the subnational government players. In the windfarm case, VW also adopted a more outspoken activist approach, paying constant attention to opportunities to mobilise the populations of the three municipalities to protest. Unlike SG, however, VW did maintain cooperative relations with subnational government players (WF3).

The more restricted activist approach differs in that activists not only share the same goals as subnational government players but are also inclined to collaborate more closely with them. Moreover, they believe that contention can be more effective through dialogue with national government players and presenting well-reasoned arguments. In this way, the restricted activist approach aligns more effectively with the administrative approach of subnational government players. Examples can be seen in the strategies of CO2isNee in the CCS case, SVH on the windfarm case, and GBB in the gas-quakes case.

Ever since their inception in late 2009, CO2isNee were convinced that they needed to collaborate with the municipality of Barendrecht. Many people within CO2isNee had substantive technical expertise and felt that cooperation with the municipality would be more effective than operating as an action group alone (CCS4). Like the municipality, CO2isNee believed that they could achieve more by generating knowledge to counter ministerial plans and convincing the ministers to amend them. They also believed that, where effective, it was their responsibility to organise protests (CCS5, CCS6).

In the windfarm case, SVH had close ties with the three municipalities from the outset. A key SVH activist had previously warned the municipalities about the two ministries' plans (see above, A quick and lasting unity). Furthermore, SVH was formed in close consultation with the municipalities as a strategy to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the Crisis and Recovery Act (see Chapter 3), as one respondent put it:

> I then said: 'Listen, I'm going to start a foundation, because I am allowed to take legal action against the state and you don't have to join me in the lawsuit, but we can all gather information and try to turn the tide together until then' (WF1).

SVH received subsidies from the three municipalities to cover research and litigation costs, but demanded the right to operate independently when choosing what investigations to commission, and which actions to undertake. The decision to commission independent research stemmed from a shared belief that they needed to demonstrate the flaws in the ministers' plans, rather than simply asserting they were wrong (WF1). In this respect, SVH were committed to principles of deliberation, which was consistent with the administrative approach to decision making.

In the gas-quake case, GBB mainly took a restrictive activist approach, particularly in the first years following the Huizinge earthquake in September 2012. The main reasons for this were that many Groningers were not naturally inclined towards activism and feared that demonstrations and protests would negatively impact the value of their homes (GQ5, GQ6). During those early years, GBB chose to deliberate, for example, by participating in a dialogue table with municipalities, the NAM and the Ministry. However, as noted previously, this was to dramatically shift after the OVV's critical report in early 2015, when GBB became more activist and dialogue with opponents took a back seat.

6.4 Strategic Dilemmas

Taken together, the goals and the administrative and activist approaches to contention influence the choices that subnational government players and activists make about tactics and framing. These choices do not only reflect how they regard relations with the national government players at any moment in time but also how they see their collaborative contentious efforts. In the process of making choices, these players face strategic dilemmas where simple answers are not apparent and each choice presents political risks but also potential opportunities (Jasper, 2006). The analysis of the three cases here revealed two strategic dilemmas: naughty or nice, and excluded or captured.

6.4.1 Naughty or Nice

The most common strategic dilemma in all cases is the trade-off between being 'naughty' and 'nice' (Jasper, 2006; Verhoeven et al., 2022): place more emphasis on activism, protest and explicit opposition, or seek to convince opponents in less confrontational ways? National government players in all cases were well aware of this dilemma, and were cognisant of the limits that restricted subnational government players, while also aware that activists could go further if necessary (CCS6, CCS10, WF2, GQ2, GQ5). Another common feature of all the cases is that players circumvented the dilemma by creating a division of oppositional labour, focusing on their strengths, and on actions that were perceived as legitimate by the public (Verhoeven and Duyvendak 2017). Based on their administrative approach, subnational government players focused on lobbying and using knowledge to persuade opponents through dialogue. Some activists adopted outspoken approaches (VW in the windfarm case and SG in the gas-quakes case), while others took more restricted approaches involving lobbying and knowledge input (CO2isNee in the CCS case and SVH in the windfarm case). GBB was somewhere in between, moving from a restricted approach towards a more outspoken activist approach over time. Thus, within activism, there was also a distinction between 'naughty and nice'. An example of this distinction can be seen in the windfarm case, where one of the respondents explains the difference between SVH and VW:

> SVH was also partly sponsored by the municipalities (…) and we did not want a conflict of interest. So a new foundation was set up, VW. And that is where the money [of local entrepreneurs] was put for the campaigning that could be done a little naughtier, you know? If you use local government money, you cannot really go up the barricade with slogans and flyers, et cetera (WF1).

In the gas quakes case, GBB followed a restricted strategy, while SG was a more outspoken activist. One GBB member explains the difference:

> They were simply able to do things that we cannot do. They have more people. They take a more radical stance. They do not need to appeal to our supporters at all. (…) At the same time, I think that has been very useful. (…) A bit of unpredictable action that goes a little further than what is considered civilly acceptable (GQ5).

However, this division of oppositional labour was not always so clear-cut, either between subnational government players and activists or between the activists themselves. As a result, all these players regularly faced the dilemma of choosing between being naughty or nice. In the CCS case, this dilemma was faced by the municipality. They wanted activists to take on the task of litigation, and CO2isNee was the logical candidate. However, while CO2isNee saw themselves as primarily a knowledge and lobbying focused action group that occasionally organised protests (CCS4, CCS5), the municipality felt they were too activist-oriented and might become radicalised (CCS7, CCS8, CCS9). The municipality chose to enlist the services of someone else, who also acted as an advisor behind the scenes, to set up a separate legal action group VDB because they regarded that person as less outspoken. Unsurprisingly, CO2isNee were rather upset by this choice as it did not correspond with their self-image (CCS3, CCS5).

A further dilemma of this type emerged from the CCS case when the two ministers made their decision to proceed with the project in November 2009. After promising to attend a meeting in Barendrecht on 1st December, they were reluctant to honour that commitment. Politicians and civil servants had to decide whether to stick with their administrative approach or take the naughty option of going ahead with the meeting. They chose naughty; booked the local theatre, mobilised residents to attend, and thus forced the meeting upon the ministers (see Chapter 4). They had, however, overplayed their hand. One of the ministers found out and refused to come, arguing that this kind of behaviour was unworthy of politicians. To ensure the ministers attended the meeting, local politicians had to agree to refrain from engaging in conversation with them (CCS 11); arguably, they were left regretful they had not chosen to be nice.

In the windfarm case, the naughty or nice dilemma manifested itself mainly at times when VW or SVH organised protests and sought collaboration from subnational government players. Examples include the postcard action, where mayors went to the beach to sign postcards addressed to Parliament, and the pole-sitting action, where mayors and councillors sat on a large pole on the beach for six hours collecting signatures for a petition. There was also a demonstration at an information evening organised by the Ministry (see Chapter 4). Local politicians were initially reluctant to participate in these actions as they favoured an administrative approach to contention. However, after much consideration, they decided to participate to demonstrate to their own populations that they opposed the windfarm. In explaining the choice one interviewee stated:

> This was a case of the whole community saying ‘we don’t want this’, with seventeen councillors unanimously supporting motions [against the plans], so I am in a position where I also have to show the community that I am actually conveying that message (WF4).

Politicians did not participate in protests at the national parliament, where petitions were presented. This was because it could have damaged their lobbying efforts and because they themselves had no formal role in the decision-making process. Therefore, they could be perceived as activists (WF4, WF5, WF8).

The same pattern emerged in the gas-quakes case, where subnational government players participated in several protests. Examples included the various torchlight marches organised by the GBB (see Chapter 4), in which subnational politicians walked in the front rows. Similar to their colleagues in the windfarm case, they wanted to be seen by the local population in opposition to continued gas production:

> I'll be invited there to give a speech. I'll do that (…) and say what I have to say. Residents of our municipality will also be there. And it's perfectly acceptable to give your opinion on how we as the government view the situation (GQ1).

In all other demonstrations, such as during ministerial visits, subnational government players were largely consistent with their administrative approach when presenting the results of negotiations or hosting visits.

Another example of the naughty or nice dilemma in the gas-quakes case emerged during the negotiations for a compensation deal in 2013 (see Chapter 4), when subnational government players chose to polarise the public debate. This involved attracting high levels of attention and adopting a confrontational stance towards national government players. One subnational player described it in this way:

> You had consultations (…) with the minister, and then a number of issues had to be finalised. Then two days before that, against the wishes of the ministry and the minister, you appeared on Nieuwsuur [a national news program on public tv], where you outlined not only the problem but also the completely unacceptable situation in which the residents found themselves. Speaking consistently on behalf of the residents, that's how I felt about it, too. Subsequently, you offered the minister a chance to accept a bridge on which you could work together (GQ4).

The timing of such polarising moments was crucial because the lobbying process required subnational politicians to avoid constant pressure. It was more a question of 'applying pressure at the right moments' (GQ4). This too involved striking a balance between being naughty and nice. Thus, the administrative approach to opposition also contains a spectrum of behaviour that can be considered more or less confrontational by national government players, and which is still distinct from the activist approach.

6.4.2 *Excluded or Captured*

In addition to the naughty or nice dilemma found in all cases, the 'excluded or captured' dilemma only occurred in the windfarm case. Subnational government players and the activists found themselves in a situation which at the time they were not fully aware of the dilemma it presented. Throughout the conflict, they had struggled to frame their opposition in the most effective way possible. The dilemma was whether to be excluded from the consultation by the ministry to escape the national government players' framing or to be formally included but captured by the ministry's framing of the issue. By analysing the complexities of the events in hindsight, a more nuanced grasp of the nature of the dilemma can be revealed.

Early in the conflict, the motions that politically legitimised the municipalities' resistance did employ forms of framing that could be interpreted as activist. For example, the plans for the nearshore windfarm were framed as 'structural horizon pollution', the 'industrialisation of nature', and the 'fear' that 'touristic attractiveness' and 'liveability' would be 'very seriously affected' by a windfarm within the 12-mile zone (Gemeente Zandvoort, 2013b; Gemeente Noordwijk, 2013). Like social movement organisations, the three municipalities framed the perceived injustices the plan caused. According to the ministry, the municipalities were against the windfarm, and local politicians feared being dismissed as NIMBYs and opponents of wind power as a solution to CO_2 reduction: 'No one can oppose sustainability anymore. You will be accused of being a NIMBY (Not-In-My-Back-Yard)' (WF3). In this respect, the municipalities were skilfully dismissed as moral outcasts and excluded from further consultation. This exclusion led to a sense of discomfort for the munici-palities, who found themselves unable to engage in dialogue with the Ministry in ways that conformed to their known way of doing politics. This discomfort prompted a revision to the municipalities' strategic thinking; shifting from an activist approach centred on polarisation and confrontation, to the more familiar administrative approach centred on lobbying, knowledge, and dialogue, as explained by two politicians:

> But if you look at the beginning, we were in that action mode. At a certain point, we did say to each other that we had to consider what our position was as executives. So we also embarked on a course of (…) discussions with Members of Parliament and, in particular, with the Minister (WF8).

The switch to an administrative approach was reflected in their framing. Rather than referring to the windfarm as 'horizon pollution' and 'the industrialisation of nature', the municipalities reframed their message, emphasising the importance of a free horizon and consistently stating their broader support for wind energy (WF3, WF6, WF8). One politician summed this up nicely: 'The discussion was no longer about whether there were going to be wind turbines. The question was where they should be located' (WF4). Literature on social acceptance indicates that such arguments are made as they tend to be in line with public opinion (Rand & Hoen, 2017; Wüsthagen et al. 2007). This reframing was also supported by SVH and VW. Together with SVH, the three municipalities developed the plan for the IJmuiden Far location (see Chapter 4). The modified framing of the problem aligned more closely with that of the Ministry, except that the opponents proposed a different solution. However, this reframing began to work against the municipalities and the SVH when the minister argued that the IJmuiden Far alternative site would be much more expensive than the nearshore windfarm within the 12-mile zone (see Chapter 5). In defence of their alternative plan, the municipalities and the SVH accommodated the cost-efficiency framing:

> Then we also took a different path and made choices to focus much more on the cost aspect. This was due to the rigidity of the ministry (…) to focus mainly on the cost aspect (WF5).

> We were totally sucked into yes-no games about 1.3 billion or 0.7 billion (…) But we had no choice, because at the end of the day this was the button that was pushed every time, in particular by the ministry (WF6).

By going along with the cost-efficiency framing, the municipalities and the SVH were discursively captured by the Ministry. As a result, particularly during the final phase of the conflict, there was little opportunity to frame the situation differently. The issue became embroiled in a technocratic debate about costs that functioned to depoliticise the voices of the opposition. Amidst this, the municipalities and the SVH failed to recognise the trade-off between accepting the Ministry's framing, which severely limited their political agency, and their ability to explore alternative framings that overlapped less with the Ministry's, which would allow them to repoliticise the issue (see Verhoeven et al., 2022).

6.5 Strategy as Emergent Process

During processes of contentious governance, strategy is not merely a plan that players act upon intentionally to achieve a goal; it also has an emergent quality that requires players to anticipate or respond to the actions of others during strategic interactions. Emerging strategy relies on consultation and alignment, as subnational government players and activists work their way through a series of strategic choices. Based on consultation and alignment, these players can be observed anticipating the steps that national government players must go through in their decision-making processes. It can also be seen in opponents' constant alertness to opportunities that arise during interactions with proponents.

