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CRISIS LEADERSHIP BY MAYORS
AN EMPIRICAL MULTIMETHOD STUDY

Wouter Jong

CRISIS LEADERSHIP BY MAYORS
AN EMPIRICAL MULTIMETHOD STUDY

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan Tilburg University
op gezag van de
rector magnificus, prof. dr. K. Sijtsma,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van een door
het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie
in de Aula van de Universiteit op

donderdag 19 december om 16.00 uur

door

Wouter Jong
geboren op 24 juli 1972 te Purmerend

Promotor: dr. P.G. van der Velden (voormalig hoogleraar Victimologie)
Copromotor: dr. M.L.A. Dückers

Overige leden van de promotiecommissie:

prof. em. dr. B.P.R. Gersons
prof. dr. I. Helsloot
dr. P.E.W.M. Tops
prof. dr. mr. S. Zouridis

To the affected who told me their stories,
the mayors who shared their experiences,
and future students who are committed to learn from them.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Friday May 9, 2008. In the small Dutch town of De Punt, three firefighters lost their lives while on duty. They were killed in a fire at a local shipyard. It was a tragedy with a large local impact. In the memorial book (De Haas et al., 2009) published by the municipality of Tynaarlo, the widow of one of the three heroes who died in the blaze tells her side of the story. She talks about her husband and the fire brigade, but also about the tensions that had arisen in the aftermath of the event, rooted in differences between the expectations of a society in shock and the more personal emotions and grief of the next of kin. She and her bereaved family felt pressured to share their grief in the public arena. Although she was impressed by the number of people who attended the commemoration, she was also left with a feeling that no place existed for the personal mourning of her family. Her decision not to attend the yearly memorial service held by the mayor and the fire brigade – along with her refusal to add her husband's name to the National Firefighters Memorial in Arnhem in the Netherlands – resulted in long-lasting tensions in the local community.

In tragedies such as this, mayors are supposed to assume the role of public leader. Citizens expect their mayor to make sense of the situation, address feelings of hope and resilience on a community level and simultaneously take care of the victims, bereaved and next of kin. These are also the situations that evoke political and psychological mechanisms with the power to change the way in which people, organizations, governments, polities, and media act and interact (Ansell, Boin, & 't Hart, 2014). Ultimately, mayors are challenged to prevent and dissipate tensions among their audiences, and guard the well-being of their citizens.

In recent years, numerous studies have been published on public leadership in times of crises. Nevertheless, in the academic literature, the focus of this aspect of crisis management tends to be on the national and international level. In particular, crisis management academics assess crises and disasters with disruptive impacts on the scale of Hurricane Katrina (2005), the September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks or the Fukushima nuclear disaster (2011). Although this category of crises certainly brings fruitful academic insights, theory on the role of public leaders on smaller scale incidents seems to be lacking. Even though such crises lack the magnitude of the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), the Cold War or the 2008 financial meltdown, they are also part of a local, social and cultural system that asks for public leadership.

This dissertation focuses on the role of mayors, as a special category of public leaders, on crises in a local setting. It draws upon prior academic research on public leadership in times of crises, and adds new empirical studies among Dutch mayors on their role as local communicators and vehicles for psychosocial intervention. It aims to broaden our academic understanding of crisis management and public leadership.

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The insights from this study result in general concepts that deepen our understanding and enable mayors in The Netherlands and other countries to be effective as local government representatives.

The current chapter presents a general overview of the study design and an outline of the studies the dissertation contains. Before elaborating on the study design, a brief description is provided on the current state of research on Dutch mayors, and general observations of academic research in public administration, crisis communication and psychosocial literature.

Dutch research on mayors

Given that most of the studies included in this dissertation are based on research among Dutch mayors, the magnifying glass is first focused on The Netherlands. Several recent Ph.D. dissertations have enhanced collective understanding of Dutch mayors in the context of crisis. De Vries (2016) has studied the influence of context and personality on the leadership of the commander-in-chief, based on scenarios judged by 190 Dutch mayors. He has examined the role of mayor as chair of the crisis team, and specifically the way in which his or her *modus operandi* influences the crisis team to take either a participative or more directive means of decision making. De Vries (2016) ultimately determined that mayors make personal assessments in the decision-making process in times of crisis; moreover, agreeable mayors exhibit less autocratic leadership behavior and partly in consequence are perceived as being less effective in leading their crisis teams. Resoort (2015) has stepped outside the "war room" of a crisis team to research the circumstances that result in the resignation of a mayor in the aftermath of a crisis. He confirmed earlier findings that leadership and communication are important factors in times of crisis. In his analysis of 18 case studies, he underlines the importance of leadership, crisis communication, and the use of legislative powers in times of crisis. Resoort (2015) has also discussed a so-called "negative bias," through which unsuccessful preventive measures before a crisis become a contributing and negative factor in the process of accountability. Like Resoort, Berndsen (2015) has discussed the political aftermath and process of accountability on both a local and a national level. In cases where (local) government was held responsible, governmental organizations tended to react in a defensive manner through fear of liability and a lack of openness and empathy (Berndsen, 2015). Moreover, Broekema (2018) has researched the learning process of governmental organizations. One of his studies was based on a questionnaire answered by 207 Dutch mayors. He has concluded that mayors with high levels of public service motivation are more motivated to learn (in terms of communication and accountability) in the aftermath of crises (Broekema, 2018).

Prins (2014) has also studied Dutch mayors, but focused on their role in terms of safety and security governance. Even though her study does not directly enrich our understanding of mayors in periods of crisis, she has shown how mayors' policies have developed over time. Indeed, whereas they previously tended to be solo actors in the governmental field of safety and security, they have increasingly become networking actors with an evolving perspective on safety, security, and risks within a post-modern society (Prins, 2014). While Prins' findings are not generalizable to crisis management as such, they might suggest that mayors are increasingly becoming network partners in times of crisis as well. Karsten (2013) has taken a similar policy approach, noting that mayors and aldermen struggle with decisions when they feel that these are not supported by their local communities. In his analysis, he proposes that local political executives can regain authority for their directive decisions by explaining and justifying to different audiences the considerations that motivated their decisions (Karsten, 2013). Again, this might have a degree of relevance for the public clarification of decisions made in times of crisis.

