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Enter emotions. Appealing to anxiety and anger in a process of municipal amalgamation

Imrat Verhoeven^{a*} and Jan Willem Duyvendak^b

^a*Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands;*

^b*Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

In recent years, emotions have taken center stage in studying politics. However, the field of interpretive policy analysis has largely neglected emotions. In this paper, we argue that we can enter emotions by studying emotional appeals by collective political actors, which are conveyed through emotion words and metaphors. For our empirical analysis, we draw on the political mobilization against the municipal amalgamation of The Hague and its vicinity in The Netherlands between 1997 and 2001. Our analysis indicates that the framing by collective actors contained emotional appeals to anxiety and anger, shifting, over time, from anxiety to anger. This shift resonated with citizens' opinions and feelings, and provided important emotional energy to citizens' protest against municipal amalgamation. These emotional appeals provided emotional energy that fueled many protest activities during the summer and fall of 1998. These findings are also relevant for studying other policy controversies and to more mundane processes of policy formation and implementation.

Keywords: emotional appeals; emotion words; metaphors; anxiety; anger; emotional energy

Introduction

In all democratic countries, examples can be found of anxious or infuriated citizens contesting governmental policy-making processes. They make claims against, for example, plans for radioactive waste disposal (Kraft and Clary 1991), new highways (Burningham 2000), the increase of aircraft noise (Bröer and Duyvendak 2009), noxious facilities such as incinerators (Wolsink 1994), processes of nature development (Hajer 2003) or community mental health facilities (Cowan 2003). Often becoming involved after political decisions affecting their environment or community have been made, these citizens do not fit the traditional idea of a policy cycle. Not surprisingly, then, policy-makers often assume that these citizens are motivated by a Not-In-My-Back-Yard (NIMBY) syndrome, consisting, amongst other things, of parochial and localized attitudes and 'irrationality' caused by emotional reactions. Contrary to this common idea, empirical research indicates that most of these assumptions are false. No overarching NIMBY syndrome exists; at best, some citizens express sometimes some of these characteristics (Kraft and Clary 1991; Freudenberg and Pastor 1992; Benford, Moore, and Williams 1993; Wolsink 1994; Hunter and Leyden 1995; Burningham 2000).

However, citizens do feel threatened, afraid, disempowered, frustrated or angry about policy interventions. Dismissing these emotional reactions as 'irrational' NIMBY behavior of citizens, misses two important points: (a) emotions are part and parcel of all

*Corresponding author. Email: i.verhoeven@uva.nl

policy-making and (b) citizens' emotions are informed by processes of policy-making; their feelings are embedded in a social and political context. Citizens' emotional reactions turn out to be heavily influenced by policy discourses, political performances and their interpretations by media, NGOs or local action groups (Broër and Duyvendak 2009; Verhoeven 2009). Through their language use, these collective (political) actors give meaning to policy initiatives, thus creating public discourses in which some try to legitimate and others try to problematize specific policy interventions (Fischer and Forester 1993; Rein and Schön 1993; Benford and Snow 2000; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003). Citizens can be triggered by these discourses 'to reflect on what they really value, what motivates them to voice their concerns or wishes and become politically active themselves' (Hajer 2003, 88).

Although emotions play an important role in policy-making processes, they are surprisingly understudied amongst interpretive policy analysts. Important books in this tradition such as *The Argumentative Turn* (Fischer and Forester 1993), *Deliberative Policy Analysis* (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003) and *Reframing Public Policy* (Fischer 2004) hardly mention emotions or feelings.¹ The focus is on arguments that have featured prominently in interpretive policy analysis ever since Fischer and Forester (1993, 1) asserted its importance: 'Whether in written or oral form, argument is central in all stages of the policy process.' Ironically, by relying on Habermasian ideas for solving moral problems through rational argumentation and deliberative procedures (Gottweis 2007, 239), interpretive policy analysts – whilst claiming to be 'post-positivists' (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Fischer 2003, 2004) – have caught themselves in the domain of cognition. As a result, the study of argumentation has been reduced to the element of logos, thus neglecting pathos and ethos² (Gottweis 2007, 239). This is puzzling considering the phenomenological and hermeneutic focus of interpretive policy analysis, on situated processes of meaning production, lived experiences, agency and local knowledge (Fischer 2003; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Yanow 2007).

Following Gottweis' (2007) lead, we claim that analyses of arguments have been too one-dimensional because they have neglected emotions as part and parcel of meaning production in policy-making practices. We suggest to enter emotional dimensions of policy-making by studying the 'emotional appeals' (Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Brader 2006) involved in policy arguments, which may evoke feelings in given circumstances. The concept of emotional appeals points to the context-bound interpretations of feelings that collective actors communicate to citizens through policy discourses (see also Newman 2012, 470). These emotional appeals enable citizens to interpret and (re)construct their feelings (cf. Hochschild 2003, 82) on a policy issue and provide them with potential motivations to either accept or protest against a policy.

By studying emotional appeals, we carefully avoid essentialist one-sided attributions of emotions to supposedly irrational citizens, as the NIMBY tradition does. We also seek to avoid harsh distinctions between emotional appeals and cognitive argumentations. Research from various fields indicates that cognition and emotions are intertwined in policy arguments and can only be separated for analytical purposes (Jasper 1998; Gross and D'Ambrosio 2004; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005; Newman 2012). Of course, policy arguments may vary in the blending of cognition and emotions, depending on the policy issue (debates on economic innovation tend to be less emotionally appealing than debates on integration of immigrants), the setting (discussion in a Parliamentary subcommittee perhaps being less emotionally appealing than a congressional hearing) and whether a policy intervention has become contentious or not

(if contentious, we expect a higher prevalence of emotional appeals in argumentation) (cf. Gottweis 2007, 246–247).