6.5.1 Consultation and Alignment

The basis of emerging strategy in all three cases was consultation and alignment. For subnational government players, this involves intra- and intergovernmental processes. The CCS case is the least complex in this respect, as it only involves intragovernmental coordination within one municipality. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of work was required by a small group that met every Monday:

> We were constantly switching gears. What can we do administratively in preparation? What do we do towards the residents? What do we do towards the Council? And how do we keep everything together? (…) What do we do on which chessboard? (CCS7).

On Tuesdays, the small group would consult with the municipal executive. Similar consultation and alignment processes can be seen in the other two cases. The following example from the gas-quakes case illustrates this point:

> We also hold a coordination meeting every three weeks, attended by the entire college, our project leaders and municipal clerks. To keep everyone informed about the local and the provincial situation: what is happening provincially? What is the impact on us locally and what should we do now? (GQ1).

Intergovernmental consultation and alignment can be observed in the windfarm and gas-quakes cases. When the decision-making process for the nearshore windfarm began in 2015, the PMWP's steering committee met at least every two weeks. In addition, a working group of civil servants was formed that met weekly. In the gas-quakes case, consultation channels were established between politicians from the nine municipalities who collaborated on housing reinforcement projects, as well as between politicians who negotiated with the minister or the NAM. One politician stated: 'Every Friday afternoon, we try to coordinate and set goals' (GQ1). Civil servants working for the municipalities and the provincial authority also regularly cooperated on issues such as filing responses or legal proceedings (GQ2, GQ3).

In addition to coordination between government players, processes of contentious governance also require consultation and alignment with activists. As subnational government players and activists tend to conflict more frequently than they collaborate, coordination between the two is not always obvious. The three cases illustrate the extent to which, and how, these processes played out in different ways: interactions in the CCS case were often tense; increasing cooperation characterised the gas-quakes case; while intensive consultation and alignment were exemplified in the windfarm case.

The strained relationship in the CCS case arose because of the municipality's assessment that CO2isNee were too activist-driven: 'They were very fierce and oversimplified, and were on the verge of becoming ineffective' (CCS12). The municipality described their interactions with the activists as strained: 'There was consultation, which was also very laborious at times because you could see that CO2isNee was thinking "Yes, where do you stand now?"' (CCS8). For the activists, the interactions were also awkward:

> The politicians actually did not know how to deal with us. Normally with an action group it is: "Keep your distance". But in this case, they had to share information anyway, but they did not do much of that (CCS6).

Despite the difficulty, consultation and/or coordination did occur, albeit irregularly. According to the activists, information was shared in an informal manner, and on occasion useful suggestions were made, particularly regarding the lobbying process (CCS4). Politicians confirm this observation: 'I don't think there was organised alignment. We divided tasks a few times' (CCS9). Another politician put it like this: 'We were informed, we did coordinate things, but they did so within their own area of responsibility' (CCS10). Sometimes, however, the ideas about what to do were too different to gain alignment (CCS7). As soon as the activists wanted to do something that was not in line with the administrative approach, the municipal players made no attempt to coordinate with them.

In the gas-quake case, neither SG nor GBB initially cooperated with the municipalities or the province. During the early years of the conflict, GBB occasionally consulted with politicians or officials, but there was no collaboration as GBB feared losing legitimacy with their members by becoming too closely associated with politics (GQ5, GQ6). Furthermore, because of the potential to create the false impression that the region's problems had been solved (GQ6), GBB felt that the €1.2 billion compensation deal (see Chapter 4) the municipalities and the provincial authority struck with the ministry was a strategic error. Politicians confirmed that GBB did not become heavily involved with them: 'No, there was no strategic alignment there' (GQ4). It was only later that more contact and alignment emerged as subnational government players and GBB found more common ground and exchanged perspectives:

> Or at least, how we look at it and how they look at it (…) But they do say we do not want to be part of the decision-making process, because that is up to the politicians (GQ1).

> I talk to them regularly, informally and formally (…) Just to talk things through and about where we stand and what we should be doing now (GQ2).

In the later stages, GBB also joined consultations with the minister more frequently, because subnational government players and activists wanted to avoid being played off against each other (GQ2).

The obverse can be observed in the windfarm case. From the outset, VW and the SVH regularly joined meetings of the PMWP steering committee and official working groups: 'Yes, I always invited them because we were partners in crime' (WF2). SVH was assigned tasks in the lobbying process, such as participating in discussions with aldermen from other municipalities or with ministry civil servants (Stuurgroep Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2015a). They also gave presentations on figures and the business case for IJmuiden Far (see chapter 4) to municipal council members, wrote explanatory notes that aldermen could use (Stuurgroep

Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2015b), or helped develop the central message for communication (Stuurgroep Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2015c):

> We really started to work together, really set a vision together of how we should profile ourselves. How should we position ourselves together? What are we going to do to eventually change the minds of the House of Representatives and the Senate? (WF5).

There was also frequent alignment between SVH and VW:

> Sometimes almost every week (…) we met with X [anonymized by the author] on Friday afternoons. (…) Then we just went and made a campaign plan (WF3).

Intensive cooperation between the municipalities and SVH only ended when there were few opportunities left to influence decision-making: 'We parted ways when we realised that both houses of parliament were going to agree' (WF8).

6.5.2 *Anticipating Steps in Decision-Making*

The adage 'to govern is to foresee' has been axiomatic in politics for a long time. By anticipating their opponents' next moves, subnational government players and activists can adjust their tactics and framing. According to Jasper (2006), behavioural experiments show that people generally cannot anticipate more than two steps ahead, making it difficult during strategic interactions, to imagine how opponents will think, feel and act in the future. This was particularly evident in the gas-quakes case, where national government players and the NAM were not onerously bound by procedural requirements in decision-making processes. Even the minister's recurring gas production decisions were not easy to anticipate because they did not take place at a fixed time of year. In the CCS and windfarm cases, however, the situation was quite the reverse. Various procedural steps were required as both involved policy proposals that had yet to be decided. For example, EIA's had to be conducted, permits had to be granted, and decision-making processes in parliament involved a series of meetings. This enabled subnational government players and activists to anticipate the steps national government players were likely to take.

In the CCS case, both the municipality and the activists put in a lot of effort to anticipate national decision-making processes. Even among civil servants with extensive knowledge of procedures, anticipating all the steps taken by opponents required considerable time and effort:

> However, it is also a demanding process to keep a close eye on all procedures and policy developments. But we have been continuously working on the playing field and the procedures (…) That is the disadvantage of such a small organisation, that at a certain point you can no longer keep an eye on everything (CCS8).

It was even more difficult for the activists to anticipate national decision-making because they had never dealt with it before. In the early stages, however, they benefited from some assistance from a resident who worked at a ministry:

> That was simply the state of affairs. What is happening now? What is coming up? When will something that is important to us be on the House agenda again? (…) You don't just know that. There was some guidance from people who worked with that matter. (…) We had someone who lived in Barendrecht (…) who worked at a ministry, who said, 'Yes, before you take that step, you first have to do this and that in that direction.' (CCS4).

In the windfarm case, the municipality and SVH were also strongly focused on anticipating the steps by the ministry and the House of Representatives:

> But what we really need to know is how the game is played in The Hague? (…) Which party members and civil servants do we need? What is the timeline? When will decisions be made? (WF2).
> You did keep an eye on the Ministry's roadmap. The decision-making process in the House of Representatives and the studies that were then released. So you were aware of those kinds of things (WF6).

In monitoring national decision-making processes, opponents were acutely aware of the importance of timing. For instance, the minutes of the PMWP steering committee revealed that they had considered the timing of politicians' and activists' actions and adjusted it, weekly if necessary (Stuurgroep Maritieme Windmolenparken, 2015c) to estimate the points at which their actions could have the biggest impact:

> We always timed it when we said, 'Hey, this is where it will have the most impact', either just before a parliamentary debate or just before a decision was to be made (WF1).

6.5.3 *Reacting to each Other*

Along with anticipating opponents' next moves, reacting to their current flow of words and actions is another important aspect of strategic interactions. Opponents may suddenly say something or act in ways that can create opportunities but often require rethinking and recalibrating one's own actions and approach. On such occasions, players can respond immediately or wait for their opponents' next move before reacting. Once again, timing is essential to gaining a strategic advantage or avoiding strategic failure (Jabola-Carolus et al., 2018).

In the CCS case, responding to the national government and Shell required the municipality to be constantly vigilant. On one occasion, they were caught off guard by the provision in the Crisis and Recovery Act that prevented municipalities from taking legal action against decisions, because they had not been paying close enough attention. National government players had purposely timed this ambush to coincide with a period of time when the municipalities could no longer exert much influence on the legislative process. This experience caused the subnational government players to realise the level of vigilance required to keep abreast of national government players actions. Respondents described how this inspired a greater level of surveillance:

> Precisely because we had that strategic group that met every week (…) we were able to react very quickly whenever something was about to happen (CCS1)

> Every Monday morning, you would sit down together and assess where you were in the process and what steps needed to be taken next (CCS10).

During their strategic interactions with the ministry, the core of their engagement was geared toward recognising and seizing opportunities:

'It's about observing, thinking, and seizing opportunities' (CCS12). For example, while a minister attempted to push the plan through after the fall of the cabinet, the municipalities were rightly focused on the opportunity to influence the new coalition's agreement by highlighting the lack of local support. This point was incorporated into the coalition agreement, which eventually led the new cabinet to cancel the CCS project (see Chapter 4), and vindicated the municipalities' course of action.

In the windfarm case it was sometimes very difficult for subnational government players and activists to assess the right moment to respond to what national government players were doing: 'sometimes making better choices strategically, in some cases waiting a little longer with certain actions or, on the contrary, taking action more quickly' (WF5). Even for someone with extensive knowledge, this proved to be a challenging process: 'Yes, it's a series of decisions, one after the other, and it's hard to know what the ultimate moment is that you should be heading for' (WF7). Therefore, during steering committee meetings, a keen eye was always focused on identifying opportunities:

> [It] was mainly about what is the status of the trajectory in the House of Representatives? What does it look like? How is the ministry moving forward? What actions can we take (…) to keep the flame burning and to change the minds of the House of Representatives? (WF5).

According to several respondents, the ministry was equally astute in playing this game, for example, they ensured that all information was shared with the municipalities as late as legally possible (WF2). The ministry was also not predisposed to react to knowledge brought in by the municipalities. In part, this was because the minister reasoned he could rely on sources already available to him (WF4), but largely because they would seek to delegitimise the knowledge brought in. As one respondent clarified: 'They actually dismissed all our research' (WF8). It was clear that the ministry acted strategically in their focus on getting the plans approved, as a result, almost no dialogue was possible on the content of the plans:

> They were always focused on: how can we now make these plans go ahead? What is needed for that and who do we need to eliminate or not let get too much attention? That was evident in everything (WF8).

In the gas-quakes case, the strategic manoeuvring of subnational government players and activists was largely dependent on their reaction to the actions of national government players and the NAM. One politician from the provincial authority acknowledged this, emphasising the importance of improvisation: 'Well, there was so much frenzy and dynamism. Sometimes it was just improvisation' (GQ9). National government players were often cunning in the way they dealt with opposition. In the early phase, they bought time with reports (see Chapter 4) before making a compensation deal with the region (see Chapter 4) but otherwise ignored the problems and gave little or no response to the framing of problems or solutions by subnational government players (see Chapter 5).

6.6 Strategic Dynamics

Compared to Chapters 4 (on tactics) and 5 (on framing), it is much more difficult to capture the development of strategy over time. While the tactics and framing dynamics are tangible, the strategic choices behind them are often obscured. Nevertheless, an understanding of important strategic dynamics can be gained by tracing changes in tactics or framing that occur in the context of events. In this way, strategic adaptation can be unpicked through, as it were, reverse engineering. By revisiting Chapters 3, 4, and 5, as well as insights I have explored elsewhere, I identify two patterns of strategic adaptation in the case studies. In Pattern I, strategic adaptation in the windfarm case moves from an activist approach by the municipality to an administrative approach, accompanied by protests staged by VW. The reverse of this pattern can be seen in the CCS case, where an administrative approach by the municipality and CO2isNee is complemented over time by restricted activism performed by all the players. Pattern II can be observed in the gas-quakes case, where an administrative approach by the subnational government players is complemented by restricted activism staged by GBB, and some outspoken activism by SG. Over time, the subnational government players became more activist and GBB's activism became increasingly outspoken.

6.6.1 Pattern I: Towards an Administrative Approach with a Touch of Activism

In the earlier analysis of the excluded or captured dilemma, I noted how the three municipalities involved in the windfarm case swiftly dismissed the plans and adopted outspoken storylines that referred to 'structural horizon pollution' and 'the industrialisation of nature'. These storylines were driven by an activist approach to contention, resulting in their exclusion from the consultation process by the ministry. The ministry's launch of the nearshore decision-making process (see Chapter 3) prompted the municipalities and SVH to explicitly focus on framing and lobbying for the alternative IJmuiden Far plan (see Chapters 4 and 5). The three municipalities and SVH understood their activist stance had been unsuccessful in the planning of offshore windfarm locations, so when the more important planning of the nearshore location began, they adopted an administrative approach to contention. This strategic adaptation, combined with the ministry's focus on cost efficiency, increasingly drove the municipalities' and SVH's contention in a more technocratic and depoliticised direction. At the same time, the nearshore decision-making process generated increasing activism from VW at the local level in the form of postcard actions, petitions, and pole-sitting protests (see Chapter 4), combined with criticism of the project (see Chapter 5).