Defining crisis situations in a local setting

What transforms a situation into a local crisis cannot be substantially defined and written down on a checklist. A disturbing event such as a fatal car accident with youngsters may have a considerable impact on a small local community, but not in a major city. When considering the definition of "crisis" that is widely used in public administration, such a difference in impact is largely ignored. Public administration tends to refer to the classic definition of Rosenthal, Charles and 't Hart, where a crisis is deemed "*a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitates making vital decisions*" (1989: 10). Consequently, the definition reflects public administrative researchers' interest in mega-crises.

Crisis communication literature takes the perception of a situation and the expectancies among stakeholders as the core theme of its definition. According to Coombs (2009: 100), "*a crisis can be viewed as the perception of an event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can impact the organization's performance. Crises are largely perceptual. If stakeholders believe there is a crisis, the organization is in a crisis unless it can successfully persuade stakeholders it is not. A crisis violates expectations; an organization has done something stakeholders feel is inappropriate.*" Although this definition renders perception and expectations central, it does not correspond entirely to the setting of local crises with a public impact. One can consider the public leadership required in the aftermath of a local shooting, where the shooter and not the local government holds direct responsibility for the crisis situation, despite the fact that the community expects its mayor to be present, as the aftermath of the shooting in Alphen aan den Rijn in The Netherlands demonstrated (Van Duin et al., 2012).

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Psychosocial literature takes an alternative approach, emphasizing the impact of crises on affected individuals and groups (Dückers et al., 2017). Certainly, Hobfoll et al. (2007) use the frame of collective "*potentially traumatic events which impact the well-being, functioning, and health to which citizens are exposed.*"

In an attempt to transform the concept of crises to the context of mayors, crises are related here to the impact of local social systems. Barton (1969) has defined a social system as a set of people with a particular degree of interaction and interdependence as well as a certain degree of independence from the outside world. Social systems may include a classroom, neighborhood, community or city, or a social unit such as a friendship group, family or extended kin group. In line with Barton (1969) and Coombs (2007), this dissertation focuses on the (perceived) impact of negative and unpredictable events on any of these social systems. Unlike the crises that generate the interest of public administration research, physical damage or fatalities are not conditional to labeling an event a "local crisis." Rather, such a definition must also include so-called public tragedies, situations of widespread notoriety, suffering and collective impact (Hayes et al., 2017).

All in all, a crisis in a local setting can be described as *the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of citizens, generates negative outcomes for a social system and asks for local public leadership.*

On the intersection of research disciplines

The difference in definitions among public administration, crisis communication and psychosocial support reflects different points of view on the matter. Nevertheless, each of these areas has aspects that can be regarded as relevant building blocks in order to increase our scientific knowledge of the role of mayors in local crises. In order to generate a complete and multidisciplinary overview of the topic, these diverse angles are discussed below.

Public administration

In recent years, crisis management has gained traction as a subject of academic study. Public administration research has tended to focus on the collective and political perspectives of public leadership. For instance, Boin et al. (2005) have helped stimulate consideration of public leadership in times of crisis, arguing that public leaders face several challenges: trying to prevent or at least minimize the impacts of adversity, dealing with the social and political consequences, accountability, and restoring public faith in the future. This highlights how within the context of public administration, the academic field of crisis management scrutinizes the relationship between citizens and their leaders on the one hand, and the interaction between public leaders and their democratic fora on the other. Regarding the former, an important task is "*meaning making,*" in which the broader

impacts of a crisis are communicated to citizens, the media and other stakeholders (Boin et al., 2005). Boin et al. (2005) have also linked this issue to accountability, because *meaning making* enhances credibility, which in turn increases one's chances of political survival in the post-crisis phase.

Crisis communication

Even though "*meaning making*" undoubtedly has elements of crisis communication, there is scarcely any interaction between public administrative crisis research and crisis communication. The focus of crisis communication can be regarded as an academic field where crisis response strategies are defined and tested, with the purpose of protecting brands and reputations. The field has a "managerial bias" (Waymer & Heath, 2007), with a focus on American, corporate case studies (Arendt et al., 2017). Hayes et al. (2017) have already called for a new paradigm, as crises affect organizations outside of the corporate arena as well. Such a paradigm might support public leaders in their efforts to integrate a more resilience-oriented type of crisis communication in order to support communities to survive and revive in the event of a crisis (e.g., Olsson, 2014).

Psychosocial support

Whereas Van Loon (2008) has demanded a more structural integration of crisis management methodologies within the domain of psychosocial support, Dückers et al. (2017) have applied psychosocial support to the context of crisis leadership. Indeed, they (Dückers et al. 2017) have drawn the conclusion that there is an unexplored intersection of crisis leadership and psychosocial support. Giving *meaning* to something can have a positive effect on people's resilience and recovery from stressful events (Park, 2016). According to Dückers et al. (2017), integrating crisis leadership with such psychosocial principles helps to reduce foreseeable problems in the response and recovery phases. Hobfoll et al. (2007) have described five so-called "essential elements" that are beneficial for the well-being of the affected: The promotion of a sense of safety, calmness, self- and community efficacy, connectedness to others, and hope. Dückers et al. (2017) argue that public leaders can serve as a necessary vehicle to bring these psychosocial principles into practice through providing social acknowledgment and contributing to a sense of connectedness and hope.

The need for an interdisciplinary approach on local crisis leadership

A multidisciplinary approach is necessary, as limiting oneself to a public administrative background may lead to potential knowledge from the fields of crisis communication and psychosocial support being overlooked. Likewise, crisis communication alone might result in the importance of communication goals other than reputation repair being ignored. Furthermore, a study that takes a psychosocial approach might neglect the political reality

in which a mayor acts, where responsibility and accountability for the decisions made are "part of the job" as well. Therefore, only by integrating academic approaches is it possible to reveal possible knowledge gaps regarding mayors' actions in the aftermath of crises. Otherwise, the risk is that situations will emerge where interests are traded off, either intended or unintended. One can think of a mayor who survives a heated political debate at the cost of the directly affected, who consequently feel ignored or used for political purposes. In such a case, a mayor might have followed a textbook approach to public administration, even though he or she turned away from the psychosocial needs of the directly affected. Only when all interests are balanced and when further harm to stakeholders is prevented can a mayor be deemed truly effective in his or her local crisis leadership in the eyes of all of his or her audiences.