In this article, we focus empirically on a case of municipal amalgamation of the city of The Hague and its vicinity in the Netherlands (1997–2001). At face value, one would not envisage a bureaucratic rearrangement of municipal borders to be an emotionally engaging policy issue. However, as we will see, strong emotional appeals by collective political actors to anxiety and anger attracted high numbers of citizens to protest against plans for the amalgamation of their municipalities with the city of The Hague. This mobilization involved intense framing processes, which makes it a good case for uncovering the work involved in creating emotional appeals. What kinds of emotional appeals were constructed in the public discourse on municipal amalgamation? How did these emotional appeals change over time? Did these emotional appeals resonate with citizens' opinions and feelings, as shown in their public expressions and collective mobilization?

Before we present our empirical analysis, we introduce a theoretical elaboration of the functionality of emotional appeals: what do emotional appeals do and which kinds of emotional appeals are relevant to contentious policy interventions? This elaboration is followed by a clarification on how to analyze emotional appeals.

Theory: the emotional appeal of fear and anger

Based on the idea of people's bounded rationality (Simon 1983), we can assume that emotional appeals perform a triggering function. Emotional appeals disrupt routine behavior and direct people's 'limited' rational capacities for thinking to important matters. This idea is developed in affective intelligence theory by Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen (2000). They argue that routine behavior is regulated by a disposition system which helps to learn and execute habits by blocking anomalous information and by enhancing existing opinions. Routine behavior may be disrupted by new developments and sudden threats which are monitored through and focused on by a surveillance system. Particularly if people experience negative emotions, they will be prepared to seek new and more information to be able to find and remove the cause (Marcus 2002, 116). This theory is corroborated by empirical research in political psychology (Marcus 2002; Neuman et al. 2007; Brader 2006; see also Groenendyk 2011, for an overview) and additional support can be found in studies on how moral shocks or sudden events lead citizens seeking redress to political action (Jasper 2011).

However, not all appeals to negative emotions may trigger people's attention due to a lack of 'resonance' with their feelings. In social movement studies, the concept of resonance is used to analyze if claims made by social movement organizations manage to 'strike a responsive chord' and thus attract citizens to their causes (Broër and Duyvendak 2009, 409). This implies that resonance is about alignment between movement claims and what audiences already know, feel or have experienced. To reach such alignment, framing processes need to package '(...) innovative meanings within a symbolic repertoire that is both familiar and legitimate to those hearing the messages' (Williams 2002, 264–265). The upshot of this argument is that appeals to negative emotions need to align with familiar feelings (see also, Brader 2006, 49) and also match with symbolical repertoires to effectively trigger people's attention and make them seek for more information. The concept of resonance thus allows us to show empirically that conditions have been created that are very conducive to certain negative feelings. As we said before, we do not imply to attribute feelings to citizens nor do we want to punctuate their feelings directly, which would lead to methodological problems of

reconstructing feelings. We can show, however, to what extent and in which way citizens' protest expresses a comparable shift in emotions as the emotional appeals of collective political actors, the former subsequently resonating the latter.

The attention-focusing functionality of emotional appeals raises the question: what kinds of negative emotional appeals are relevant to contentious policy processes? Within the domain of politics and policy, a broad range of emotions can be found. Following Goodwin, Jasper, and Poletta (2001), we can make a distinction between longer and shorter term emotions and between general and object-centered emotions. Cynicism, shame, pride and enthusiasm are examples of general longer term emotions, whereas sympathy, love, hate and compassion are object-centered longer term emotions. Fright, anxiety, joy and euphoria are general shorter term emotions, and anger, surprise, grief and sorrow are object-centered shorter term emotions. From this broad range of possibilities, we argue that for contentious policy processes the combination of emotional appeals to *anxiety* with emotional appeals to *anger* may be very powerful in triggering people's attention and in getting them actively involved in protest against contentious policies.

According to emotion expert James Jasper (1998), *anxiety*³ is an emotion that does not necessarily contribute to the political activation of citizens' as it cannot easily be attributed to an actor, and is therefore less urgent to act upon. Facing the unknown on a regular basis, people often confront feelings of anxiety or more intense manifestations of fear and have found ways to suppress, neglect or avoid these feelings (compare Thoits 1989, 325; Wagner 2014, 685). This routine confrontation with anxiety does not imply a total lack of political behavioral effects whatsoever. Based on affective intelligence theory, we can expect that emotional appeals to anxiety help to focus people's attention on a controversial policy and make them look for more information (Marcus, Neuman, and Mackuen 2000; Marcus 2002; Neuman et al. 2007; Wagner 2014, 686).

However, emotional appeals to *anger* cause different reactions. Anger springs from the 'failures of others to conform to social norms' (Thoits 1989, 325) and is thus powerfully connected to new developments and to persons or organizations that should be acted upon (Jasper 1998, Wagner 2014). When this happens, these emotional appeals are related to 'us-them distinctions' that will point out actors (them) who are held responsible for causing a grievance that 'we' experience and who should undertake action to remedy the cause of the problems for which they are held accountable, or otherwise, we (us) will take action. These types of us-them distinctions are well-known ingredients from collective action frames produced by social movements (Klandermans 1997, 38–41) and they are important elements of planning controversies such as the Stop Stansted Expansion Campaign in London (Griggs and Howarth 2008, 132), or the protest against the re-building of the Brno railway station (Durnova 2013b, 10–13).

Social movement research and studies from the field of political psychology suggest that political mobilization is highly dependent on the shift from general anxieties to object-centered anger (Klandermans 1997, 17; Jasper 1998, 409; Wagner 2014, 684). Therefore, we can expect a shift in emotional appeals from anxiety to anger to trigger (massive) protest. Yet, we still do not know *how* appeals to anxiety and anger can be analyzed as part of policy argumentation processes.