6.6.2 *Pattern II: Towards an Activist Approach on Top of an Administrative One*

In the CCS case, several events impacted strategic choices. The municipality's initial interest was triggered by the launch of the EIA procedure and the two information evenings organised by Shell in early 2008 (see Chapter 3). Consequently, the CCS project became a politically controversial topic in the municipality of Barendrecht, with an initial phase of cautious opposition characterised by a heavy emphasis on knowledge to inform political decision-making (see Chapter 4 and the analysis of strategic approaches above). The publication of the EIA report in February 2009 containing a favourable opinion of the project initiated a brief phase of activism led by the GroenLinks party. However, they soon returned to the knowledge-driven approach of the local executive (see Chapter 4 and the analysis of strategic approaches above). Subsequently, in late June 2009, the municipality decided to oppose the project. This led to an expansion of the administrative approach, involving lobbying the province and, later, parliament (see Chapter 4). In terms of framing, the municipality's approach remained stable, consistently focusing on risk and evidence framing to underpin their administrative approach to contention (see Chapter 5 and Verhoeven, 2020).

A combination of events within a relatively short timeframe forced a change to this strategy: the decision by the two ministers in favour of the project in November 2009; the fall of the cabinet in February 2010; and the passing of the Crisis and Recovery Act in mid-March 2010. The ministers' decision to proceed with the project created a momentum that prompted the municipality to adopt a more assertive approach. According to one of the politicians, this was a deliberate choice: 'Yes, it was a conscious decision to build things up a bit more' (CCS10). 'Building up' meant that in addition to lobbying, the municipality and CO2isNee jointly mobilised the population for the information evening with the ministers in December 2009. This turnaround was also reflected in the increasingly prominent framing of procedural criticism, particularly by the CO2isNee activists, who strongly condemned national politics. The municipality's framing also became more activist when they called on the public to submit responses to the ministerial planning proposal (see Verhoeven, 2020). The Crisis and Recovery Act further broadened this restricted activist approach when the municipality decided to facilitate and fund the creation of a legal action group (see Chapter 4).

In the gas-quake case, contentious governance was triggered by the Huizinge earthquake in August 2012, and particularly by the subsequent report linking gas production and earthquakes (see Chapter 3). Initially, politicians adopted an administrative approach focused on agenda-setting at the national level and lobbying for financial compensation (see Chapter 4), combined with framing aimed at safety and anxiety, demands for financial compensation and allegations of a breach of trust (see Chapter 5). Meanwhile, GBB adopted a more restricted activist approach, developing narratives about insecurity and fear, while SG adopted an outspoken activist approach, focusing on anger towards the government's indecisiveness (see Chapter 5 and Verhoeven & Metze, 2022).

The 2014 deal between the provincial authority, the nine municipalities and the minister for €1.2 billion in compensation, coupled with the minister's decision to reduce gas production in only a small part of the region, triggered considerable protest and, at times, civil disobedience (see Chapter 4). The framing by activists became much more emotional. Among other things, GBB's framing used more intense storylines about fear through video clips, while SG's framing shifted from anger to contempt directed at politicians and the NAM (see Chapter 5 and Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). Meanwhile, subnational government players continued their administrative approach, lobbying for reduced gas production, damage repair, and the strengthening of existing buildings (see Chapter 4). Their framing increasingly emphasised the growing distrust caused by the lack of action (see Chapter 5 and Verhoeven & Metze, 2022).

The OVV report in early 2015 that argued economic motives had always dominated decisions on gas production constituted a third event that influenced strategic decisions. In response, GBBs' activism became more vocal; organising demonstrations (see Chapter 4) and intensifying their framing of procedural injustice and anger (see Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). Politicians from the region also became increasingly activist in conjunction with their administrative approach. Alongside their continuous lobbying, they too expressed anger and demanded action from the national government (see Chapter 5 and Verhoeven & Metze, 2022). Additionally, subnational government players and GBBs filed a lawsuit to force the minister to reduce gas production further (see Chapter 4).

The final event was the earthquake at Zeerijp in early January 2018, which did not result in any strategic adaptation. GBB continued with an outspoken activist approach, organising a torchlight march with over 10,000 participants (see Chapter 4), and continued to demand a reduction in gas production amid fear and anger storylines. Subnational government players maintained the combination of the administrative approach (lobbying) and some activism by participating in the torchlight march, seeking media attention, and by demanding the lowering of gas production in conjunction with anger and anxiety storylines (see Chapters 4 and 5). This strategic dynamic only changed in March 2018, when the Minister of Economic Affairs took the historical decision to stop gas production before 2030. Contention decreased, and the framing of both subnational government players and GBB became more positive (see Chapter 5).

6.7 Conclusions

In their use of strategy, subnational government players always stuck to the plan they formulated when contentious governance processes began. These plans were set out in the motions they adopted to legitimise their respective efforts to stop the CCS project, halt the construction of the windfarm, and reduce gas production, reinforce houses and get damage settlements in place. Because these are government players, and political unity around these demands emerged in each case, the municipalities, and in one case the provincial authority, had licence to operate in this way. Yet, these goals did not inform all the choices that were made. Rather, they provided a compass that indicated the broad direction, albeit more loosely mapped out than the landmarks and predetermined direction that a detailed route planner might use, on the basis that they were attentive to adjustments they might need to adopt on the way. Goals then, while important to keep sight of, did not suffice as a touchstone for all subnational government players' strategic choices, as these were often contingent on interactions with national government players and with their activist allies.

The empirical analysis shows that the approach to contention is an important filter for subnational government players when determining strategic choices, as they were primarily influenced by their administrative approach which was directed to initiating or maintaining dialogue with their opponents. It also shows that the informal rules on how politics is conducted provided important guidance within this approach. Subnational politicians and civil servants had moral sensibilities regarding what would and would not be acceptable to their opponents in terms of tactics and framing, as they regularly experienced resistance from activists on other issues in their roles as government players. In line with Bourdieu (1991), we can argue that subnational government players have a highly developed political habitus, giving them an intuitive understanding of the political game. This is particularly prescient in the case of new plans, where subnational government players sensed that their contention would only be effective if they stayed within the unwritten rules of the political game. Staying within bounds served to enhance their credibility, provided they did not take on too much of an activist role. In the gas-quakes case, where the conflict focused on changing an existing implementation of policy, politicians and civil servants explicitly pushed the boundaries of the political game on occasion. For example, they were highly critical of national government players in the media at sensitive moments, albeit because in this case the policies behind the damage had already been in place for several decades, and they had less to lose.

Activists who adopted a restrictive approach were convinced that they would be more credible and have greater influence if they were able to enter into dialogue with national government players or businesses, armed with reasoned arguments and knowledge. This restrictive approach reflects the notion that hard campaigning is less effective because opponents can more easily dismiss activists as angry citizens or NIMBYs. This was evident with CO2isNee, SVH, and GBB in the initial phases of the conflicts. Only SG and VW explicitly chose a more outspoken activist approach, kept their distance from subnational government players, and felt little necessity to engage in dialogue with their opponents; accordingly, they made different choices regarding tactics and framing.

In making their choices, players encountered strategic dilemmas. The main dilemma was whether to be 'naughty' or 'nice', i.e., whether to adopt naughty activist or nice administrative approaches. The fact that both subnational government players and activists experienced this dilemma indicates that these two approaches were not fixed. Sometimes, they chose a division of oppositional labour, at other times, either the subnational government players or the activists adapted their strategies. A second dilemma was whether to be excluded or captured this involved subnational government players contemplating what they were willing to give up in return for becoming more engaged with their opponents. Greater activism could lead to exclusion and a sense of ineffectiveness, while greater access could result in discursive capture and depoliticisation of the conflict.

A closer look at the complexities of strategic interactions across the cases reveals an abundance of intra—and intergovernmental—consultation and alignment, as well as varying degrees of consultation and alignment between subnational government players and activists. This provided a basis for anticipating opponents' moves during strategic interactions, particularly in the CCS and windfarm cases, as these were policymaking processes governed by various procedural requirements. It also provided a basis for reacting to opponents and seizing opportunities that arose during these interactions. In all cases, however, this did require constant vigilance regarding the actions and statements of national government players and businesses.

The cases also demonstrate that contentious governance processes involve strategic adaptation over time. Pattern I shifted approaches from an activist to an administrative one, while pattern II, with some variation between cases, shifted in the opposite direction, from a largely administrative approach to one involving more activism among politicians, civil servants, and activists. These patterns of strategic adaptation are strongly tied to the context of the cases and the specific events therein. Nevertheless, one might expect to find similar patterns in many cases because they relate to the extent to which conflicts escalate in response to events. Pattern II assumes an escalation of conflict alongside the decision to become more activist. Verhoeven and Metze (2022) demonstrate this for the gas-quakes case, and Verhoeven (2020) does so for the CCS case. The windfarm case also involved an escalating conflict over time as the decision-making process progressed (see Verhoeven, 2020). However, the three municipalities and the SVH chose an administrative approach, which eventually led them to yield to national government players. This suggests that local protests are much less effective when opposing politicians are engaged in dialogue, as national government players will assume they have the conflict under control.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

Contentious governance is now a salient feature of energy and climate policy domains and is likely to remain so. In a context where (supra)national government players are developing ambitious plans on renewable energy through climate agreements and green deals, the potential for conflict is liable to increase (Verhoeven, 2020; Verhoeven et al., 2022a). The same applies to new forms of fossil energy such as hydraulic fracturing (Dodge & Metze, 2017; Metze, 2013; Metze, 2018), and older forms such as conventional gas production. Equally, the growing global need for energy (Hafezi et al., 2021) is expected to induce an increase in Carbon Capture and Storage (Meadowcroft & Langhelle, 2009; Shaw & Mukherjee, 2022), a surge in windfarms and other renewable energy sources (Hafezi et al., 2021; Leung & Yang, 2012; Sadorsky, 2021), a further boom in fracking (Jackson et al., 2014), as well as significant growth in natural gas production (Hafezi et al., 2021). Along with heightened risk, this has an adverse impact on the economies and living conditions for communities adjacent to the required facilities. No doubt, a constellation of circumstances that provides fertile ground for contention between (supra)national and subnational government players and activist groups, and a marked proclivity for cases of contentious governance to rise.

The growth of contentious governance is not only applicable to energy and climate policies, but also to migration policies in the formation of 'sanctuary cities' (Baumgärtel & Pett, 2022; Bazurli & Verhoeven, 2026;

I. Verhoeven, *Contentious Governance*, Understanding Governance,
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Kos et al., 2016; Spencer & Delvino, 2019), mobility policies in relation to airport expansion (Griggs & Howarth, 2023; Bröer & Duyvendak, 2009; Koppe, 2017), and to economic policies connected to international trade and investment agreements that potentially affect subnational government players (Siles-Brügge & Strange, 2020; Verhoeven et al. 2022b). It is therefore striking that conceptual and empirical scholarship on contentious governance has been largely conspicuous by its absence. The analysis offered in this book provides the first systematic elaboration to establish its significance.

This concluding chapter provides several general conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis of the three cases, before developing nine core propositions on contentious governance. Following this, I offer normative reflections on what contentious governance contributes to, and means for, the democratic functioning of political systems. The book closes with some recommendations for (supra)national government players about how they can change the dynamics of contentious governance and move towards collaborative forms of governance.

7.1 General Conclusions

Contentious governance is a complex triangular relationship between (supra)national government players, sometimes with businesses, and subnational government players and activists, each seeking to influence each other through tactics, framing processes and strategies. Their 'ownership' of problems and the power to define solutions give (supra)national government players the greatest leverage within the triangle by dominating the available procedures and excluding opponents from decision-making. For subnational government players and activists, contentious governance demands constant vigilance over decisions and events, and engagement in different arenas while trying to exert maximum pressure on their opponents.

In the cases explored here, both subnational government players and activists predominantly exerted pressure through moderate forms of contention. Tactics such as lobbying, presenting knowledge, and mild forms of protest were used, and the respective framing was often a dialogue of the deaf with players communicating past each other in attempts to persuade. Strategies were the glue which held tactics and framing together and formed the overarching direction. These were predominantly administrative but occasionally more activist approaches were apparent or emerged. Finally, the cases show varying outcomes: the national government prevailed in the windfarm case, while subnational players and activists succeeded in stopping CCS, and convinced national government players that gas extraction had to stop in the long term. While contentious governance is not intrinsically a zero-sum game, there are always losers—a win for one is a loss for the other.

These general conclusions are the basis for the following nine propositions on contentious governance, which I contend provide a richer understanding of the concept and allow researchers to further test its viability in other cases.