Study objective and research questions

Recent dissertations on the performance of mayors in the Netherlands have helped increase our understanding of the political aftermath, the process of accountability, and the performance of mayors within a crisis team. However, little is known about the expectations citizens have of their public leaders as soon as their community is faced with crises. Empirical studies on this aspect of the "meaning making" role of mayors remain lacking. Moreover, interdisciplinary studies using the three perspectives described are, to the best of our knowledge, absent. Similarly, empirical studies are lacking on what mayors can expect in their interactions with local citizens, the bereaved and next of kin. Nor is much known about how mayors are able to influence the well-being of their citizens in their behavior and responses to crises. The answers to such questions and topics can be found at the proposed intersection of psychosocial support, crisis communication, and public administration paths.

This dissertation is aimed at the role of mayors during "*crisis in a local setting*". Aim is to increase our scientific knowledge regarding several aspects of this role, varying from effective leadership to the expectations of affected residents as to the role of their mayor. Several empirical studies have provided a basis of knowledge, enabling the *modus operandi* of mayors in times of crisis to be approached in an interdisciplinary manner, as proposed. Together, the answers to the following sub-questions generate building blocks that help knowledge on crisis leadership by mayors to be developed. Specifically, the seven research questions of this dissertation are:

1. What is regarded as effective leadership when mayors from across the world act as public leaders in times of crisis? (Chapter 2)
2. What is the visible *modus operandi* of Dutch mayors in times of crisis, and do they act in the same way in all crisis situations? (Chapter 3)

3. What are the potential bottlenecks and challenges for Dutch mayors when dealing with different types of crisis? (Chapter 4)
4. What are the implications, in terms of trustworthiness and reliability, when accountability becomes more prominent on the mayoral radar? (Chapter 5)
5. What is the visible *modus operandi* of Dutch mayors when there is an apparent and simultaneous need for action on the societal impact of a crisis and requests for support to those directly affected? (Chapter 6)
6. What do those affected by a crisis, generally speaking, expect from their public leaders? (Chapter 7)
7. How do Dutch mayors relate their own perceptions to the expectations of those affected by a crisis, and what is the resulting behavior they demonstrate in times of crisis? (Chapter 8)

To answer these sub-questions, this investigation utilizes different methodologies, along the lines of a multimethod and multisource approach. Through the combination of a literature review, a series of interviews with mayors and those affected by crises, a questionnaire, a simulation study, and a media review, insights are combined and hypotheses thoroughly tested.

Outline
The following paragraph provides a brief overview of the chapters in this dissertation. These chapters consist of independent peer-reviewed publications and manuscripts under review by international crisis-related journals. Most of these peer-reviewed articles are co-authored, which explains why the word "we" is used in some of these chapters. As the first author of all of the papers, I can confirm that I took the lead in constructing the research questions, in choosing the appropriate methodology, and in the entire process of writing all of these articles. For the purpose of clarity, the "we" form is used in both this introduction and discussion. As the chapters are identical to the published articles, the reference style changes between chapters.

Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 primarily look at the role of mayors in times of crisis from a public point of view. The chapters describe what (Dutch) mayors tend to do in terms of *meaning making*, and how they cope with dilemmas related to their role as public leaders in times of crisis. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 take as a central theme the position of citizens and individuals affected by a crisis, including their expectations of government and its representatives. In the overall discussion in Chapter 10, the two perspectives are combined and an attempt is made to answer the core research question.

Chapter 2: Literature review
Based on:
Jong, W., Dückers, M.L.A. & Van der Velden, P.G. (2016), Leadership of Mayors and Governors during Crises. *Journal of Contingencies & Crisis Management*, 24: 46-58. doi:10.1111/1468-5973.12091

Method: review of 34 peer-reviewed articles; the full list contained 1,496 articles.

Given that the aim was to study the role of mayors, a literature review was undertaken first. The review examines peer-reviewed articles from The Netherlands and abroad to generate a concise perspective on the state-of-the-art view on public leadership in times of crisis. The purpose of a literature review is twofold. First, it maximizes the likelihood that the researcher will include all relevant studies on the topic at hand, and minimizes the chances that key articles are overlooked. Second, it provides the reader with a broad overview of the topic and the paths that have been taken by other researchers. In this case, the central theme of the literature review was public leadership in times of crisis. In order to avoid excluding any potential similarities between mayors and other public leaders, the review assesses the role of mayors, governors, and premiers in times of crisis. As part of the overall research question considers the effectiveness of public leadership, this study focuses on the effectiveness of crisis leadership. A total of 34 peer-reviewed articles met the criteria for inclusion in this review and enabled conclusions to be drawn regarding the tasks and effectiveness of mayors. The review revealed two insights: first, the literature on crisis management seems to be dominated by American case studies, mostly on 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina; second, the literature is dominated by the public role of mayors in the aftermath of crises, while little attention is given to the role of mayors in relation to victims' families. In this way, the review confirms the relevance of the research question.

Chapter 3: Toward a framework
Based on:
Jong, W. (2017), Meaning making by public leaders in times of crisis: An assessment. *Public Relations Review*, 43, 5: 1025-1035. doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.09.003.

Presented and awarded at: *International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference*, University of Central Florida, March 15, 2017, Orlando, USA

Method: exploratory qualitative method with semi-structured interviews. 94 interviews (approximately 1.5 hours each) with Dutch mayors were analyzed.

The literature review (Chapter 2) reveals that one of the key tasks of mayors is *meaning making*, whereby communication must be effective and additionally take into account politically charged issues of causation, responsibility and accountability (Ansell, Boin, & 't Hart, 2014). Using the findings on *meaning making* from Chapter 2 as a starting point, this chapter develops a framework to assess recent *meaning making* efforts by mayors. The study is based on 94 interviews pertaining to Dutch cases that occurred between 1979 and 2014. These case studies enabled the pool of comparative case studies to be widened, as suggested in Chapter 2. Moreover, the article contributes insights from Dutch cases, in contrast to examples from the literature review in Chapter 2 that predominantly discuss insights from the United States. After coding and analyzing the 94 interviews, four distinctive roles of mayors in times of crisis are described: "mourner-in-chief," "orchestrator," "advocate," and "buddy." All of these roles emphasize different elements that depend on the collective emotional impact of a situation as well as on the political responsibility attributed to the public leader.