Methodology: how to analyze emotional appeals?

We situate our analysis of emotional appeals in the interpretive tradition which emphasizes meaning production and interpretation in discourses, framing processes, stories and metaphors (Yanow 2007). Social-cultural processes of meaning production are very

important factors for how people constitute emotions (Lutz and White 1986, 409, 429; Thoits 1989, 320; Turner and Stets 2005, 2–3; Hogget and Thompson 2012, 2–3). Building on this idea, we may assume that emotional appeals are also constructed as part and parcel of meaning production.

We draw on framing theory for the analysis of how emotional appeals are conveyed through meaning production, which is not a self-evident choice for all framing scholars. Some theorists have a rather one-sided perspective of framing as a strategic activity based on cognitive arguments. In social movements literature, this ‘cognitive bias’ is debated because it excludes emotions from framing processes: ‘At its core, the problem that framing language presents is that it “cools” the analysis of movement thinking by separating it from the deeply felt passions and value commitments that motivate action’ (Marx Ferree and Merrill 2004, 252). To circumvent this bias, some scholars link framing processes directly to emotional appeals: ‘Clearly, emotional appeals are part and parcel of these frames. (...) Most of the framing literature has focused on the cognitive aspects of opinion, not on affective aspects’ (Gross and D’Ambrosio 2004, 1–2, for comparable arguments, see, Jasper 1998; Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005). The framing perspective thus allows us to focus not only on the cognitive schemata of interpretation but also on the emotional appeals presented by collective actors to ‘render events or occurrences meaningful and (...) organize experience for constituents, antagonists, bystanders or observers’ (Benford and Snow 2000, 613–614).

However, the framing perspective requires operationalization: what do we look for when analyzing emotional appeals? We follow Janet Newman who suggests searching for the framing of ‘emotion words’ such as ‘I felt’ or ‘we got angry’ (Newman 2012, 470). Such direct references to feelings through emotion words may not always be omnipresent in policy framing. Therefore, we suggest adding the analysis of metaphors as indirect references to emotions. The essence of metaphors is ‘understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another’ (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 5). Metaphors can express a feeling, an experience or an act motivated by feelings and thus trigger peoples’ emotions (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 3; Kane 2001, 252–255; Stone 2012, ch. 6). Anger, for example, is often expressed by heat metaphors: ‘I was boiling with rage’ and ‘I blew of steam’ (Kane 2001, 253).

For our empirical analysis of metaphors, we draw on Dvora Yanow’s more precise distinction between a vehicle and a focus. In her well-known example of community centers in Israel in the 1970s, the popularity of these centers is explained by the metaphor of supermarkets. The term supermarket is the vehicle that popularizes the community centers (the focus) (Yanow 1993). We think that Yanow’s distinction between vehicle and focus is useful because the vehicle may transfer emotional appeals and connect them to the focus, thus creating a very powerful tool in the empirical analysis of emotions as part of framing processes. With this ‘toolkit’, we can move on to the actual empirical analysis that draws on extensive research by the first author for his doctoral thesis (Verhoeven 2009). More precisely, this article uses the empirically selected corpus of 398 articles from a total of 3200 published in the regional Newspaper *De Haagsche Courant*, as well as campaign material developed by the municipalities protesting against the process of municipal amalgamation.⁴

The municipal amalgamation of The Hague and its vicinity

Perhaps surprisingly, processes of municipal amalgamation are amongst the most contested policy interventions in the Netherlands. In many cases, higher tiers of

government and bigger municipalities initiate an amalgamation process, and the smaller municipalities contest the plans because they could lead to them no longer existing or losing part of their territory. For these municipalities and their citizens, amalgamation often is an emotional process with potentially threatening outcomes. It touches upon local identities and feelings of belonging and home. There may also be strong identifications with the 'we' of the community and dis-identifications with and anger for 'them' doing this to 'us'. In the last three decades, many instances of amalgamation can be found in the Netherlands that provide fertile ground for empirical analyses of the construction and working of emotional appeals. One of the most comprehensive Dutch cases is the municipal amalgamation of the city of The Hague and its vicinity between May 1997 and the end of 2001.

The process of contention was set in motion by a resolution accepted by the Dutch House of Representatives on 22 May 1997 in which municipal amalgamation of The Hague and its vicinity was proposed as a solution for The Hague's lack of space to build new houses, for the flight of the middle class and for financial problems. At the time, the city was on the verge of bankruptcy, so obtaining new territory (and inhabitants) was crucial to its financial position. The resolution ruled that The Hague would secure territory from five municipalities in its vicinity: Leidschendam, Nootdorp, Pijnacker, Rijswijk and Voorburg. More specifically, these municipalities had to give up the new middle-class housing projects of Leidschenveen and Ypenburg to provide a substantial boost for The Hague's poor financial situation. The resolution also specified the need for a 'corridor', a piece of land that would connect Leidschenveen and Ypenburg with The Hague's territory. This corridor was necessary because The Hague would obtain more income if the new projects were directly connected to its territory. It was not specified exactly where the corridor would be situated; this was left to the discretion of the public authorities in charge of the amalgamation process.

The execution of the parliamentary resolution turned out to be a two-stage process. In September 1997, the Minister of the Interior mandated the provincial authorities of South Holland (a regional tier of government) to take charge of the planning process. However, after losing a legal battle on a procedural technicality, the provincial authority had to return its mandate. From that point forward, the second stage began during which the Minister of the Interior took charge of the planning process. In the end, he succeeded. The law regulating the municipal amalgamation of The Hague became effective on 1 January 2002. Until that moment, a rather uncommon coalition of the five municipalities, local action groups, a well-read regional newspaper and individual citizens expressed fierce opposition to the plans. Particularly during the first stage of the planning process, in the spring, summer and fall of 1998, emotions ran high, and contestation reached its peak. Thus, we focus on this wave of contention and its emotional dynamics.