7.2 Nine Propositions on Contentious Governance

1. *Contentious Governance is a Form of Governance on its Own*

Unlike processes of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008), where government players mostly initiate collaborations with citizens, processes of contentious governance can be initiated by either subnational government players or activists (see Chapter 6 on rallying the troops). It shapes contestation and forges collaboration built upon a shared sense of threat that binds subnational government players and activists. In contrast to collaborative governance, which seeks stable longer-term relationships, collaborations made during contentious governance tend to be terminated when the threat is over. Although based on vast power asymmetries, there is little to suggest that the relationship between subnational government players and activists is marked by manipulation or co-optation. Rather, their cooperation is underpinned by pragmatism; subnational government players only getting involved if there is an internal political consensus that gives them licence to do so.

The contestation builds on multilevel dynamics, with vertical strategic interactions between (supra)national and subnational government players at its core, with differential processes likely to develop across political systems. An important factor is the degree of autonomy experienced by subnational players in combination with the amount of hierarchical action undertaken by higher tiers of government. As a generalisable rule of thumb, I would argue that the greater the level of autonomy in the intergovernmental system, and the higher the use of hierarchy, the more likely it is that contentious governance will arise. While activists play very much their own part in these processes of contention, the multilevel dynamics between the (supra)national and the subnational government players influences how they collaborate with the latter.[1]

2. *Contentious Governance is a Form of Conflict on its Own*

The theoretical possibility of governments initiating contentious claims (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015) has been further conceptualised and empirically investigated. The empirical analysis confirms that subnational government players can initiate contentious claims themselves, can be a target of contentious claims, and can be powerful collaborative partners to the claims made by activists. During such processes, there are a number of familiar conflict escalation dynamics: seeking support from other players through scale shift (see Chapter 4); firm investment of resources (see Chapter 4) and increasing intensity in the framing of emotions (see Chapter 5).

Despite similarities with policy conflicts, contentious governance distinguishes itself by more complex dynamics between players. The cliche image of policy conflicts is that of activists opposing a government player, e.g., citizens opposing a waste incinerator, a homeless shelter, or a new airport runway. Contentious governance always involves at least two government players opposing each other and can include various groups of activists. With such constellations, conflict dynamics are immediately messier, as government players and activists leverage a division of oppositional labour in which the former are nice, and the latter naughty (see Chapter 6). This creates a plurality of contention and the simultaneous use of escalating and de-escalating tactics and framing. With such a divergence of tactics and framing in place, it is not so difficult to distinguish contentious governance from your average dichotomous policy conflict.

[1] This aspect is given further nuance in propositions 4–7 below.

3. *Contentious Governance is Easier for* (supra) *national Government Players to Engage in*

Seen as a strategic game, contentious governance is easier for higher tiers of government to play as they hold key strategic advantages. In all three cases, national government players had the power to define the problems and the solutions: CO_2 reduction was the important problem in two cases, and CCS and windfarms respectively, were the innovative contributions to solving it; in the remaining case, the secure supply of an energy source to consumers and meeting export agreements were the problem, and continued gas production by the NAM provided the solution. By naming policy issues, (supra)national government players assert their ownership over problems and solutions (Gusfield, 1981). This enables them to direct courses of action, determine relevant knowledge, and to define meaning (Rein & Schön, 1993). By positioning themselves as guardians of markets in all three cases, national government players managed to reduce and depoliticise their role, and present themselves as the rational decision-makers that allowed markets to function. This role is rooted in established discourses of administrative rationalism (the government arrives at rational decisions based on knowledge and experts) and economic rationalism (the market offers the most efficient and effective solutions), which mobilise deep-rooted discursive power structures that are difficult-to-challenge (Dryzek, 1997). In this respect, rationalism became the Teflon coating that legitimised national government players' actions and simultaneously allowed them to ignore or criticise others.

National government players can thus constantly mobilise knowledge in conjunction with market and cost framing to legitimise decisions and tick the boxes of procedural requirements associated with the formulation of new policies. The Teflon coating proved so effective in the windfarm case that national government players could afford to largely ignore the framing by subnational government players and activists, and, in the CCS case, enabled the dismissal of opponents as NIMBYs. The same dynamic was apparent in the first few years of the gas-quakes case, although the persistent lobbying, protest and litigation, in combination with the framing of emotions, eventually chipped away at the Teflon coating that led to decisions to reduce and, in the long run, terminate natural gas production.

The power dynamics evident in the tactics and framing employed by national government players are probably not unique to Dutch cases. Energy policy subsystems around the world face major challenges in scaling up renewables or phasing out older forms of energy production. (Supra)national government players worldwide are deeply committed to global climate targets, which can only be met if they put pressure on businesses or make major investments in the energy sector themselves. This is likely to result in directive attitudes that can trigger resistance from subnational government players and activists, thereby provoking contentious governance within and beyond singular policy subsystems (Verhoeven, 2020; Verhoeven et al., 2022b).

4. *Contentious Governance is Demanding for Subnational Government Players and Activists*

Subnational government players and activists face greater difficulties when engaging in contentious governance. In contrast to (supra)national government players, they benefit from politicising controversial policies by adapting their tactics, framing and strategies to changing circumstances, but with limited relative power and resources, they are dependent on persuasion. They must persistently monitor what opponents are doing, demanding well-honed interpretive skills, if they are to respond effectively to opportunities that arise during strategic interactions. In the ebb and flow of successive episodes of contentious governance, subnational government players and activists must constantly ask themselves the Goffmanian question: 'What is it that's going on here?' (Goffman, 1974: 8). The answers will have consequences for their strategic choices, tactics and framing. Two crucial factors influencing this dynamic are events and operating in multiple arenas.

Events can have a big impact on the interpretations subnational government players and activists make. There are plenty of examples in the three cases. In the CCS case, the fall of the cabinet led the municipality to shift to an activist approach, framing procedural criticism and increasing their mobilisation of the population for protest. This was due to ministers continuing the active pursual of the project even though the cabinet had collapsed. With the new coalition yet to be established, the municipality interpreted the situation as one that demanded greater politicisation to elicit the support of political parties who were jostling for political power. Conversely, in the windfarm case, the start of the decision-making process on the nearshore windfarm was interpreted by the municipalities and activists as a serious increase in impetus, galvanising them to develop well-informed alternative plans. Their strategy thus shifted to a more administrative approach focused on knowledge and lobbying as the main tactics. In the gas-quakes case, the report by the OVV was the pivotal event. It stimulated a reinterpretation of the national government's policies as mistaken, justifying a more assertive strategic approach based on procedural criticism, anger and contempt, combined with protest-oriented tactics. The interpretation of events is heavily influenced by the temporal and political elements of the decision-making context. Events do not have to be major occurrences, such as earthquakes or the collapse of a government, sometimes a small incident, crystallised at a delicate moment, or the propitious timing of a report can be enough to prompt a 'critical moment' that inspires an adjustment of tactics, framing or strategy (Verloo, 2015). Viewed in this way, events act as instruments of perpetual motion, greatly influencing the dynamics between players during episodes of contentious governance.

In addition to events, being active in different arenas is very important for subnational government players and activists. In the CCS case, the municipalities and activists lobbied in the political arena of the provincial authority and later switched to the national parliament. In the windfarm case, lobbying the national parliament went hand in hand with the organisation of protests on the beach. In the gas-quakes case, lobbying in parliament was combined with local street protests, interspersed with litigation. Being active in different arenas poses more than logistical difficulties. While pressure can be exerted on opponents in different ways and across different fora, thus maximising their persuasive efforts, each arena has its own formal and informal rules and discourses that determine what is appropriate to say or do (Hajer, 2009; Pralle, 2003). Unlike (supra)national government players, who have a wealth of specialised expertise at their disposal, subnational government players and activists have to work harder to respond effectively across arenas.

Furthermore, outcomes in one arena can reinforce, or undermine, the pressure in another (see Pralle, 2003 on venue shopping). For example, the outcome of a court case can strengthen the arguments used in a lobbying process or during protests. However, outcomes in some arenas can also limit what players can do and say in others. For example, the establishment of facts by a judge can have an impact on what knowledge and arguments can be mobilised in a lobbying process (cf. Elliott, 2003; Flynn, 2011). Finally, success in one arena can increase the degree of influence in another. For example, in the gas-quakes case, legal victories that forced the minister to reduce gas production served to convince political parties in parliament that gas production should be terminated on safety grounds.

The work required in relation to responding to events and operating in multiple arenas is further complicated by the relations between subnational government players and activists. The analysis in Chapter 6 illustrates that while these players may regularly reinforce each other, they can also struggle to understand one another, forming an attraction-repulsion dynamic as the case unfolds.

5. *Contentious governance is dominated by moderate contention*

The three cases were all characterised by distinctly moderate forms of contention (Verhoeven et al., 2022b) that focused primarily on redressing or blocking policy through the dominant use of established tactics such as negotiation, lawsuits, or lobbying, in combination with contained forms of collective action such as petitions or demonstrations (see Chapter 4). In contrast, conservative forms of contention focus on mitigating undesirable policy through established political consultation tactics, while radical forms of contention focus on replacing policy through prefiguration and protest. A characteristic of moderate contention is the co-opting of rules to gain strategic advantages. This was evident in Chapter 6, where procedural steps were followed to put pressure on (supra)national decision-making processes. Conservative contention accepts the existing rules of the game, while radical contention would seek to subvert and transform the rules (Verhoeven et al., 2022b).

Moderate contention was also evident in the search for recognition from higher authorities *and* by local or regional communities. This can be seen in chapter 6, where local politicians were often acting nice towards the national government and naughtier within their community, participating in protests organised by activists. Conservative forms of contention only seek recognition from higher authorities, while overtly radical forms of contention mainly seek recognition from activists (Verhoeven et al., 2022b). A final characteristic of moderate contention is that pragmatism underpins cooperation between subnational government players and activists: joint activities last as long as the shared threat exists. These players rarely become too close. By contrast, during conservative contention, government players do not cooperate at all with activists, while in the radical variant, the boundaries between these players are commonly blurred through intense cooperation and strong ties (Verhoeven et al. 2022b). The cases do reveal minor deviations from moderate contention; close cooperation between the three municipalities and SVH, for example, in the wind farm case, and in the more radical tactics employed by SG in the gas-quakes case. In all cases, subnational government players maintained conservative elements to their approaches, not least because they need to remain in formal dialogue with ministries.

One can expect contentious governance to be predominantly moderate beyond energy and climate policy domains, and in other liberal democracies where contained action repertoires and administrative and activist strategic approaches to contention are deeply rooted. This does not mean, of course, that radical forms of contentious governance cannot emerge, indeed resistance in Western Europe by municipalities and many NGOs to the EU–US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) had a strong prefigurative character. In this respect, municipalities were declared TTIP-Free Zones where the provisions of the trade-deal would not apply (Verhoeven et al. 2022b). Similar examples of radical contention can be found in the policy domain of migration. The establishment of sanctuary cities, such as in Barcelona, for example, has seen the emergence of alternative migration policies, diametrically opposed to harsh national policies focused on deportation (Bazurli & Verhoeven, 2026). Explicitly conservative forms of contentious governance do not exist because subnational government players who adhere to conservative forms of contestation do not cooperate with activists (Verhoeven et al. 2022b).

6. *Contentious governance is mostly a dialogue of the deaf*

The framing dynamics in processes of contentious governance are characterised by players who are often not willing to listen to, or understand, each other. The analysis in Chapter 5 shows how national government players pursue their own framing processes, characterised by depoliticised, technocratic, and rational storylines based on propositions of fact.

Occasionally these players use propositions of value, when accusing subnational government and activist opponents of NIMBY-ism, for instance. By sticking to this type of framing, they can mostly afford to neglect, or respond minimally, to the framing articulated by their adversaries. Meanwhile, subnational government players and activists developed relatively stable framing of the problems that formed their claim-making.

The one exception to the dialogue of the deaf was found in the gasquakes case. The framing by national government players was already somewhat incoherent, rendering it vulnerable and presenting opportunities for opponents. Over time, the framing of safety issues and the evolving emotional storylines, adapted to specific events, became increasingly difficult to ignore. This illustrates how a sustained expression of emotional storylines can penetrate unstable framing, force national government players to develop responses that acknowledged the expression of emotions and gradually wrestle the ownership of the problem from them. In the CCS and windfarm cases, this would have been difficult because the stable technocratic and rational framing of the problem was effective in rendering emotional storylines as irrelevant, or indicative of NIMBY-ism.

Whenever the dialogue of the deaf occurs, it can be regarded as a basic ingredient of the underlying conflict dynamics of contentious governance. Chapter 2 shows how conflicts escalate when players, unwilling to compromise on their own policy position, seek to impose their own definition of the problem and its corresponding solution on others (Glasl, 1982; Rubin et al., 1994; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022; Weible & Heikkila, 2017). Hence, as far as possible, players will stick to their own framing of the problem (Schön & Rein, 1994). When they do, as in the cases in this book, the dialogue of the deaf assumes that national government players will conduct themselves in a depoliticised and rational manner. However, in a world where populists are increasingly participating in or even leading national governments, it is arguable whether this assumption is still tenable. After all, populists are characterised by their permanent campaigning, criticism of elites and their frequent use of emotional storylines (Bonansinga, 2022; Lotta et al., 2024; Salmela & von Scheve, 2018).