Chapter 4: Complexity of roles within the framework
Based on:
Jong, W., Dückers, M.L.A., van de Ven, J.G.M., Schouten, D.G.M. & Van der Velden, P.G. (2019), Decision making in times of crisis: A simulation study on complexity among 135 Dutch mayors. *Submitted.*

Presented at: *International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference*, University of Central Florida, March 13, 2018, Orlando, USA

Method: 135 mayors participating individually in a serious 30-minute game

This study uses the framework from Chapter 3 to assess the complexity of crisis-related decisions. The purpose of this study was to examine whether or not different types of crisis generate different complexities. This chapter examines the influence of collective impact and political responsibility on the perceived complexity of crisis-related decisions by mayors. A computerized serious game simulation was set up, comprising four real-life crisis situations, each of which presented four dilemmas with differing levels of collective impact and political responsibility. Dutch mayors (n=135) rated the perceived complexity of these 16 dilemmas.

Chapter 5: Dealing with perceived responsibility
Based on:
Jong, W. (2019), Anticipating the unknown: Crisis communication while under investigation. *Public Relations Inquiry*. doi:10.1177/2046147X19862343

Method: conceptual paper

This commentary discusses the implications for mayors who are faced with an investigation in the aftermath of a crisis. This specific angle was chosen because it sheds light on the potential tension between *meaning making* in the public arena and the process of accountability that follows in a political setting. Given that several of the interviews from Chapter 3 refer to the role of investigative bodies, the article helps to build understanding of situations in which perceived responsibility for a crisis represents a central theme. In other words, the chapter discusses the implications of the horizontal axis of the framework from Chapter 3 and potential tensions in the upper-right corner of that framework.

Chapter 6: Case study: Mayors during the MH17 disaster
Based on:
Jong, W., Dückers, M.L.A. & Van der Velden, P.G. (2016), Crisis leadership by mayors: A qualitative content analysis of newspapers and social media on the MH17 disaster. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 24: 286-295. doi:10.1111/1468-5973.12124.

Presented at: International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference, University of Central Florida, March 15, 2017, Orlando, USA

Method: (social) media analysis of 299 media clippings and 1,698 tweets

This study uses the MH17 disaster as a case study. The Malaysian Airlines flight crashed in Ukraine on July 17, 2014. All passengers and crew died, including 193 people with Dutch nationality. Despite its devastating impact, the case study provides a unique opportunity to conduct a comparative study, because more than 50 Dutch mayors were confronted with exactly the same situation. The study is based on (social) media analysis, to which end 299 newspaper articles and 1,698 tweets were captured. Given that mayors could regard the MH17 disaster as a situation with low (crisis) responsibility and high (collective) impact, the circumstances facilitate a greater understanding of the role of mourner-in-chief from the framework presented in Chapter 3.

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Chapter 7: The interests of those affected
Based on:
Jong, W. and Dückers, M.L.A. (2019), The perspective of the affected: What people confronted with disasters expect from government officials and public leaders. *Risk, Hazards & Crisis in Public Policy*, 10: 14-31. doi:10.1002/rhc3.12150

Method: exploratory qualitative method with semi-structured interviews. An analysis of eight interviews (two hours on average) with people who had experienced a major crisis or disaster or its aftermath.

Given that the literature review from Chapter 2 revealed that previous scholarship on *meaning making* by public leaders is dominated by the interests of the general public, this chapter takes a different approach. Indeed, the perspective taken is that of the affected, seeking clues as to what they expect from their public leaders. The chapter describes eight interviews with adult residents from The Netherlands who had been affected by a crisis, sharing their expectations and experiences in relation to government. As the perceptions of those affected may differ from those of the mayors who are supposed to support them, the article makes a set of recommendations in order to fill this gap.

Chapter 8: Providing social support
Based on:
Jong, W., Dückers, M.L.A. & Van der Velden, P.G. (2019), Provision of social support by public leaders in times of crisis: A survey among Dutch mayors. *Submitted*.

Method: survey of 220 Dutch mayors

Chapters 6 and 7 provide insights into the expectations of those affected by a crisis and the actions taken by mayors to support them. This chapter does not only look at mayors' behavior, but also assesses their perceptions and motives with regard to their relationships with those affected in the aftermath of a crisis. For this reason, social support from a provider's point of view is discussed. To this end, a survey of 220 Dutch public leaders was conducted to assess their role in relation to victims and their families, and to analyze their behavior toward the affected in the aftermath of crisis.

Chapter 9: Summary and general conclusion
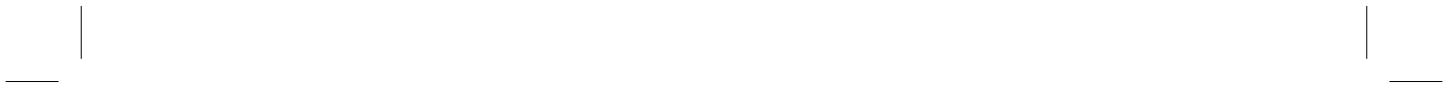
In Chapter 9, a general conclusion and discussion are presented, based on the material presented in the previous chapters. The findings are integrated and a conceptual model outlining the main findings is offered. An attempt is made to answer the sub-questions and to discuss some practical implications. The chapter concludes with limitations and suggestions for further research.