Collective actors taking position on the amalgamation issue

Two opposing governmental discourse coalitions (Hajer 1993) formed themselves as early as the summer of 1997. On the one side the very powerful coalition in favor of amalgamation, consisting of the municipality of The Hague, the provincial authority of South Holland and the Ministry of the Interior. They quickly developed the political slogan 'Give The Hague space', framing their pro-amalgamation stance by referring to the 'problems of the big city', a 'lack of space', 'financial problems' and the 'need for a revival of the big city'. They also produced numbers and reports to underpin the benefits

of amalgamation. On the other side, resistance against the plans started with the five municipalities who came up with the political slogan: ‘Cooperation yes, annexation no’, thus quickly reframing municipal amalgamation as ‘annexation’. Their anti-annexation framing argued that ‘neighborhoods would be lost’, that there would be ‘increased distance between citizens and local government’ and that the plans would result in ‘extra financial burdens due to rising taxes’. To prevent annexation, they suggested ‘administrative cooperation’ amongst the municipalities in the region as the better alternative.

With their pro-amalgamation and anti-annexation frames, the proponents and opponents structured the public discourse around two positions (Ellingson 1995, 107–108) that signaled in condensed forms what the discourse was about, what was open for discussion and what was not, what problems were at stake and what kinds of action were preferable for making the leap from ‘is’ to ‘ought’ (Rein and Schön 1993, 148).

Within the discursive boundaries of the ‘cooperation yes, annexation no’-slogan, the five municipalities turned into ‘governmental activists’ (Verhoeven and Bröer, *forthcoming*) by mobilizing their citizens in the spring of 1998. They organized information evenings, planned for a non-binding referendum and stimulated the formation of five local anti-annexation action groups (Anti-annexatie comité’s, e.g. AACs). These AACs are of great interest because they joined the five municipalities in their organization of protest. Although they were financed by the five municipalities, the AACs were very keen to demonstrate their independence to the public as much as possible by underpinning the anti-annexation frame in their own way, arguing that social cohesion and public facilities would be undermined by annexation. They also criticized the choices of national politicians and the money that would be wasted by the whole process. Their most important critique focused on the idea of undemocratic conduct by the provincial authority and the city of The Hague, neglecting the preferences of the approximately 150,000 inhabitants of the five municipalities. This is a familiar and powerful rhetorical switch from content to procedures (Gordon and Jasper 1996, 163). The AACs proved to be well organized and very capable of mobilizing citizens for collective action against annexation.

The ‘Cooperation yes, annexation no’ coalition turned out to be even more unusual when the well-read regional daily newspaper *De Haagsche Courant* started to support claims against annexation. Immediately after the resolution from the House of Representatives became public in the spring of 1997, the editors took position in a couple of op-eds and news analyses by expressing an understanding for The Hague’s lack of space and financial burdens but also by stating that the solution was to be sought in administrative cooperation and not in municipal amalgamation. This perspective made them very critical of the provincial plans, with their 1998 coverage giving more attention to the opponents who almost outnumbered the proponents by three to one. In addition, the public opinion against amalgamation received a lot of space through the publication of citizens’ letters and by prominently featuring their viewpoints in human-interest articles (cf. Verhoeven 2009, 147–163).

Altogether in the spring of 1998, the five municipalities, the AACs and *De Haagsche Courant* formed a peculiar and very powerful Cooperation yes, annexation no alliance. Their anti-annexation framing first emphasized emotional appeals to anxiety, whereas later on, it predominantly emphasized appeals to anger. As we will see, a number of political events were crucial for how the opponents were able to frame their emotional appeals and for their (lack of) resonance amongst citizens.

Appealing to anxiety

From the summer of 1997 onward, the five municipalities quickly reframed municipal amalgamation as ‘annexation’. This in itself was a very important shift in meaning production because it transformed the policy process from a bureaucratic and quasi-neutral operation to a contested intervention that could have serious consequences for the citizens living in the five municipalities. The term annexation signals a threat that might arouse anxiety. According to emotion sociologists Turner and Stets (2005, 17), anxiety builds on a combination of fear and expectancy. In the amalgamation case, the idea of annexation itself relates to the fear of being taken over, whereas the threat referred to consequences to be expected from annexation. The term annexation also refers to a history of successful resistance to earlier attempts to amalgamate The Hague with Leidschendam, Voorburg and Rijswijk that go as far back as 1903, in the case of Voorburg, and 1954 in the case of Leidschendam and Rijswijk (Verhoeven 2009, 100).