The involvement of populists can play out in two ways for contentious governance. On the one hand, it could result in more intense and politicised conflicts, with the players frequently responding through increased use of emotional storylines in their framing. In this sense, contentious governance is likely to be a conflict based on image-building, rather than on knowledge-based rationality and following the rules of the game. On the other hand, it could also mean that subnational government players are becoming increasingly silenced by national politicians claiming that they act against the will of the people. As the self-proclaimed mouthpiece of the people, the national government could isolate itself from counter-arguments and emotional storylines, dismissing them as elitist politics. It would be more difficult to suppress the arguments and emotional storylines of activists, but they can still be dismissed as unrepresentative of the will of the people.

7. *Contentious governance is deeply political and strategic*

The empirical analysis allows for an elaboration on one of the central themes of this book in greater detail, namely, that contentious governance represents a distinctively strategic take on the nature of politics. First, contentious governance is a deeply political process in the obvious sense of a political order that Chantal Mouffe (2005) refers to as 'politics'. Politics is reflected throughout this book in the prominent role of politicians, political arenas, and decision-making processes. But contentious governance also relates to what Chantal Mouffe (2005) refers to as 'the political', by which she means the deep potential for conflict and antagonism that is constitutive of societies. By adding the dimension of conflict, the notion of the political is formative for processes of contentious governance.

Due to its conflictual nature, the political introduces the need to persuade others, thereby eliciting strategic behaviour and strategic interactions. This is evident in the opposing goals of players, the strategic approaches to contention that inform their choices, and in the strategic interactions in which they engage. It is precisely this broad array, in which strategy manifests itself, that confirms Jaspers' (2006) idea that strategy is so much more than calculating behaviour. Strategy is deeply cultural and is largely shaped by the interpretations that players make of each other's tactics, meanings, and emotions, and of the institutional contexts in which they interact with each other. Such interpretations do not exclude rationality but are only determined to a limited extent by rational thinking, as can be seen in the form of claims made by the players, and in the importance of the administrative and activist approaches that act as filters for their choices.

8. *Contentious governance produces mixed outcomes*

The results of contentious governance differed across the cases explored in this book; it seems reasonable to assume that differential outcomes are likely wherever contention occurs. In the windfarm case, the opponents achieved virtually nothing. The three municipalities and the action groups faced a united front of national government players, and despite their best efforts the national government players retained ownership of the problem with relative ease and saw little need to respond. This is evidenced, among other things, by their consistent cost framing (see Chapter 5) and the excluded or captured dilemma in which the opponents found themselves (see Chapter 6).

In the CCS case, the municipality and the activists were successful in getting the plan to store CO_2 under Barendrecht off the table. This outcome is partly explained by the lack of a united front at the national level, because political parties outside the coalition were also critical of CCS. Nevertheless, most of the tactics and framing processes used by the opponents proved to be ineffective. The proponents and opponents largely talked past each other. The crucial factor underlying the municipality and the activists' success was the well-timed lobbying based on the procedural criticism that there was no local support for the CCS project. By first lobbying and successfully gaining the support of the provincial government against the project (see Chapter 4), the opponents made optimal use of the window of opportunity created by the fall of the cabinet (see Chapters 3 and 4) to persuade parties that were in the process of forming a coalition that the CCS project had to be scrapped (see also Verhoeven, 2020).

In the gas-quakes case, the opponents were successful, and in March 2018 the decision was made to terminate gas production at the latest by 2030 (see Chapter 3). Although there was a united front at the national level during the first episode of contention, this slowly crumbled in subsequent episodes. This was reflected in, inter alia successful lobbying in 2014 that led to €1.2 billion being awarded to the region (see Chapter 4); national government players losing ownership of the problem's definition (see Chapter 5 and also point 6 above); increasing framing of anger and distrust to put pressure on the minister in parliament (see Chapter 5); and in the successful litigation that forced the reduction of gas production (see Chapter 4). What makes this case different was the frequent recurrence of damage due to successive gas-quakes, while gas production demonstrably did not decrease, and repairs to existing damage proceeded very slowly. This made it easier for opponents to make claims, adjust their tactics accordingly, gain more political support within parliament, and witness the eventual (in 2030) cancellation of the project.

It is safe to assert that there is certainly something for subnational government players and activists to gain in processes of contentious governance. The degree of success they can achieve, however, depends heavily on the degree of political division at the national level (in coalition systems) and on events such as the collapse of a government or regular elections. Of course, subnational government players and activists still need a great deal of strategic insight, tactical adaptability and, where necessary, the agility to reframe the problem if they are to successfully pressure national government players to change course. This type of dynamic is likely to develop differently within majoritarian political systems. While regular elections can also be a game changer in such systems, this does not apply to the fall of governments, which depends on parties leaving a coalition.

9. *Contentious governance is conceptually and analytically innovative*

This book draws on social movement and public policy literature to shed light on an empirical phenomenon that has hitherto been absent from either field. Social movement scholarship, and the contentious politics literature derived from it, has much to offer. Insights about governments that can behave contentiously in response to a threat, insights about how protest works, the strategic interaction perspective (SIP), and insights about tactics, framing, and emotions have all provided important building blocks for understanding contentious governance. Public policy literature, too, offers a wealth of insights into governance, and associated ideas about cooperation and mutual dependencies. This literature also provides perspectives on conflict dynamics in policy conflicts, processes of meaning-making, and on the role of knowledge. Building on these insights, I have coined the concept of contentious governance and developed an analytical lens focused on tactics, framing, and strategy that enables empirical research on this phenomenon. This provides scholars of social movements and public policy a toolkit to study contentious governance, so that it no longer remains an orphan being pulled in two different directions. The empirical analysis of contentious governance, however, presented several analytical challenges that required three key innovations.

First, it was necessary to combine tactics and framing in the analysis of strategic behaviour. This required a combination of behaviourist and interpretative approaches that are often considered incompatible in public policy literature. Largely as a result of decades of epistemological boundary work by Actor Coalition Framework (ACF) scholars, and interpretative scholars, research has been siloed in one camp or the other. Among other things, different assumptions about rationality and human behaviour, the role of meaning-making, methodological individualism, and relationality made it difficult to combine aspects of these approaches. Although my analysis of human behaviour through tactics is only one aspect of ACF (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) and related approaches such as the Policy Conflict Framework (Weible & Heikkila, 2017), it is an important element in the empirical analysis of contentious governance. The same applies to the analysis of meaning-making from an interpretative approach focused on framing processes and storylines. Without the combination of tactics and framing, my analysis of contentious governance would have been one-sided. With this research, I thus join a group of public policy scholars that find it worthwhile to explore how combining behaviourist and interpretative approaches can help to better understand empirical puzzles (Durnova & Weible, 2020).

The second innovation was to analyse tactics, framing, and strategy from a dynamic perspective. To my knowledge, this has not been previously undertaken. Social movement literature either looks at the use of specific tactics or the historical development of tactical repertoires (Tarrow, 2011; Taylor & van Dyke, 2004). In this analysis, I am more attentive to the dynamic way in which specific tactics change over time in specific cases, or how a range of tactics emerge, adjust or transform over time and can be compared across several cases. A dynamic analysis of framing processes was also innovative, because most studies primarily focus on frames, a problem recognised several times by the founders of the framing perspective in social movement literature (Benford, 1997; Snow et al., 2014), and by public policy scholars (Dewulf et al., 2009; Van

Hulst & Yanow, 2014; Gray, 2003). Studying framing from an interactional perspective requires a focus on 'framing dynamics', which I defined as 'the various ways in which players construct, negotiate and transform competing ways of framing, with the aim of persuading others in exchanges of contentious claims'. A dynamic analysis is not entirely new for strategy, because some social movement scholars have been working on strategic adaptation (McCammon et al., 2008; Meyer & Staggenborg, 2012). There are, however, no analyses that have empirically investigated the development of strategy over time, which has been undertaken in Chapter 6. The empirical analysis in this book shows that important shifts in tactics, framing, and strategic approaches can indeed occur over time. However, there are sometimes fewer dynamics than might be expected. This is most apparent, for example, when subnational players and activists respond to framing by their opponents, but this rarely occurs the other way around. Without a focus on dynamics in tactics, framing, and strategy, this would remain invisible.

A third, and final, innovation was to also analyse the role of emotions in contentious governance processes. Based on my previous work with Tamara Metze (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022), I have used an interpretive approach to analyse the expression of emotions by different players through storylines (see Chapter 5). Analysing the development of these storylines within the various cases over time made it possible to reveal the dynamics of emotional meaning-making. Such dynamics are clear in the analysis of expressions of fear, anger and distrust within the gasquakes case in Chapter 5. This analysis also reveals the clash between rationality-oriented meaning-making, the expression of emotions, and how sometimes the rational image of policy dissolves, making space for the recognition of emotional expressions. Furthermore, this type of analysis also establishes that the cloak of rationalism, sometimes worn by national government players, is almost impossible to penetrate. The result of which is that subnational government players and activists refrain from emotional meaning-making to ensure that their legitimacy within the rules of the political game remains intact. With the analysis of emotional storylines over time, this book makes a decisive contribution to the rapidly developing literature on the role of emotions in policy conflicts (see for example Durnova, 2022; Fullerton et al., 2024; Pierce, 2021; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022).

7.3 Contentious Governance and Democracy: A Normative Reflection

Contentious governance is a corrective to the exercise of power through policymaking and implementation within a representative democracy (compare Rosanvallon, 2008). For this reason, a normative reflection on its merits and defects with regard to democratic functioning is warranted. In this task, I avoid classical elitist views of representative democracy (Schumpeter, 1966) that would reject the value of any form of input from subnational government players or activists on national elites. There is equally little traction in drawing on either perspectives on direct democracy (Cronin, 1989), that prioritise citizen input through referenda, or discursive 'flavours' based upon reasoned deliberation between equal players aiming to reach consensus; commonly in some form of citizen assembly or council (Bohman & Rehg, 1997). Equally, arguments for associative forms of democracy (Bader & Maussen, 2024), that favour limiting and delegating government powers by extending power to people through associations, have no analytical reference points in the context of contentious governance. The problem with all these 'models of democracy' is that they tend to suggest a 'one size fits all' solution that can be picked from a curated shelf of democratic goods. Moreover, they highlight one, or several, ideal-typical characteristics of democracy at the expense of others, leading, as Warren (2017) suggests, to one-sided normative reflections.

A broader normative framework can be found in Mark Warren's work (2017: 41), which eschews thinking about discrete models, and instead begins from the question: 'What kinds of problems does a political system need to solve to function democratically?' In searching for answers, Warren focuses on three functions and seven political practices that can help to fulfil these functions. The three functions are: 1) empowered inclusion, which asserts that those who are affected by collective decisions have a say in them by speaking, voting, representing, and dissenting; 2) collective agenda and will formation, which is attentive to the will formation of those included into collective agendas through forms of deliberation; and 3) collective decision-making, which focuses on the collectively binding decisions a people choose to impose on themselves to get things done (Warren, 2017: 43–44). To fulfil these functions, Warren distinguishes seven generic political practices that can bring about democratic effects: recognising; resisting; deliberating; representing; voting;

joining; and exiting. I exclude both voting and exiting; electoral processes play no role whatsoever in contentious governance, while exiting is much more relevant to market competition than to the conflicts at issue here. The remaining five are discussed in turn, considering how they can give a picture of contentious governance that relates to the three functions of democratic systems.

7.3.1 Recognizing

Recognising is fundamentally democratic because it fulfils the function of inclusion. For Warren, this is essential because: 'in the minds of agents, recognitions establish mutual connections to shared circumstance, affected interests, fate, concern, common injuries, or common aspirations' (Warren, 2017: 47). Awareness of recognition thus contributes to the development of moral relationships in which mutual consideration of each other's perspectives, interests and values is central to entering into collaboration.

In the multilevel relationships between higher and lower tiers of government and between higher tiers of government and activists, contentious governance processes are characterised by a high degree of misrecognition. (Supra)national government players seek to impose their will at the expense of other players and make little effort from their position of power to create shared interests or arrive at joint solutions. In fact, their misrecognition triggers similar behaviour among subnational government players and activists. This is often witnessed when players believe they are right, and in the process of seeking to get their way at the expense of others, embed a dynamic of conflict escalation (Rubin et al., 1994). During such escalation processes subnational players and activists increasingly perceive injustices, which are not only related to a lack of recognition. These focus on procedural injustice, the idea that they have not been sufficiently involved in the relevant procedures of a decision-making process; and on distributive injustice, the perception that the expected outcomes of the contested policy will be unfairly distributed in terms of benefits and burdens (compare Williams & Doyon, 2019). Nevertheless, a lack of recognition is the driving force behind the conflicts that arise in contentious governance processes, and presumably in other types of policy conflicts, because of the similar forms of exclusion they create (compare Boon & Wolf, 2025).

Nonetheless, recognition can also emerge within processes of contentious governance, in the relationships and interactions between subnational government players and activists. Although they have ambivalent relationships, a sense of shared circumstance, shared interests, the formation of moral relationships can, to some extent, underpin their contentious collaborations. Despite this positive note, we can safely say that processes of contentious governance fall short on the political practice of recognition and tend to be exclusive rather than reflective of empowered inclusion.

7.3.2 Resisting

For Warren, 'agents resist domination, oppression, exploitation, or imposed rule—that is, forms of exclusion from places and processes of deliberation and decision about matters that affect them' (Warren, 2017: 47). Following this, significant resistance through moral demands for recognition can produce inclusions that can be institutionalised, as happened for instance with voting rights, or with the right to demonstrate (Warren, 2017). So, resistance can lead to empowered inclusion, but it does not necessarily contribute to either a collective agenda and will formation, or collective decision-making, because those who resist can persist in their struggle, and choose not to give in or collaborate (Warren, 2017).