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2

Leadership of mayors and governors during crises and disasters: a systematic review on tasks and effectiveness

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to provide a systematic review of peer-reviewed literature on leadership tasks and effectiveness of mayors and governors during drastic collective events. A total of 34 peer-reviewed articles met our criteria. They were analysed using the theoretical framework by Boin on leadership tasks, i.e., sense making, decision making, meaning making, terminating, and learning. Studies ranged from minor incidents like local riots, to the events of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. The material turned out to be dominated by Western and American studies. Because of limitations in the empirical and knowledge base of the studies, it is difficult to draw general conclusions on what is supposed to be effective leadership by mayors and/or governors in these circumstances.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mayors and governors play a strategic role during and in the immediate aftermath of crises and disasters. Even though the legislative powers of mayors and governors differ throughout the world, they share a sustained interest in outright duties and responsibilities for interventions such as a mandatory evacuation to restore or enforce public order (Boin & Gralepois, 2006; Martinko, Breaux, Martinez, Summers, & Harvey, 2009; Prins, Cachet, Ponsaers, & Hughes, 2012). They also keep the public spotlight during these crises. Wellknown examples are mayors Giuliani of New York after 9/11 and Livingstone of London after the bombings in July 2005 (UK), or Mayor Nagin of New Orleans and Governor Blanco of Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina (USA).

Since crises and disasters continue to be part of modern life, it is important to gain systematic insight and knowledge as to how mayors and governors fulfil their relevant roles and how their interests, duties and responsibilities are related to the outcomes across crisis and disasters. The aim of the present study is to contribute to the development of this knowledge by conducting a systematic review of literature on leadership tasks and effectiveness of mayors and governors during and in the aftermath of crises and disasters. To the best of our knowledge, no such review has been undertaken to date.

The need for such a systematical approach was underscored by Boin and Gralepois (2006).They plead for a systematic investigation of empirical studies into crisis management performance. In their view, such an approach is necessary to contribute to a set of guiding principles for fulfilling crisis management tasks. In response to that call for more knowledge, we review in a systematic fashion case material related to mayors and governors as specifically crisis managers. This review consists of studies published in English in peer-reviewed journals. Accessibility to this body of literature proved difficult in some cases, while information from grey literature (e.g., dissertations, consultancy reports, unpublished manuscripts and book chapters), although much more limited in terms of accessibility, was not included because its quality could not be ensured (these publications did not always receive a blind peer review). Crisis management performance by mayors and governors, as we will now see, encompasses a broad category of behaviour. To categorize findings on the behaviour of mayors and governors during the different stages of crises (including disasters), our point of departure is the theoretical framework of Boin et al. (2005). This framework, which has been much applied in the field and referenced elsewhere (e.g., McConnell & Drennan, 2006; Boudes & Laroche, 2009; Christensen, Lægreid, & Hellebø Rykkja, 2013), is relied upon as the conceptual framework to categorize our findings. The framework distinguishes five tasks of public leadership during crises and disasters: sense making, decision making, meaning making, terminating, and learning. To be brief and at risk of simplification, Boin et al. (2005) refer to sense making as the leadership task of recognizing vague and sometimes contradictory

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signals, taking a position in a developing story, and separating the message from the noise. Decision making under crisis circumstances does not only require the prioritization of interventions, but also an ability to manage (not just cope) in the face of scarce public resources. Meaning making is the leadership task of communicating the broader impacts of a crisis to citizens, media and other stakeholders. Terminating the crisis consists of taking measures in order to leave the crisis mode and return to a sense of normality, even if it is a new normal (this includes blame games and accountability, as we will see). Learning is the fifth form of public leadership, which consists of evaluating the crisis on a political and/or organizational level and digesting the lessons learned for the future. Boin et al. (2005) focus their framework on the policy maker, who 'experiences a serious threat to the basic structures of or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitates making vital decisions'. In our review, we adopt the more general version of crises commonplace in crisis communications. Coombs (2007) defines such a crisis as 'the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes'. From this point of view, a crisis situation is not necessarily defined by law, the damage done or the number of fatalities, but ultimately depends on the perceptions of stakeholders. Using Coombs' definition broadens our scope of potential situations and possible relevant studies to be reviewed. The central research question is therefore as follows: according to peer-reviewed research, what are the leadership tasks and behaviour of mayors and governors that may be regarded as effective during and after crises.

2. METHODS

Databases and search strategy

To identify relevant empirical studies, electronic searches were performed in Scopus ('single search') and PsycINFO, MEDLINE and Communication Abstracts ('combined search'). The four databases cover peer-reviewed journals in the broad fields of sociology, psychology, communications, political science and public management. Searches were conducted in the years 2013–2014, with a final check in September 2014. Date of publication embraced a period of 25 years (1989– 2014). The search strategy was based on a combination of broad search terms related to mayors, governors, public leaders as well as certain types of crises (Table 1). Terms were used in keyword, title or abstract and singular and plural form.

TABLE 1 Search strategy and keywords

1 mayor* OR "public leader" OR "crisis leadership" OR "public leadership" OR "public management" OR governor*
AND
2 accident* OR disaster* OR crisis OR crises OR calamit* OR aircrash* OR airplane* OR fire* OR epidemic* OR shoot* OR kill* OR casualt* OR catastroph* OR zoonos* OR flood* OR pandemic* OR hurricane* OR terror* OR attack* OR explos* OR "critical incident*" OR emergenc*
1 AND 2
Limits date of publication: 1989-2014, abstracts available, English language

* : zero or more characters can be added in the search. For instance: a search for hurricanes

Inclusion and exclusion criteria, including screening and categorization

We focused on peer-reviewed qualitative and quantitative studies on mayors or governors following crises over the past quarter century (1989–2014). We did not include 'presidents' in the search, as we deliberately focus on mayors and governors as public leaders closely connected to citizens and oftentimes governing for a longer period of time. In several commonwealth countries (e.g., Canada, Australia) the head of government in a state is referred to as the premier, not governor. Articles about these public leaders were included as their role is comparable with governors. Studies on crisis management among CEOs or public leaders in schools were excluded as and when there was no relationship with mayors or governors. Studies published in other languages than English were excluded as well. In the final selection, studies were excluded if neither a mayor nor a governor was one of the study subjects. Screening took place in two stages. During the first round, all authors independently screened articles retrieved on title and abstract, based on the inclusion criteria. During the second round, the reviewers' selections were screened on full text.

3. RESULTS

The results of the review are presented in Table 2 (appendix to this chapter). The second column categorizes the study in the different leadership tasks of sense making, decision making, meaning making, terminating and/or learning. When an article discussed more than one leadership task, it was categorized accordingly. In the same column, we briefly described the research methodology. When there was no underlying data, an article was labelled as 'discussion article'. Also, the type of

crisis event is mentioned, when applicable. The third column of Table 2 summarizes the main findings and conclusions of the study reviewed. References to specific public leadership behaviour or interventions by the mayor or governor, as part of his or her crisis management duties, are also indicated.