Politicians and policy-makers speculated on the potential consequences and risks of the amalgamation plans. These speculations were powerfully framed when the mayors gave the same speech in their municipal councils in mid-April 1998. An important part of the speech reads:

The annexation of Leidschenveen and Ypenburg and the plan for a corridor may have *serious consequences* for the inhabitants of our municipalities. Think not only of the inhabitants of the new housing estates and the people living in the corridor. The *danger* exists that the next step will be total annexation of our municipalities. Our inhabitants may be *confronted with* a rise of the OZB [the most important local tax]. Another *harmful consequence* is that the distance between local government and inhabitants will increase in such a way that it will become almost impossible for citizens to address certain things directly to you as council member or to us as the Municipal Executive. (*De Haagsche Courant*, April 15, 1998, Pd.60,⁵ italics added)

Here, we clearly see the mayors invoking an emotional appeal to anxiety: there may be ‘serious consequences’ such as paying more taxes or a growing distance between citizens and their representatives. Besides these direct consequences of the current process, the Mayors speculate that there is a ‘danger’ of ‘total annexation’ in the future. One of the mayors added some extra text to his speech, emphasizing the threat and the need for protest to counter it:

Today we kick off a historically unique event. Together with four other municipalities we turn against *the threat of annexation*. The next few weeks or even months we will reinforce this action. We will not *be erased from the map* that easily. (*De Haagsche Courant*, April 15, 1998, Pd.63, italics added)

There are again hints that the existing municipalities will cease to exist by being erased. Compared to the rest of the speech, ‘the threat of annexation’, remains rather vague. This diffuse character of appeals to anxiety was omnipresent in the anti-annexation framing by the five municipalities. This is also apparent in the following quotes:

Aldermen H. ter Heegde of Voorburg [liberal party, finance] is quite *worried* about the possible annexation of parts of his municipality. He considers the possibility of ‘*stealing our land*’ by The Hague as a ‘*great risk*’ and a ‘*dangerous threat*’. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 23, 1997, Pd.11, italics added)

Like representatives of the other municipalities, Roscam Abbing [mayor of Rijswijk] is very *worried* about the not yet specified connection which is supposed to be made between the existing territory of The Hague and *the areas to be conquered*. 'A corridor is being mentioned. That word reminds me strongly of Bosnia'. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 24, 1997, Pd.14, italics added)

Schartman [mayor of Nootdorp] calls the planned annexation, which requires that Nootdorp yields its territory on Ypenburg (...) to The Hague, '*a serious threat*'. (*De Haagsche Courant*, April 25, 1998, Pd.76, italics added)

Although they do not specify this in terms of consequences, most politicians explicitly see the diffuse threat to come from the City of The Hague. They accuse the city of conquering areas or 'stealing our land', a topic that is very controversial in general.⁶ The fact that politicians connected annexation to conquering or stealing the land and identified the City of The Hague as the perpetrator was a very powerful emotional appeal to anxiety. Local politicians did not only frame this appeal during interviews, as in the quotes above, but they also expressed these views in public meetings with citizens:

'These kinds of decisions are driven by emotions', alderman Th. Weterings [liberal party] adjudged in the overfull theatre of Rijswijk where more than 700 people take a stand against *the threat of stealing our land* by The Hague. 'Maybe annexation is a kind of consolation prize because The Hague did not get the city-province it so much longed for', sneered Weterings in the direction of national politics. (...) Alderman Jense managed to *appease the anxiety* that had built up. 'It may happen that the Provincial Authority decides this summer that nothing will happen. No amalgamation, no loss of territory, nothing. In that case we have had a cozy evening'. (*De Haagsche Courant*, April 29, 1998, Pd.80, italics added)

The emotional appeal to threat and anxiety manifested itself further during a campaign for a local referendum that was organized by the five municipalities on 14 October 1998. The communication specialists of the five municipalities were aware of the importance of the communication of symbols and metaphors for conveying concrete arguments (Verhoeven 2009, 106–109).⁷ To mobilize citizens for political action, it is important to direct their attention to a selection of facts in the jungle of arguments by applying well-chosen symbols or metaphors. The communication specialists realized that anxiety was an important emotional driver in this process and devised a campaign that appealed to this energy (Verhoeven 2009, 106–109).

For the referendum campaign, the threat of annexation was framed by the metaphor of the shark (see Figure 1). The shark symbolizes the provincial authority of South Holland. In the shark's mouth, we see a line of text: 'The autonomy of the municipalities will of course be respected after the municipal amalgamation'. This is a quote from a member of the Provincial Executive who was in charge of the amalgamation process for the Provincial authority of South Holland. The metaphor of the shark threatening to eat up anything that comes in its way is of course completely contradictory to the quote that intended to comfort people. The message is very clear: be aware of the provincial authority that is claiming that annexation will not have serious consequences but who will eat us alive if we do not take action. This metaphor is powerful because the image of the shark is a vehicle for emotionally appealing to the anxiety that becomes connected to the focus of annexation.

The choice of the shark metaphor is no coincidence because it corresponds with framing the proponents as hungry for land. In this case, they chose the provincial authorities, whereas in the previous quotes, this emotional appeal was more closely related to the city of The Hague. Hunger for land is also a recurrent topic in the history of



Figure 1. (a and b): The metaphors of the shark and the stork.

Notes: Figure 1a © [Commedia]. Reproduced with permission of Commedia.

Figure 1b © [Gemeentearchief Leidschendam-Voorburg]. Reproduced with permission of Gemeentearchief Leidschendam-Voorburg.

annexation of The Hague and its vicinity. A 1926 caricature depicted the stork, the symbol of the city of The Hague, as a metaphor for the city eating the municipalities of Voorburg and Rijswijk instead of eating frogs (see Figure 1). By choosing the metaphor of the hungry shark, the appeal to anxiety became strongly connected to older annexation metaphors.

The shark metaphor appeared on action leaflets, balloons, small banners, buttons and stickers. Moreover, the image was printed on posters that were distributed to every house in the five municipalities, and it was used on campaign signs in public spaces. Hardly anyone could have missed the image during that period. At the same time, the campaign team issued several editions of an ‘annexation no’ newsletter (75,000 copy’s per issue) that contained a lot of information for citizens to help them make up their minds on the issue. A strong emotional appeal to anxiety was combined with substantive information, in line with the interaction between cognition and emotions, as suggested by affective intelligence theory.⁸

Appealing to anger

The anti-annexation framing changed remarkably after the provincial authority presented its initial amalgamation plan on 7 May 1998, 1 day after the national elections for the

House of Representatives. As expected, the new housing projects Leidschenveen and Ypenburg were planned to become part of The Hague. The most controversial issue was the plan for the ‘corridor’, which had to connect these estates to The Hague’s territory. The provincial authority planned the corridor through Voorburg-West, Cromvliet and Leeuwendaal, in Rijswijk, and through Park Leeuwenberg, in Leidschendam. About 6000 people living in these neighborhoods would become citizens of The Hague.