In contentious governance, there are many expressions of resistance by subnational government players and activists within the multilevel relationships they share with higher tiers of government. They strive to be included in decision-making processes and gain more say over matters perceived as threats to their policies and communities. Sometimes this elicits adjustments in decision-making or the withdrawal of policy proposals. In such situations, it could be argued that they achieved inclusion in collective decision-making through empowered inclusion, and by extension in agenda and will formation. However, this can only apply if they achieve outcomes related to their claims. If not, as in the windfarm case, no positive democratic effects of resistance in multilevel relationships can be present, because they have been effectively excluded. The reaction of (supra)national government players to resistance is thus the decisive factor if democratic effects are likely to emerge within contentious governance.

However, contentious governance is a triangular relationship, meaning that the resolve of higher government players is only decisive within multilevel relationships. On the axis between subnational government players and activists, cooperation in resistance can lead to greater inclusion for the latter in local or provincial politics, in particular their ability to collaborate on agenda setting and decision-making through collective will formation (see Chapter 6 on rallying the troops). The extent to which this happens varies from case to case. Activists had a significant influence in the windfarm case, a moderate influence in the gas-quakes case, and a relatively minor influence in the CCS case. Any democratising effects can only apply to the specific issue on which resistance is focused, due to the intrinsic single-issue nature of contentious governance.

7.3.3 Deliberating

Deliberating is understood here as about 'practices that generate influence through the offering and receiving of cognitively compelling reasons about matters of common concern' (Warren, 2017: 47). For Warren, in addition to exchanging arguments, players become aware of each other's preferences, which enables better understanding of each other's position. In this sense, deliberation is not necessarily the means to reach consensus or joint decisions, rather to clarify and sort out preferences. Deliberating thus contributes to the democratic function of collective agenda and will formation (Warren, 2017).

In multilevel relationships between government players, deliberation generally does not work. While players seek to persuade each other, they have little interest in discovering each other's preferences—if they were, they would seek cooperation rather than contention. Collective agenda and will formation are thus highly unlikely. As above, the situation is different for subnational government players and activists, who can, and do, develop awareness of each other's preferences and policy positions through deliberation. In most cases, contact between municipalities and activists did result in the development of shared agendas and coordinated operations (see Chapter 6). Thus, the nature of the relationships within the triangular framework of contentious governance determines the extent to which deliberation takes place, and in what form.

7.3.4 Representing

Representing occurs when 'one agent stands, speaks, or acts for another' (Warren, 2017: 48). This can strengthen empowered inclusion because representatives provide large groups with a voice. However, empowered inclusion can also be undermined if those being represented are unable to monitor their representatives and the claims made on their behalf. In addition, representing can contribute to collective agenda and will formation if representatives unite, for example, in advocacy groups or action groups, which seek to influence the public debate on an issue. Conversely, forming preferences through aggregation is difficult because finer-grained preferences are suppressed. Finally, representation enables collective decision-making, but strategic considerations on the part of representatives can also hinder this (Warren, 2017).

Contentious governance is characterised by constant conflict between elected representatives, primarily within multilevel relationships. Elected politicians at all levels of government engage in conflict with each other on behalf of their constituents and on the basis of democratically legitimised decision-making. The problem is that citizens have rarely expressed their views on discrete controversial issues during elections. This is because the policies that lead to contentious governance are often formed between elections while the government is in power. In such circumstances, politicians must believe that they represent their voters when engaging in conflict over these types of issues. For citizens, this raises the problem of inadequate monitoring, because, as Warren notes, citizens cannot hold politicians directly accountable. This weakens their empowered inclusion. Engaging in conflict based on a perceived political mandate leaves little room for citizens' nuanced opinions, which undermines collective agenda and will formation. Collective decision-making is precisely the battleground for conflict between politicians who are driven by their strategic behaviour. While it becomes less effective for higher tiers of government, it may be perceived as fairer by subnational government players and activists. In multilevel relationships of contentious governance, representation therefore contributes little or nothing to democratic relations, even though politicians' actions are based on electoral mandates.

In the case of activists, citizens can choose whether to donate money, participate in demonstrations or sign petitions. These direct forms of input suggest citizen representation in contentious governance processes, as citizens' monitoring of the action groups' activities can result in either approval and continued support, or disagreement and withdrawal. These direct signals also make it much more obvious to action groups if their representation is valid. Thus, action groups offer more democratic potential within contentious governance through their mode of representing.

7.3.5 Joining

Joining refers to 'joining an association—that is, an organisation created by members to achieve a collective purpose' (Warren, 2017: 49). According to Warren (2017), the most important democratic function of joining is empowered inclusion because it enables citizens to organise themselves and form informal constituencies around issues that are important to them. While associations can exert pressure, influence agendas and represent larger groups of citizens, their influence is likely to reflect the interest of their members when forming collective agendas (Warren, 2017). The principal problem for democratic inclusion is that those who join associations are primarily drawn from privileged groups in society (Warren, 2017).

Joining plays no role whatsoever in multilevel relationships of contentious governance; however, it does underpin the *raison d'etre* of action groups that emerge. This is reflected in the three cases, where action groups were invariably comprised of individuals with a strong background in politics and policy, or those who possess the technical knowledge necessary to effectively contend the issues at hand. Although it is arguable if this necessarily means that they were too far removed from the nuances of their provincial or local populations, it does impose some limit on the scope of empowered inclusion. Nevertheless, in all cases, evidence strongly suggests that there was widespread public opposition to the controversial policies, suggesting that the action groups were able to translate this into agendas and collective will formation.

7.3.6 The Paradoxical Nature of Contentious Governance

Overall, the extent to which contentious governance contributes to the democratic functioning of political systems is ambiguous. In the multilevel relationships between (supra)national and subnational government players and activists that are defined by conflict, it is unsurprising that recognising, deliberating and joining do not play a role. While representing is a feature of multilevel dynamics, politicians only claim this through political mandates obtained through elections, rather than by empowered inclusion by citizens. Elements of democratisation in relations with (supra)national government players can be achieved through resistance, but only if they permit subnational government players and activists to participate in policy processes and are willing to revise or even scrap policies.

Through collaborative efforts, activists can become more included in local policy, albeit on specific issues. In this way, contentious governance contributes to the democratisation of relationships between subnational government players and activists. Furthermore, through deliberation, subnational government players and activists familiarise themselves with each other's policy positions and establish shared objectives. Focusing exclusively on the relationships between action groups and citizens, the former performs reasonably well in terms of representation because citizens can participate easily, and their views can be clearly reflected. When it comes to joining, action groups are limited in empowered inclusion, but stronger in terms of agenda and collective will formation.

Contentious governance primarily contributes to the democratic functioning of relationships between subnational government players and activists, as well as between activists and citizens. It can also act as a lever to break through the hierarchy in multilevel relationships with (supra)national government players, achieving greater inclusion and influence on policy. Hence, contentious governance is paradoxical by nature, combining a lack of democratisation and exclusion with partial democratisation in multilevel relations, and greater democratisation between subnational government players and activists, or between activists and citizens.

7.4 Dealing with Contentious Governance

Contentious governance is an uncomfortable prospect for (supra)national government players, and a demanding one for subnational government players and activists. Nevertheless, as I argued at the start of this chapter, it is a phenomenon that is likely to persist and potentially grow. Players at higher tiers of government have substantial influence on how cases develop, and with considerably greater power, their tactics, framing and strategies play a significant role. This is why they can contribute to changing the dynamics of contentious governance processes, perhaps even transforming them into collaborative governance processes. I conclude this book by offering considerations for politicians, administrators, and policymakers working at (supra)national levels of government.

Processes of contentious governance all relate to a much broader governance problem concerning authority. To appreciate this problem, a closer look at conceptualisations of authority is warranted. Traditional Weberian (1978) perspectives have always associated authority with a person or office, namely that the legitimacy of politicians, administrators and policymakers is primarily derived from rational-legal authority, based on established laws and rules. However, this form of authority is no longer sufficient. Public officials can no longer assume that their authority is established simply by virtue of holding office, it has become increasingly dependent on the relationships and interactions established between office holders and others. It is determined by the quality of communication between people. Exchanging convincing arguments (the 'what') in combination with a convincing political performance (the 'how') has become the crucial determinant for establishing authority (Hajer, 2009). In this respect, politicians, administrators and policymakers at higher levels of government cannot take their authority for granted, rather they must earn it through interactions with others.

Hierarchical behaviour that does not consider the communicative quality of authority will provoke a backlash from those who are confronted by it, even if it comes from those elected in authoritative positions. A different response to subnational government players and activists who oppose policy plans is therefore needed. (Supra)national government players usually try to ignore the opposition or dismiss conflict as not fitting in with how decision-making processes are supposed to work. Conflict is often seen as negative, which denies its constructive nature (Deutsch, 1973; Verloo, 2015; Wolf, 2021). For example, conflict provides the basis for the clarification of differences in policy positions and enables the search for widely supported solutions. It is therefore important that politicians, administrators, and policymakers at higher tiers of government have the courage to embrace conflict as a productive phenomenon that deserves more of their time and attention, in order to achieve authoritative decisions. This requires that they consider their own role in the emergence of contentious governance processes in three specific ways.

First, using hierarchy to impose policy will rapidly encounter strong resistance. The reason is that hierarchy is often associated with injustice: those affected feel misrecognised; believe they are not sufficiently involved in decision-making; and fear an unfair distribution of benefits and burdens, with provincial or local governments and their communities bearing the costs of the latter (compare Williams & Doyon, 2019). It would help if representatives of higher tiers of government were not only aware of this but also tried to be more open about the substantive, procedural, and relational dimensions of the conflict (Wolf, 2021). This can be achieved by listening carefully to opposing policy positions, responding with greater openness, and giving opponents more influence on policymaking or policy implementation. Perhaps most importantly, they need to recognise opponents as legitimate players in contested policy processes. If opponents have more productive engagement with controversial policies, they are likely to accept the outcomes in good faith, whatever they may be, because the process is seen to be fair.

Secondly, with greater emphasis on technocracy and rationality, and rigid adherence to market-oriented neoliberal policies, corresponding moral deficits in the actions of (supra)national government players are more apparent (Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur, 2022: 10). This serves to depoliticise policymaking and implementation, forming a strong trigger of opposition. Subnational government players and activists get the impression that they are being handed over to market players, and that the emotions and arguments within their communities regarding controversial policy issues are not being taken seriously. To resolve this, (supra)national government bodies ought to politicise controversial policy issues. Engaging in debates with opponents can clarify the interests and values at stake, the difficult choices that need to be made, the emotions and underlying issues involved, and facilitate the exploration of possibilities to reach an acceptable compromise. By doing so, opponents will feel involved in a meaningful way and may be more willing to accept the final decisions, even if they do not entirely agree with them.

Thirdly, (supra)national government players demonstrate their hierarchical position not only through their interactions with opponents during decision-making processes, but also through the institutional conditions they establish for these processes. Higher tiers of government can override decisions made by subnational government players and remove the coordination of planning procedures and licensing. When applied, this guarantees that a process of contentious governance will occur (see Chapter 3).

Even more far-reaching are processes of pre-emption, whereby legislation is developed that strips subnational government players of their decision-making power or prevents them from legally opposing decisions made by higher tiers of government. These institutional preconditions encourage contentious governance, either because subnational government players seek support from activists to strengthen their resistance, or because activists can engage in litigation, as citizens may still have legal grounds to oppose undesirable policies. (Supra)national government players would be wise to remove these kinds of triggers that drive subnational government players and activists into each other's arms.

If (supra)national government players take these three issues into account, contentious governance can become productive conflict, where considerations of justice play a more important role, political values and interests are more clearly articulated, and in which the struggle is conducted under equal institutional conditions. Addressing such issues can strengthen the authority of (supra)national government players and may even transform contentious governance processes into collaborative ones. According to Boon and Wolf (2025), in the context of conflict, collaborative governance processes require all players to be open to diverse forms of knowledge, and to involve all those affected by policy, as well as those with relevant resources, perspectives and values. All players must be willing to seek consensus by defining common goals, engaging in fact-finding and jointly closing avenues for decision-making to work towards a result (Boon & Wolf, 2025). As soon as some players try to gain the upper hand by imposing their interpretations on others or secretly designing the process to favour their own interests, forms of exclusion arise (Boon & Wolf, 2025). Consequently, relationships based on fresh and often fragile trust become relationships based on distrust; the process ceases to be collaborative and veers towards contentious governance.

It is not self-evident that politicians, administrators and policymakers within higher tiers of government consider that issues of justice, politicisation and the creation of an institutional level playing field are what is needed to transform contentious governance into collaborative governance. They need the help of professional mediators who are trained in transforming conflicts into outcomes that are acceptable to everyone. Mediators can organise negotiations, foster good communication, increase understanding among the players of each other's positions and issues, contribute to reframing problems and solutions, generate shared knowledge through joint fact-finding, develop procedures for working towards a compromise, and draw up an agreement that all players can support (Forester, 2009; Susskind & Cruikshank, 1987).