Number of studies found

The combined search in PsycINFO, MEDLINE and Communication Abstracts yielded 1.084 abstracts. After 'limit to publication date 1989–2014' and 'limit to journals', this resulted in 266 studies (PsycINFO 198; MEDLINE 0; Communication Abstracts 68). The search in SCOPUS yielded 1.922 articles. After 'limit to publication date 1989–2014' and 'limit to journals', this resulted in 1.304 publications. After checking for duplicates, the combined set of 1.496 articles was examined using the inclusion criteria. Articles were excluded for various reasons. For instance: studies regarding public service sometimes discussed 'disastrous policy decisions', but did not discuss disasters as such. Many articles described experiences of mayors in public health policy, but did not have a direct relationship with crisis management and were excluded for that reason.

Type of events

After abstract screening and full-text confirmation, 34 articles were found relevant enough to answer the research question addressing mayors and/or governors. Five studies focused on Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (Harris, 2011;Koven, 2010; Lay, 2009; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007; Martinko et al., 2009). One study focused on the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York (Back, Küfner, & Egloff, 2010) and three studies established a connection between the two preceding cases (Griffin-Padgett & Allison, 2010; Kapucu & Demiroz, 2011;Kapucu & VanWart, 2006).Two studies compared crisis management of Katrina with other natural disasters (Fairhurst & Cooren, 2009; Gallagher, Fontenot, & Boyle, 2007). Other studies from the United States discussed the Houston floodings (Arceneaux & Stein, 2006), Hurricane Gustav (Boin, 2009) and an anthrax case in New York (Mullin, 2010). Compared with 14 studies based on US cases, we found six studies discussing crises outside the United States: one Australian case on the Queensland floodings (De Bussy & Paterson, 2012), a volcano eruption in Montserrat (Haynes, Barclay, & Pidgeon, 2008), a comparison of a tornado in Birmingham, UK, with a fireworks explosion in Enschede, the Netherlands (Noordegraaf & Newman, 2011), and riots and crowd control at a hospital in Israel (Pinkert, Bloch, Schwartz, Ashkenazi, Nakhleh, Massad, & Bar-Dayan, 2007). One study discussed crisis management after an airplane crash in Amsterdam, the Netherlands (Boin & 't Hart, 2003).Another study analysed a riot in the Dutch town of Hoek van Holland, which may be considered a minor incident compared with other described

events such as Katrina and 9/11 (Resodihardjo, van Eijk, & Carroll, 2012). Some articles were labelled in more than one category. In total, 17 articles discuss meaning making. By comparison, terminating (11), decision making (7), sense making (6) and learning (2) received considerably less attention.

Methodology of identified studies

The reviewed studies consisted primarily of narrative descriptions of individual cases. Evidence is often based on newspaper clippings (Griffin-Padgett et al., 2010; Koven, 2010; Littlefield et al., 2007; Martinko et al., 2009), expert opinions (Austin, Liu, & Jin, 2014; Griffin-Padgett et al., 2010; Hadley, Pittinsky, Sommer, & Zhu, 2011; Haynes et al., 2008), focus-group sessions with citizens (Rinchiuso-Hasselmann, Starr, McKay, Medina, & Raphael, 2010) or a combination of these (Noordegraaf et al., 2011). Other data came from 573,000 lines of pager messages (Back et al., 2010), Twitter messages (De Bussy et al., 2012) and voting data (Gasper & Reeves, 2011; Lay, 2009; McBride & Parker, 2008). Ten cases qualified as 'discussion articles', as they did not rely on identifiable quantitative or qualitative data. Just four studies (Arceneaux et al., 2006; Haynes et al., 2008; Noordegraaf et al., 2011; Rinchiuso-Hasselmann et al., 2010) undertook population-based empirical studies, assessing, for instance, the perceptions and evaluations of affected residents.

Findings on sense making

The six reviewed studies qualified as 'sense making' are dominated by discussion articles. Only Hadley et al. (2011) used expert interviews as underlying methodology. The studies underscore that making sense of what is going on during a developing crisis becomes even more difficult because of the increasing complexity of societies and stakeholders. According to Boin (2009) and Boin and Smith (2006), sense making in crisis management has become more complex because of transboundary developments. Where a traditional crisis, such as an airplane crash, has a clear beginning and ending, transboundary crises intersect with and cross functional systems and territorial borders (Boin, 2009; Boin et al., 2006). An outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Great Britain affects all Europe within days (Boin & 't Hart, 2003). In these types of crises, there is a point where it becomes unclear 'who' is in charge (Boin et al., 2006). The growing complexity of social, corporate, industrial, financial, infrastructural and administrative systems (Boin et al., 2006) and our 'increased dependence on critical infrastructures in combination with the looming threat of terrorism' (Boin et al., 2006, p. 296) renders sense making ever more challenging. Only knowing and practising crisis response plans is no longer adequate, if it ever was (Hadley et al., 2011). Sense making in an operational field where every second counts differs from a more strategic level of operations at times far away in a crisis room (Boin & Renaud, 2013). Sense making can even be more stressful when crisis teams have to work together but have a different understanding of 'the' crisis situation. This parallels observations

by Scholtens (2008) to the effect that core management involving public leaders like mayors or governors may lack a big-picture overview for giving centralized orders to the operational field. Hadley et al. (2011) developed a model to capture the efficacy of leaders to assess information, which is the backbone of sense making.

Findings on decision making

The seven studies we qualified as relevant to 'decision making' show that, like sense making, it is also hindered by the complexity of networks. Not surprisingly, actual networks during crises differ from those assumed in crisis response plans (Kapucu, 2008; Kapucu et al., 2011). Several authors conclude that decision making is positively related to the level of intrinsic motivation to lead and the ability to motivate others in a crisis (Hadley et al., 2011; VanWart & Kapucu, 2011). In their view, decision making demands a dominant mode of leadership – not the consultative, iterative and process-oriented form in undertaking transformational change. This is also what the public expects from decision makers; during crises, they should not be half-hearted or play by-the-rules-only (Kapucu et al., 2006;VanWart et al., 2011).These authors did not mention mayors or governors specifically, but referred to 'decision making' by public leaders in general. Two studies referred to mayors specifically. According to Boin et al. (2006), decision making by these local leaders can be hindered by institutions they do not lead. In France, mayors find other institutions with overlapping municipal police powers in their way (Boin et al., 2006). In the Netherlands, mayors have the legal authority to enforce, but practice shows that centrally controlled coordination cannot be achieved (Scholtens, 2008).