Politicians in the five municipalities were very upset that the plan was presented one day after national elections and even more so about the content of the plan and its lack of accountability to their citizens’ interests. The chairman of the liberal party in Leidschendam voiced this concern in an open letter to the newspaper *De Haagsche Courant*:

Motivated by *fear* and *cowardice* the procedure prevailed for the Provincial authority, resulting in a decision which *totally ignores* the interests of many thousands of families and citizens (...) We are deeply *ashamed* that this *absurd decision* is published one day after the elections and *apologize* to our voters beforehand. We will support all actions to reverse this *unfair state of affairs*. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 15, 1998, Pd.102, italics added)

These are remarkable words from a chairman of a local political party who spoke out against party members in the provincial authority who were strongly in favor of the amalgamation plans. He introduces an ‘us-them’ distinction, presenting the provincial authority as the ‘them’ whose decision becomes a legitimate object of annoyance, frustration or even more high intensity expressions of anger against ‘us’ (cf. Turner and Stets 2005, 16) and whose unfair behavior should be corrected.

About 10 days later, the mayors of the five municipalities met with the provincial authority to present alternatives to the plan. Their experience deepened the us-them distinction and added to the emotional appeal to anger:

The mayors are *angry*, *disappointed* and above all *astonished* because the Provincial authority had *listened barely* yesterday. The position of the five mayors that The Hague can also be helped out without new territory did not make much of an impression. Mayor Haersma van Buma of Voorburg found the attitude of the administrators ‘*humiliating*’. ‘Our arguments have not been dealt with and even normal questions weren’t answered. Very *careless*. We *have not been taken seriously*’. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 25, 1998, Pd.117, italics added)

It was not only the mayors who felt humiliated and not being taken seriously. A month later, the citizens of the five municipalities had similar experiences. On 24 June 1998, the Provincial authority organized an ‘open information evening’ about its plan. The AACs decided to turn this evening into a demonstration. The Provincial authorities expected 400 people, but in the end, about 4500 were present, and many more had wanted to attend. On 2 July 1998, a second information evening was organized that drew an audience of yet another 1500 citizens. Both evenings turned out to be critical events for the anti-annexation framing.

The provincial politicians were not accustomed to discussing their plans with citizens. They expected it to be sufficient to offer an explanation of their plan, assuming that citizens simply lacked important knowledge. The provincial governor opened the first information evening with the words: ‘You think you know everything, but perhaps this is not true’ (Letter to the editor, 4 July 1998, Pd.249), a common response from politicians who think citizens are overreacting and irrational NIMBYs (Benford, Moore, and Williams 1993; Burningham 2000). Instead, citizens complained that the provincial politicians were playing a political game and that they did not stick to common democratic procedures of deliberation in which all parties present should be able to voice their

concerns. They were waiting in long lines behind the microphones in an attempt to be heard. After both evenings, the leading provincial politicians were interviewed. They said they had a ‘good feeling’ about the meetings. The reactions from politicians from the five municipalities were quite the opposite:

Mayor Haersma van Buma of Voorburg could not escape the impression that the provincial politicians did not make a good estimate of the amount of resistance. That goes for the massive turnout as well as the substantial emotionality. ‘The people are *angry*, no, they are *mad*’, according to Haersma van Buma, who also spoke of *arguments ‘as soft as butter’*. He hoped that the responsible politicians would take all this into account in their considerations and that common sense would prevail in the end. (*De Haagsche Courant*, June 25, 1998, Pd.205, italics added)

Here, we see a critique of the way citizens have been treated that is very similar to the critique of how the politicians themselves were treated at the other meeting. There is also a direct reference to citizens’ anger. The opposing sentiments between the provincial politicians and the citizens are nicely captured in a cartoon printed in *De Haagsche Courant*.

The cartoon, which we unfortunately were not allowed to publish in this article, depicts the atmosphere at the information evening organized by the Provincial authority. On the left hand side we see the Provincial governor and some Provincial administrators sitting behind a table on a stage, facing an angry crowd of citizens in front of them. The citizens are sitting and standing, whilst holding up signs or shouting at the governors and administrators. The text of the Provincial governor and the responsible administrator reads: ‘This emotional involvement of the ordinary citizen with our Provincial policy gives me a good feeling!’ It is starkly contrasted with the angry citizens who hold up signs that read: ‘Annexation no!’, ‘Me inhabitant of The Hague? Never’, ‘Shame!’, ‘Voorburg, not The Hague’ and some other expressions that touch on local identities of Voorburg and Rijswijk. One sign reads ‘Into the pond with you lot’, referring to the pond in front of the Dutch House of Representatives and the office of the Prime minister in The Hague.