Particularly when processes of contentious governance are expected to escalate in scope and intensity, and the dynamics are often so complex, it is an obvious step to involve mediators that can act as guides towards more broadly supported solutions to contested policy issues. Although they can achieve a great deal, mediators are also dependent on the willingness of all players to shift away from contentious governance towards collaborative governance. (Supra)national government players have a special responsibility in this regard, because their position can contribute significantly to the escalation of contentious governance or, conversely, tip the balance towards collaborative governance. In this context, a famous quote of former US President Franklin D. Roosevelt applies: 'Great power involves great responsibility.'[2]

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[2] https://elevatesociety.com/great-power-involves-great-responsibility/.

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Appendix A: Case Studies and Methods

The introduction briefly discussed case selection, the research methodology used, and how the analyses rely heavily on issues of contentious governance related to: carbon capture and storage nearshore windfarm construction; and gas-quakes. Here, I outline all these matters in greater detail.

Case Selection

The three cases are all situated in the Netherlands; a choice based on the country receiving a Local Autonomy Index score which approximates to average (see Chapter 3). The Netherlands has a national government that, in principle, has extensive powers over subnational governments and local government. Despite this, the latter has an increasingly important role in processes of co-governance with higher tiers of government and is thus progressively more assertive in their attitude towards authority (Steen & Toonen, 2010). These combinations of hierarchy and co-governance, and of authority and assertiveness, make it unlikely that Dutch local governments will immediately contest policies steered by the national government, since they are accustomed to the predominant hierarchy. Therefore, contentious governance is likely to be neither over- nor underrepresented in multilevel relationships between Dutch tiers of government. The advantage of studying cases within one country is that they are embedded within the same type of polity, institutional structure, and political culture. A comparative study of policy domains between

I. Verhoeven, *Contentious Governance*, Understanding Governance,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-22461-3

countries falls outside the scope of this book, but it arguably constitutes the logical next step for research on contentious governance.

In addition to choosing a single country, the selection of a single policy domain, namely energy and climate, was another important choice. I could have chosen cases of contentious governance within migration policy, which are abundant in the Netherlands, or cases of municipal amalgamation, however, I maintain that a single, albeit broad, policy domain allows for greater comparability between the cases, not least because policy domains can differ greatly in their institutional design. Within energy and climate policy there is a strong focus on market thinking, which is not as marked in other policy domains where contentious governance occurs. For a comprehensive but nonetheless exploratory study of contentious governance, a constant policy domain was important. This has the advantage of a more in-depth analysis of the strategic interactions between the players, without the inevitably complex comparisons between widely divergent policy domains, which, while interesting, shift the focus of the analysis toward institutional aspects. This book is more attentive to the agency of the players.

My research focuses on a phenomenon that has not been widely studied. In this respect, the cases were selected to offer the best opportunity for new variables, patterns, and concepts to be revealed—hence the concentration on extreme or deviant cases rich in information, actors, interactions, and patterns (Flyvbjerg, 2006; George & Bennett, 2005). Purposive sampling was used (Bryman, 2012) to ensure maximum variation between cases within the context of one polity and one broad policy domain. I first looked for cases focused on mitigation measures within Dutch energy and climate policy, including solar energy, CCS and wind energy projects. No solar energy projects had developed into processes of contentious governance, however, there were two CCS cases, and many windfarm cases. Ultimately, I chose the Barendrecht CCS project and the nearshore windfarm project off the coast of Katwijk, Noordwijk, and Zandvoort (see Chapter 3 for detailed descriptions of both cases).

Both were flagship projects that shared the national government's ambitions to mitigate climate change, and were reflective of major national political interests that clashed, not least with local political interests. However, they were also sufficiently distinct from each other, with wind energy more widely accepted than CCS, which could result in significant differences in how the two technologies were framed. The number of opponents and the extent of their collaboration also varied (one municipality and one action group opposed CCS, while three municipalities and two action groups opposed the windfarm). There was also variation in incumbent national governments, with two cabinets representing different coalitions in the CCS case compared to one stable cabinet in the windfarm case. The fall of a cabinet can be an important event for subnational government players who suddenly have to face different opponents. With a stable cabinet, there is more policy continuity, meaning that the strategy of national government players is less likely to change. It is beyond the scope of a single book to cover the full range of cases of contentious governance on mitigation measures, but the selected cases offer sufficient variety to gain broader insights into the tactics, framing processes and strategies of the various players.

To increase variety, a third case was selected within the domain of energy and climate policy. The CCS and windfarm cases both concerned policy proposals, which left room for considerable speculation about the risks of the technologies, the economic and ecological consequences, and/or other effects on local communities. However, there are also cases of contentious governance that concern the implementation of policies, where adverse effects have already occurred and are therefore more difficult to refute. The dynamics between the players in such cases would be different from those concerning policymaking: (supra)national players will have even more deeply rooted interests and are likely to defend them more vigorously. At the same time, they have less to rely on in terms of a clearly delineated decision-making process, which is decisive in the flaring up and subsiding of episodes of contentious governance. This means that subnational players and activists are forced to respond to opportunities that arise during strategic interactions. Given these expectations of a different dynamic, a case study of an implementation process adds value when exploring the variations that occur in contentious governance processes.

My choice was the gas-quakes case, where natural gas production had produced earthquakes in the province of Groningen (see Chapter 3 for a detailed description). Due to the large number of people affected, the vested economic and political interests of the national government players and their business partners, the resistance of both provincial and local government players and two action groups, the case adds distinctive value to my research. The conflict over gas-quakes was one of the largest in recent Dutch history, even resulting in a parliamentary inquiry that investigated the actions of the national government and its business partners.

All three cases lend themselves to longitudinal analysis because they all span several years. This also allows for a thorough investigation of the dynamic aspects of contentious governance, such as strategic interactions, the impact of events, the development of framing and changing tactics. To bring these aspects into sharp empirical focus, all three cases were investigated in the same way, which I explain below.

Methods

The empirical research for all three cases focused on a combination of newspaper articles, policy documents, and semi-structured interviews, which I discuss in turn.

Newspaper Analysis

In each case, I collected newspaper articles from a combination of national newspapers and one or more regional newspapers that represented a broad political spectrum. The regional newspapers were selected for the degree to which they reported on the region in which the conflicts were taking place.

In the CCS case, the analysis focused on six national newspapers: *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*, *AD/Algemeen Dagblad*, *Trouw* and *Reformatorisch Dagblad*. The first five newspapers form the core of most read national newspapers. The *Reformatorisch Dagblad* is a Christian newspaper that devoted a lot of attention to the conflict and was widely read in Barendrecht, because the municipality belonged to the so-called Bible Belt in the Netherlands. In addition, the analysis focused on three regional editions of the *Algemeen Dagblad*: *AD/Rotterdams Dagblad*, *AD/Dordtenaar,* and *AD/Rivierenland*. These regional newspapers also devoted a lot of attention to the CCS conflict. My analysis focused on the period from January 2008, when contentious governance began, to December 2011, just after the cabinet decided to cancel the CCS project (see Chapter 3). I extracted a total of 791 articles from the LexisNexis Academic NL database: 376 national articles and 415 regional articles. In Excel, a dataset was created for national and regional newspapers, with the number of articles per month allowing me to map media attention for the CCS conflict (see Fig. A.1).

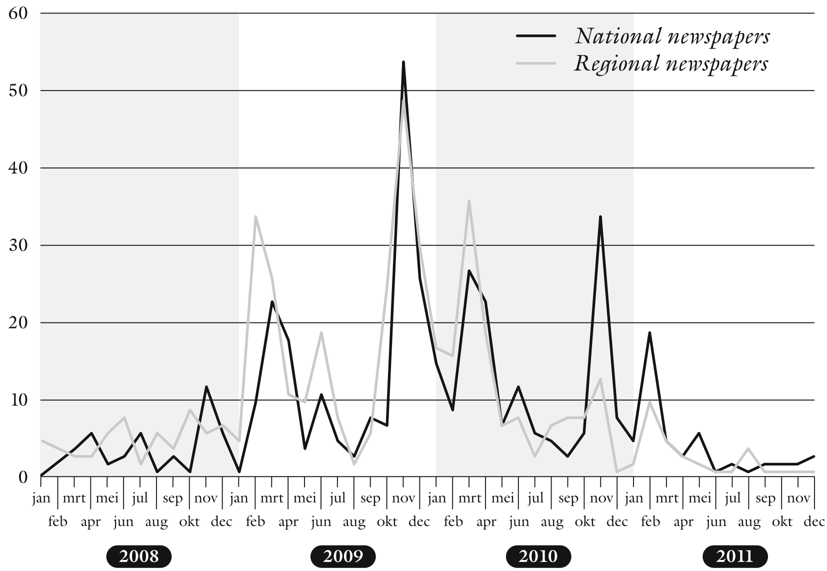

Fig. A.1 Total number of articles CCS case in six national and three regional newspapers, January 2008–December 2011

I identified three peaks in media coverage: February–June 2009; October 2009–April 2010; and September–November 2010. These mostly coincided with the three episodes of contentious governance described in Chapter 3. To ensure that important developments in the case were not overlooked, I checked for reports between the peaks that could not be ignored in the analysis, but that was not the case. In limiting the analysis, I selected all articles that appeared during the peaks, which resulted in 561 articles being analysed: 255 from national newspapers and 306 from regional ones. After discussing the materials from the other two cases, I will explain the coding method which was applied consistently throughout.

In the windfarm case, I analysed the five most widely read national newspapers: *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, *NRC Handelsblad*, and *AD/Algemeen Dagblad*. The analysis also focused on three regional newspapers: *Leidsch Dagblad*, *Haarlems Dagblad*, and *Noordhollands Dagblad*. For the analysis, I took the period from January 2013, when ministers began making plans for windfarms within the 12-mile zone, to July

2016, when the most important decisions had already been made and contentious governance subsided (see Chapter 3). Out of the LexisNexis academic NL database, I retrieved 105 national articles and 341 regional articles, a total of 446. Similar to the CCS case, I created a dataset in Excel with numbers of national and regional articles per month, to get an overview of the media attention (see Fig. A.2).

From the selected newspaper material, I identified four peaks: January–May 2013; December 2013–April 2014; February–September 2015; and February–December 2016. These peaks coincide with the four episodes of contention discussed in Chapter 3. During the February–December 2016 period, newspaper reporting did not consistently peak (see Fig. A.2), but important events occurred that needed to be considered. Figure A.2 also shows a peak in newspaper reporting from September to November 2014. This relates to the ministers approving the location of the offshore windfarm on 26th September 2014. As this was perceived to be a *fait accompli*, the PMWP and SVH did not react. Therefore, this peak does not coincide with an episode of contentious governance and is excluded from the analysis. As with the CCS case, I checked the periods between the peaks for important events that could not be overlooked, which was only the

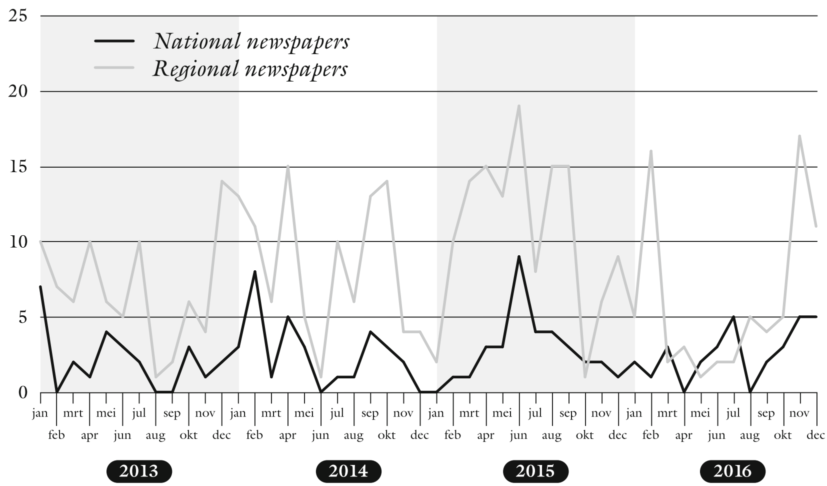

Fig. A.2 Total number of articles windfarm case in five national and three regional newspapers, January 2013–December 2016 case for February–December 2016. This yielded 88 national articles and 275 regional articles, for a total of 363 analysed articles.

In the gas-quakes case, my analysis[1] also focused on the five most widely read national newspapers: *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, *Algemeen Dagblad*, and *De Telegraaf*. In addition, the reporting of *Dagblad van het Noorden*, a major regional newspaper that covered the conflict extensively, was also analysed. The period analysed spanned almost six years, from September 2012, the month in which the earthquake at Huizinge took place, to May 2018, shortly after the minister's announcement to phase out all gas production by 2030 at the latest (see Chapter 3). I extracted a total of 5445 articles from the LexisNexis Academic NL database: 2176 national articles and 3269 regional articles. Consistent with the other two cases, I created an Excel dataset showing the number of national and regional articles published each month, to map media attention (see Fig. A.3).

From the selected newspaper material, I identified four peaks: January–April 2013; November 2013–February 2014; December 2014–April 2015; and January–March 2018. I checked the periods between the peaks for important events, but these did not occur outside the peaks. My analysis of the four peaks yielded a selection of 1080 national and 1301 provincial articles, a total of 2381 articles.