Findings on meaning making

In general, the 17 articles addressing 'meaning making' put more emphasis on mayors and governors as a subcategory of public leaders. Two studies (Haynes et al., 2008; Rinchiuso-Hasselmann et al., 2010) undertook population-based empirical studies. Studies reviewed here consider the purpose of meaning making to be one of regaining public confidence (Griffin-Padgett et al., 2010) and of underscoring that the government is 'fully in charge' (Boin, 2009; Pinkert et al., 2007). Of the studies on meaning making, Griffin-Padgett et al. (2010) referred to Mayors Giuliani and Nagin, who spoke directly to constituents and addressed their physical and emotional well-being. Similarly, Back et al. (2010) provided insights on the impact of mayor Giuliani's words. At 2:49 pm, he refused to speculate about body count; he communicated that the number of casualties would be 'more than any of us can bear'. According to Back et al. (2010), sadness and anger rose and anxiety declined immediately afterwards. In the view of Fairhurst et al. (2009), a lack or absence of leadership during crises can also result in a perception of indecisiveness. Where Governor Blanco (Louisiana) was overwhelmed by the situation in New Orleans, Governor Schwarzenegger was present at the scene and managed to embody the hero

leader in charge of overcoming Californian wildfires. Schwarzenegger had favourable reviews because of his tough-talking language matching his film career (Fairhurst et al., 2009; Gasper et al., 2011). Others studies note that mayors and governors were meant to provide hope for the future (Noordegraaf et al., 2011; Pennebaker & Lay, 2002). In like fashion, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh actively called upon Queenslanders' resilience and pride (De Bussy et al., 2012).This study suggested that her perceived successful leadership was largely due to charisma and inspiration. Mayors or governors are not the only leaders who speak publicly on the crisis at hand. Several studies show that scientists (Haynes et al., 2008) or other officials supported the public leader to gain public trust (Mullin, 2010). During an anthrax case in New York, Mayor Giuliani displayed 'both empathy and mastery over information' and implicitly asked the public to trust the other officials (Mullin, 2010, p. 16). Once the city's mayor and health commissioner were trusted, citizens were more likely to listen to the directions provided by the city because they just did not feel they had an option not to (Rinchiuso-Hasselmann et al., 2010). Included studies suggested that in their meaning making role, mayors and governors seemed to be aware in advance of the political aftermath to follow. As blame games in the aftermath of Katrina were looming, government agencies, governor and mayor all tried to 'spin' the news during the hurricane and showed 'strong leadership' and 'masculinity' (Harris, 2011; Koven, 2010). As these images can define a political career, public authorities have to engage with media (Boin et al., 2006) because the media contributes to blame games as well (Littlefield et al., 2007). One pitfall in showing compassion and empathy was studied by Boin et al. (2003). The 'caring government' philosophy of Mayor Van Thijn (Amsterdam) after an airplane crash in Amsterdam (1992) was meant to be compassionate to victims; it promised them long-term care. Instead, the strict procedures necessary to provide care were inconsistent with the sympathetic face he had projected earlier on (Boin et al., 2003).

Findings on terminating and learning
Eleven studies assessed 'terminating', while two studies referred to 'learning'. As they both focus on the aftermath of a crises, the findings are presented together. Most crises cast a long shadow (Boin et al., 2006). After the real-time operational demands of a crisis have faded, a time comes when politicians, media and victims want to determine how this could have happened (Boin et al., 2006). More, it becomes the time to evaluate and learn from the crisis in order to improve future crisis management (Stern, 2013). Boin, Kuipers, and Overdijk (2013) discuss what they take to be 10 executive tasks of crisis management that can be used to evaluate the performance of a public leader. In their view, the resulting evaluation is more likely to be fair and takes into account the difficult conditions under which crisis leaders all too often operate. With respect to the terminating element of leadership, Austin, Liu, and Jin (2014) conducted 20 in-depth interviews with senior-level crisis communicators. They stressed the importance

of communications in the after-effects of crises in order to show 'you are back'. According to their interviews, communications should be positive with a focus on the future. In order to engage the public effectively in the aftermath of crises, Noordegraaf et al. (2011) believe it is worthwhile to invest in the networks of local groups as well. Literature on terminating primarily focuses on political accountability and responsibility (Arceneaux et al., 2006; Boin et al., 2003; Gasper et al., 2011; Resodihardjo et al., 2012). From a survey among 792 Houston voters in a mayoral election, mayors appear to be held accountable for responding to natural disasters as well (Arceneaux et al., 2006). In their study, the attributions of responsibility for (the lack of) flood preparation were shaped by voters' experience with the floods and the level of knowledge about the political system. In the aftermath of Katrina, voters from New Orleans blamed the federal, not local government for the broken levees and the (lack of) response (Lay, 2009). Arceneaux et al. (2006) found that the 'attribution of blame came from a desire to maintain a sense of control' (p. 48). Gasper et al. (2011) added to these observations, suggesting that victims will be less angry when the president grants a disaster declaration, since this acknowledges their situation (Gasper et al., 2011). Regarding the aftermath, a crisis is not necessarily an opportunity for reform (Boin et al., 2003). The requisites of crisis leadership differ from the qualifications needed for an effective reform. According to their study, leaders should formulate a crisis management philosophy in order to guide them in the aftermath of a crisis (Boin et al., 2003).