From the announcement of the Provincial plan onwards, politicians from the five municipalities began mixing their emotional appeal to anger with war metaphors:

Roscam Abbing [mayor of Rijswijk] announced as well that the municipalities will end their cooperation with The Hague and the provincial authorities in the new housing estates. This as a countermove in the administrative ‘*war that has now exploded*’. Roscam Abbing: ‘We will no longer hold back. Such a corridor is a term from *the art of war*. *Emotions will run very high*. This happens because the Provincial authority arouses municipal councils against each other. They can forget cooperation’. (*De Haagsche Courant*, June 12, 1998, Pd.169, italics added)

By hoisting up the anti-annexation flag and *accompanied by marching music*, the mayors of the five *threatened* municipalities yesterday night gave the starting signal for ‘*a hot summer*’ (...) The intention is to have the *war banner* with the text ‘Cooperation yes, annexation no’ flare ‘everywhere’ in Leidschendam, Nootdorp, Pijnacker, Rijswijk and Voorburg. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 28, 1998, Pd.125)

In terms of Yanow’s metaphor theory, we see here how the idea of war becomes the vehicle that connects the emotional appeal to anger through the focus on annexation. The term annexation itself resonates with the traumatic experiences of countries captured during wars, as happened during World War II when Germany captured the Netherlands. In this case, the meaning of the annexation = war metaphor was twofold: it referred to the land being captured, but also to acts of war (different forms of protest

against the plans), which the five local authorities were about to engage in and for which they called upon the AACs as their sergeants and the citizens as their foot soldiers. The war metaphor thus channeled the emotional appeal to anger in the protest campaign.

Striking an emotional cord

By framing emotional appeals to anxiety and anger, the local politicians and AAC's seem to have laid the groundwork for the mass mobilization of citizens over the summer. But, did this groundwork strike a responsive emotional chord with them?

There is not much evidence for the resonance of the emotional appeal to *anxiety*. It can only be found in a few interviews or citizens' letters to the editor:

R. Koumans from Hoornbrug-lane *fears* that annexation will lead to higher municipal taxes. *'I'm thoroughly against'*, he says. 'But it's not only about the money. I can also become very emotional about it. I'm very much attached to Rijswijk. And why does there have to be a corridor? No, I have never walked with a banner, but if there will be protest, I will certainly participate. (...) P. Admiraal (...) 'They want to *besiege* Rijswijk and then try to hog the lot', the inhabitant of the Koninginnelaan speculates. 'I don't even want to think about it'. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 8, 1998, Pd.95, italics added)

'I beg de storch [symbol of The Hague] *stay off with your paws*'. *'Annexation a mass grave'*. These types of strong statements could frequently be heard yesterday during a protest meeting of the municipalities Nootdorp and Pijnacker against the threatening annexation of Ypenburg by The Hague. (*De Haagsche Courant*, April 29, 1998, Pd.81, italics added)

Here, we see examples of how feelings of anxiety and local identity become intertwined. Local identity was not overly present in the anti-annexation framing by the five municipalities, but it can be recognized in the AACs' arguments against annexation and, consequently, in many of the remarks made by individual citizens during interviews with *de Haagsche Courant* (Verhoeven 2009).

Anger was the predominant feeling that citizens expressed in relation to the annexation issue. The anger started to grow after the Provincial authority announced the first plan, understood – in line with the collective political actors – as a form of annexation:

Angry I am, no *mad!* You don't believe your eyes and ears that annexation is an option nowadays. This so called *legally sanctioned usurpation* of the ground of others. If you are found guilty of this as a citizen they lock you up, but this *political mafia* can apparently do as they please and even *hide behind the law*. (*De Haagsche Courant*, May 23, 1998, Pd.120, italics added)

'It is *scandalous*', Gerard Koppe cries out intensely. 'The Hague is *guilty*. Now they want to *embezzle these villages* for the money. They should *burn that city down*'. (*De Haagsche Courant*, June 24, 1998, Pd.192, italics added)

The anger amongst citizens grew after the two Provincial information evenings mentioned before. Resonating the sharp reactions of the local politicians, particularly of the five mayors, many citizens severely criticized the Provincial politicians regarding the non-democratic procedure, as embodied in their conduct during the evening. For example:

I'm very *annoyed* by the *arrogant way* in which the administrators of our province have executed the open information evening on the annexation plans – o pardon me, the plans for 'border corrections'. The provincial governor and the responsible administrators have succeeded in producing a *meaningless* – and sometimes *unintelligible toffee-nosed* –

vocabulary, thus sending home 4500 citizens in *uncertain circumstances*. (...) With a lot of courage questions concerning content were posed, whilst the panel was whispering and finally coming up with meaningless answers. The whole procedure during this '*obligatory sham*' is typical for the *lack of respect* from these administrators for all *concerned citizens* from the prey-municipalities in The Hague's vicinity. (*De Haagsche Courant*, July 1, 1998, Pd.230, italics added)

The provincial governor, ms. Leemhuis-Stout, has *irritated* most with her arrogant attitude. She employed a very condemnable technique to chair the meeting; had the *brutality* to *intimidate* spokespersons by asking them questions that they needed to answer immediately, whilst *ignoring* or *refusing* to answer questions from the audience. Repeatedly citizens *screamed* 'listen!' to summon her, because of her *disinterested attitude* and the conversations she (covering the mike) was having during the spoken protest. (*De Haagsche Courant*, July 1, 1998, Pd.234, italics added)

In addition to the politicians' conduct at the information evenings, the conduct of the Provincial authority in general was also heavily criticized, it was considered a form of power politics. Again, citizens were very annoyed by this:

Finally the provincial authority of South Holland could prove itself and show citizens that it consists of proper administrators who know what they are doing – not administrators that *abuse their power*. But no: instead they come with proposals for the annexation of vital well-governed municipalities. (*De Haagsche Courant*, June 6, 1998, Pd.138, italics added)

Political *power games*, *hiding behind a resolution* of the House of Representatives, *tricks to reach an unclear goal* with *as least as possible deliberation and voice*, are in play here. *Feelings and emotions of citizens are completely ignored*. How's that for decreasing the distance between local government and citizens, how's that for voice, how's that for deliberation? (*De Haagsche Courant*, June 25, 1998, Pd.211, italics added)