The newspaper articles from all three cases were coded in the same way. To this end, I created a code book that consisted of administrative codes for types of articles and administrative codes for specific individuals such as politicians, civil servants, activists or business representatives. In addition, I created content codes based on relevant concepts from the literature for categories of players: activists; government opponents of the policy; government proponents of the policy; and a 'general' category for other players, such as businesses or other civil society players. For each category, I created specific content codes, such as: protest; the construction of grievances; the construction of emotions; resources deployed; the use of knowledge; or legal actions. The codebooks for each case were the

[1] I collaborated with Tamara Metze on some of this work, with whom I gathered the newspaper materials, created the database, and collated the articles. However, for our collaborative work on the role of emotions in policy conflicts (Verhoeven & Metze, 2022), we undertook a separate inductive coding process. For this book, I used a codebook that I developed myself (see Appendix B), informed by existing concepts, to ensure a structured focused comparison of all three cases (George & Bennett, 2005).

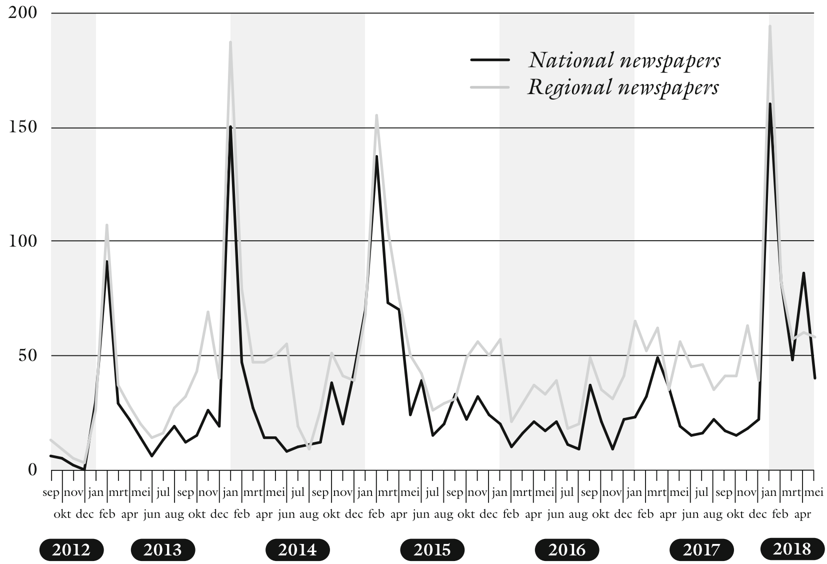

Fig. A.3 Total number of articles gas-quakes case in five national newspapers and one regional newspaper, September 2012–May 2018

same (please see Appendix B for an example). Based on manual coding in Atlas.ti, I used a total of 11,203 codes for all cases, of which, 1456 were in the CCS case, 837 in the windfarm case, and 8910 in the gas-quakes case. Of those, 5627 were administrative codes (713 CCS, 420 windfarm, and 4494 gas-quakes) and 5576 content codes (743 CCS, 417 windfarm, and 4416 gas-quakes). All coded quotes from news reports were assigned an administrative code for the type of article, specific person speaking, and then one or more content codes per player category, depending on what was discussed in the quote. When coding, I was careful to select only direct quotes from players in the cases, to avoid coding journalists who paraphrase such players, or explain what is going on in their own words.

Analysis of Policy Documents

In addition to the newspapers, policy documents were also analysed. This material consisted of 1314 documents, of which 160 were for the CCS case, 245 for the windfarm case, and 909 for the gas-quakes case. In selecting this material, I used the same periods that were employed for the newspaper analysis: January 2008–December 2011 for the CCS case; January 2013–December 2016 for the windfarm case; and September 2012–May 2018 for the gas-quakes case. The material consisted of parliamentary documents and proceedings and ministerial documents at the national level. In addition, municipal motions, responses and letters, position papers, press releases, and minutes from executive and council meetings at local and sometimes provincial level, were used. The national policy material, in particular, involved large numbers of documents. I was assisted in gathering this material by student assistants, who worked closely with me, and also helped with the screening which documents to pay extra attention to in the analysis. Ultimately, however, I included all the material in the analysis, which was coded manually by selecting quotes and pasting them under headers for codes in word documents. The headers were based on the same codebook as used for the newspaper analysis (see Appendix B).

Alongside this policy material, I also analysed documents, self-made newspapers, newsletters, websites, videos and audio recordings of activists in the three cases. This material was manually coded in the same way.

Interviews

To strengthen the research material, I conducted interviews in all cases. In total, I interviewed 32 respondents in 29 interviews (three were undertaken with two respondents): 12 in the CCS case, 8 in the windfarm case and 9 in the gas-quakes case.[2] Respondents were selected using snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012). I identified key respondents through newspaper material and used them to find other respondents. With the exception of two cases where people had left office and no longer wanted to discuss the case, everyone else I approached participated in the research. When selecting respondents, I focused on subnational government players and activists, who not only received far less media attention than their national counterparts, but were also considerably less evident in policy material due to the overwhelming number of national

[2] Of these last nine, three were jointly conducted with Tamara Metze.

documents. All interviews lasted between one and two hours, were semi-structured, and were aided by a topic list to ensure comparability between cases (see Appendix C for an example). Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

All interviews were analysed using Atlasi.ti. This resulted in a total of 2,137 codes for all cases, of which 759 were in the CCS case, 805 in the windfarm case and 573 in the gas-quakes case. Of these, 826 were administrative codes (272 CCS, 349 windfarm and 205 gas-quakes) and 1,312 were content codes (487 CCS, 456 windfarm and 369 gas-quakes). Similar to the newspaper analysis, all quotes were coded with administrative codes for persons and with content codes (see Appendix B for an example of a codebook). In addition to the original codebook, I added a few codes per category of players that related to the strategic interactions between the players. I also carried out some axial coding to cluster some codes into families of strategic dilemmas, which can be found in Chapter 6.

Because some respondents wished to remain anonymous, I decided to anonymise all subnational politicians and civil servants and all activists quoted in the three empirical chapters. The following codes indicate which respondents I am quoting: 'CSS' stands for respondents from the CCS case; 'WF' for the windfarm case; and 'GQ' for the gas-quakes case. When using newspaper material or policy documents, these individuals are also anonymised. National politicians are not anonymised because the newspapers and policy documents from which I quote them are public.

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Appendix B: Codebook Newspaper Analysis

Below is an example of the codebook that I created for the newspaper analysis. The names of persons (Act 1, Act 2, Act 3, ...) are subject to change as each case is unique regarding the players involved.

Admin codes Type of Article:

- # Soart—Background
- # Soart—Human interest
- # Soart—Letters to the editor
- # Soart—News
- # Soart—Opinion
- # Soart—Editorial comments

Admin codes persons:

- * Act—1
- * Act—2
- * Act—3

Et cetera

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Content codes activists:

- 1 ActionRep—Protesting
- 1 ActionRep—Construction of agency
- 1 ActionRep—Construction of emotions
- 1 ActionRep—Construction of identities
- 1 ActionRep—Construction of grievances
- 1 ActionRep—Construction of solutions
- 1 ActionRep—Construction of risks/safety
- 1 ActionRep—Attitude versus government
- 1 ActionRep—Deployment of resources
- 1 ActionRep—Legal actions
- 1 ActionRep—Media pressure
- 1 ActionRep—Striking metaphors
- 1 ActionRep—Other
- 1 ActionRep—Naming political opportunities
- 1 ActionRep—Utilising political opportunities
- 1 ActionRep—Creating political opportunities
- 1 ActionRep—Use of knowledge

Content codes subnational government players:

- 2 OverRep—Construction of agency
- 2 OverRep—Construction of public interest
- 2 OverRep—Construction of emotions
- 2 OverRep—Construction of identities
- 2 OverRep—Construction of grievances
- 2 OverRep—Construction of solutions
- 2 OverRep—Construction of risk/safety
- 2 OverRep—Use of conventional political means
- 2 OverRep—Attitude towards action groups
- 2 OverRep—Deployment of resources
- 2 OverRep—Internal conflict
- 2 OverRep—Legal actions
- 2 OverRep—Media pressure
- 2 OverRep—Striking metaphors
- 2 OverRep—Other
- 2 OverRep—Naming political opportunities

- 2 OverRep—Utilising political opportunities
- 2 OverRep—Creating political opportunities
- 2 OverRep—Use of knowledge
- 2 OverRep—Support of protest
- 2 OverRep—Informing citizens

Content codes national government players:

- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of public interest
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of de-escalation
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of escalation
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of legality
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of legitimacy
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of solutions
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of performance
- 3 ProtaRep—Construction of risks/safety
- 3 ProtaRep—Attempts to restore trust and image
- 3 ProtaRep—Attitude towards other tiers of government
- 3 ProtaRep—Deployment of resources
- 3 ProtaRep—Legal actions
- 3 ProtaRep—Denial and disregard of opponents
- 3 ProtaRep—Striking metaphors
- 3 ProtaRep—Other
- 3 ProtaRep—Use of knowledge
- 3 ProtaRep—Informing citizens

Content codes other players:

- 4 AlgRep—Protesting
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of agency
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of public interest
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of de-escalation
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of escalation
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of emotions
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of identities
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of legality
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of legitimacy
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of grievances

- 4 AlgRep—Construction of solutions
- 4 AlgRep—Construction of risks/safety
- 4 AlgRep—Attempts to restore trust and image
- 4 AlgRep—Attitude towards government players
- 4 AlgRep—Deployment of resources
- 4 AlgRep—Legal action
- 4 AlgRep—Media pressure
- 4 AlgRep—Striking metaphors
- 4 AlgRep—Other
- 4 AlgRep—Use of knowledge

Appendix C: Topic List Interviews

During the interviews, I used two topic lists, one geared towards subnational government players and one directed at activists.

Topic List Subnational Government Players

How did your local/provincial authority become involved in the conflict against wind turbines? How did you become aware of the plans? How did politicians in your authority respond to the plans? Was there any early cooperation with action groups?

What were the most important actions taken by your authority against the plans? + examples of questions.

Dealing with knowledge. What knowledge is important to you? Which experts are important? How do you use knowledge? How do you view the knowledge used by the national government? What role does knowledge play in the conflict? Have you used knowledge strategically?

Dealing with meaning. How consciously did your authority communicate about this issue? What did you see as the problem? What were the possible solutions?

Dealing with imaginaries, symbols and emotions.

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Dealing with rules. During the protest, how aware were you of rules that offered opportunities for action against the plans? What about rules that the national government had to comply with?

Dealing with resources? How much money and time went into your authority's actions against the plans? Did the authorities provide resources to SVH or other action groups?

Cooperation with action groups. How does this work? Who does what? Is there coordination? What is coordinated? How does this work when organising actions? Do action groups do this for the authority, or do you also organise actions yourselves? If so, what kind of actions are these? Why did the authority want to cooperate with action groups? How open was this cooperation?

How widespread is activism against the plans within the authority? Only specific political parties or across the board? And what about among the population?

How strategic is your authority in its actions against the plans? What are the goals that you, as authority, want to achieve? How strategic are activists in this regard? Does the authority differ from activists in this respect? To what extent did the actions of the opponents guide your behaviour? Which actions were important in this regard?

How is the cooperation with other authorities in actions against the plans going?

Were there aspects of the national government's behaviour that you considered inappropriate and against which you took action? If so, what were those elements?

What did you personally consider to be morally acceptable aspects of your authority's actions against the plans, and where did you draw the line in this regard?

Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Topic List Activists

How did you become involved in the protest against the windfarm? How did your action group come about? How did the protest against the windfarm start? Who was involved? What was the role of local politicians?

What were the most important actions? Ask for examples.

Dealing with knowledge. What knowledge is important? Which experts are important? How do you use knowledge? How do you view the knowledge that the national government has used? What role does knowledge play in your protest? Have you used knowledge strategically?

Dealing with meaning. How consciously was this issue communicated? What did you see as the problem? What were the possible solutions?

Dealing with imaginaries, symbols and emotions.

Dealing with rules. How consciously did you engage with rules that offered opportunities for further action during the protest? What about rules that the national government had to adhere to?

Dealing with resources? How much money and time went into the protest by your action group? Did the provincial/local authorities provide resources to your action group?

Cooperation with provincial and local authorities. How does this work? Who does what? Is there coordination? What is coordinated? How does this work when organising actions? Does your action group do this for the provincial/local authorities, or do they also organise actions themselves? If so, what kind of actions are these? Why did the provincial/local authorities want to cooperate with you? How open was this cooperation?

Did you already know people at the provincial/local authorities or did you have to build up a network?

How widespread is activism within the provincial/local authorities? Only specific political parties or across the board?

How strategic is your action group in its protest? How strategic are the provincial/local authorities in this regard? What exactly are the goals they want to achieve? Does your action group differ from the authorities in this regard? To what extent did the actions of the national authorities guide the behaviour of the provincial/local authorities? Which actions were important in this regard?

Are there other action groups? Is there cooperation with them? How does this cooperation work?

Were there aspects of the national government's behaviour that you considered inappropriate and against which you took action? If so, what were those elements?

What did you consider to be morally acceptable aspects of your protest and where did you draw the line?

Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed?

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