All this anger and its framing is very much in line with the anti-annexation framing of the Cooperation yes, annexation no coalition. These citizens were angry because of a perceived lack of empathy, not being taken seriously and the idea that the decision-making procedure lacked transparency and went over their heads. This anger proved to be fertile ground for a broadly shared anti-annexation sentiment amongst the citizens of all five municipalities. In September 1998, during the heat of the moment, a representative survey in all these municipalities indicated that 98% of the citizens were familiar with the plans, 82% were interested in the process as such, and 93% were against it. The most important information sources were newspapers (89%), publicity by the municipalities (55%) and publicity by the AACs (41%) (Verhoeven 2009, 175).⁹ This strongly suggests that emotional appeals by politicians, AACs and in newspaper coverage laid the groundwork for the citizens' feelings on the issue.

Inhabitants of the five municipalities became massively involved in protest activities during the summer and fall of 1998. Approximately 2000 citizens attended information evenings organized by the five municipalities at the end of April. As indicated before, nearly 100,000 anti-annexation posters with the shark image were distributed amongst a total population of 152,000. In the end of June and the beginning of July, about 6000 people came out to demonstrate during the two open information evenings organized by the provincial authorities. In the period from June until the end of September, 23,500 citizens were mobilized by the AACs to file a notice of objection to the plan by the provincial authority. One-sixth of the total population in the five municipalities was involved in this particular action. In October 1998, even more citizens were mobilized to participate in the aforementioned referendum. Of a total of 121,715 eligible voters, 90,385 participated in the

referendum, which is a turnout of 74%, a rate that, compared to the municipal elections, varied between +36% and +17% in the five municipalities. The question used for the referendum was: ‘Are you in favor or against the plan of the provincial authority of South Holland to transfer parts of the suburbs to the municipality of The Hague?’ Notice that the word annexation was carefully avoided here. In the end, 89% of the citizens that turned out voted against the amalgamation process. Numerous petitions, demonstrations and other forms of small-scale protest regularly occurred in 1998 (Verhoeven 2009, 109).

Conclusions: enter emotions

The municipal amalgamation case study clearly indicates the relevance of studying emotional appeals as important elements of policy controversies. These emotional appeals were closely connected to events that proved to be critical moments in the mobilization process. By reacting to these events, the opponents of municipal amalgamation produced a continuous stream of emotional appeals, which shifted, over time, from anxiety to anger (with exception of the referendum campaign in October 1998, which appealed to anxiety). These emotional appeals provided emotional energy that fueled many protest activities during the summer and fall of 1998.

If we interpret this shift from the perspective of affective intelligence theory, we can say that emotional appeals to *anxiety* helped to attract people’s attention to the policy intervention, whereas the highly resonating appeals to *anger* stirred them to action to do something about the situation. Of course, the emotional appeal to anger did not resonate with everybody, but the massive participation in some forms of protest suggests that it affected a substantial number of citizens. We think that these findings are relevant to the analysis of emotions in other policy controversies as well. Moreover, we claim that emotional appeals can also be found in more mundane, less oppositional processes of policy formation or implementation. Studying emotional appeals in policy discourses may help to deepen explanations of performative failure (Alexander 2006) in the conduct of politicians and civil servants and thus prove productive for better understanding the persisting problems of failing policy implementation and issues of lacking legitimacy (Hajer 2009).

To do so, we do not suggest that there should be an ‘emotional turn’ in interpretive policy analysis. Instead, our suggestion is that the IPA community starts to study emotional appeals and figures out ways to incorporate the empirical analysis of emotions into policy processes. The tools of studying ‘emotion words’ and metaphors are available; we have showed one way that these can be applied. We would like to invite interpretive policy analysts to broaden their focus on arguments as practical productions to include the involvement of emotional appeals and thus shake off their cognitive bias. Enter emotions!

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Notes on contributors

Imrat Verhoeven is Assistant Professor of Public Policy in the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. His research interests are governmental activism, emotions and conflict, and the activating welfare state. He is a member of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR).

Jan Willem Duyvendak is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology at the University of Amsterdam. His main fields of research currently are belonging, urban sociology, 'feeling at home' and nativism. He is a member of the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR).

Notes

1. Based on several other well-known textbooks in the field, Deborah Stone concluded in her keynote lecture Taking Emotions Seriously at the Interpretive Policy Analysis conference 2013 in Vienna that '(...) feelings don't show up much in our studies, beyond ritual mentions of the word' and 'I don't think IPA is fulfilling its promise of taking emotions seriously' (Stone 2013, 4).
2. There are some exceptions such as Forester (1999) who argues that emotional sensitivity is an important aspect of planning practices, Durnová (2013a) who shows how intimacy plays a role in care policies and Stone (2012) who acknowledges the importance of policy-making for avoiding emotional harms caused by some people and affecting others.
3. Jasper talks about fear, of which anxiety is a mild form.
4. For an explanation of the empirical selection of the 389 newspaper articles, see Verhoeven (2009, 245–249).
5. Pd.60 refers to the number of the specific primary document in Atlas.ti, the program we used for the analysis of the newspaper articles.
6. Consider for example the experiences of Somali refugees in Ethiopia who report on not getting their land back after being repatriated to Somalia as the government 'eating our land', which lead some of them to be demoralized and others to become mad (Zarowsky 2004, 196). Again, we thank Deborah Stone for her suggestion of this analogy in her comments on our IPA conference paper.
7. Gusfield (1981, 51) once captured this insight in his well-known quote: 'We live in a forest of symbols on the edge of a jungle of fact.'
8. See the theory paragraph.
9. These percentages do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose more answers to this question.

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