4. DISCUSSION

The systematic review of these 34 journal articles highlights what we believe to be a major and continuing difficulty with the peer-reviewed literature when it comes to understanding the role of local leaders in crisis management. On the one hand, the studies confirm what many readers already expect by way of effective leadership in crises, and not just for the cases described. Basically, local leaders – mayors and governors – also lead by communicating in many ways. Clearly, the impact of the increasing complexity of networks (Boin et al., 2006), the importance of a motivational role in crisis teams (Kapucu, 2008; Kapucu et al., 2011) and the benefits of crisis evaluations (Boin et al., 2013; Stern, 2013) are not exclusively limited to mayors or governors. On the other hand, the review demonstrates that, when it comes to specific but major tasks (so core to the Boin et al., 2005 framework for effective leadership in crises), the key ones of sense making, decision making and learning have been examined only briefly to date. For that matter, only Scholtens (2008) comes to very specific conclusions on the role of mayors in crisis situations with regard to decision making. For her, mayors should not concentrate on decision making but on the important role they have to fulfil during disasters and

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crises, being the 'first citizen' and public personification of the crisis management team. According to Scholtens, mayors (and governors) should focus instead on meaning making. Yet the public performance of a mayor (meaning making) and the process of political responsibility and accountability afterwards (terminating) seem, in comparison, to be closely connected (e.g., Boin et al., 2003; Gasper et al., 2011; Lay, 2009; Resodihardjo et al., 2012). But once more, the literature reviewed offers little by way of guidance, general or otherwise, on how to operationalize these tasks in effective ways. Much remains to be clarified in terms of how actual leadership tasks are undertaken and balanced by way of crisis management. We believe the common factor accounting for the gap between the general observations found and the lack of specifics needed by way of task elaboration is not the terminology of the Boin et al. (2005) framework: after all, a focus on decision making and learning have long been common in the relevant academic literature for longer than even the last quarter century. Rather, far more remains to be done by way of research of testing and extending the utility of the Boin et al. (2005) framework when it comes to mayors, governors and their counterparts – and until that happens, we are left to rely on, just as did the studies reviewed here, the language and lenses of newspaper clippings, expert opinions, voting data, focus-group discussion and social media. While recording first-hand accounts with respect to crises is important, what we are specifically calling for are more studies that enable a comparison of mayors and governors in similar crisis situations, as Gallagher et al. (2007), Fairhurst et al. (2009) and Griffin-Padgett et al. (2010) did. Comparative studies are to be particularly welcomed, as they would also enable the crisis management communities to explore not just the Boin et al. (2005) framework but also other possible frameworks and evolving effective crisis management interventions. It could be argued that this call for more comparative research is misplaced. Would the pool be wider if the review had included 'grey literature' on crises involving mayors and governors but which is by definition not peer-reviewed? After a check on references of all 34 journal articles retrieved, we are, however, confident that we did not overlook an existing 'grey literature' empirical study on the role of mayors or governors in crisis situations at least in the English-based sample, which in turn raises another possible objection. What if we had widened the selection pool to include non- English peer-reviewed articles on crises managed in non-English settings – would that have helped in enlarging not only the pool of crises examined but also the number of studies relevant to separating and clarifying crisis management tasks? Perhaps. Clearly, internationalizing a literature review would enable wider access to more crises for more systematic review when it comes to what mayors and governors (or their counterparts) do. But we must wonder – as authors also familiar with the Dutch literature not reviewed here – if such an enlarged review would lead to findings on 'leadership' any less generalized than the ones found in our review of the English material on crisis situations in Israel, Montserrat, Australia, United Kingdom and the Netherlands as well as the United States. We also

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must wonder if the wider literature is any more comparative than observed here in our subsample. Still, readers of JCCM represent an international audience and we hope our review encourages some of readers to widen the pool of comparative case studies dramatically beyond the case material reviewed here. Comparative studies of course have their own limitations. Studies from other regions of the world might contribute to the body of knowledge, as long as the public position of mayors and governors during and after crises is comparable with their counterparts in the countries covered by the English written journals. Even more telling, widening the pool of comparative studies may well not entail all that many more new crises for examination. If the pool of English articles in our review is any guide, such studies capture only a portion of crises and disasters in the English-speaking world over the past 25 years. No peer-reviewed studies were found on the specific role of mayors or governors in several high-impact crises, such as the London bombings (UK), the earthquake in Christchurch (New Zealand), Hurricane Sandy (USA) or the bombing at the Boston Marathon (USA), to name just a few. More, no studies were based on interviews or surveys with individual victims in light of their demographic (e.g., racial) differences.

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, the outcomes of our systematic review demonstrate that leadership of mayors and governors during crisis and disasters is a young and fragmented field of research. Even though care and rigor were taken in their selection, the 34 studies reviewed, all published between 2003 and 2014, proved highly skewed. American studies were predominantly about crisis management during Hurricane Katrina (10 out of 14 cases from the United States). Regarding the crisis management tasks of sense making, decision making and learning, articles came to general conclusions, which pertain not only to mayors and governors. The articles with the most intense focus on mayors and governors during and after crises focused on their 'meaning making' and 'termination' role. Further research on these roles and identifying the deliberations and intentions of mayors and governors in the heat of like situations and crises are necessary to deepen our understanding of the effectiveness of their performance during and in the aftermath of crises. Lastly, and also with respect to the crisis aftermath, mayors and governors distinguish themselves from most public leaders in their 'meaning making tasks' during that period. Thus far, crisis communication literature has foremost focused on maintaining and repairing the organizational image among stakeholders, while circumstances described above in the case material may call for a more resilience-oriented communication that helps communities to survive and revive in the event of a crisis (e.g., Olsson, 2014). If the latter, then we are again back to the importance of 'meaning making', which was also closely

connected to the circumstances in which mayors and governors enter the public arena in the first place. Sharing insights and empirical case studies between public administration and crisis communications might provide specific guidance for these 'meaning making' situations where mayors or governors have other communication goals than image repair alone.

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APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Characteristics of studies addressing mayors and/or governors during and after crises and disasters

Reference	Type of study **a.** task from framework Boin cs.; **b.** method; **c.** event.
Arceneaux and Stein (2006)	a. terminating; b. survey among 792 voters in Houston area c. floodings in Houston (USA).
Austin, Liu, and Jin (2014)	a. terminating; b. interviews with senior crisis communicators (N=20); c. no specific crisis.
Back, Küfner, and Egloff (2010)	a. meaning making; b. analysis of 573,000 lines of pager texts during 9/11 attacks. c. September 11 attacks (USA).
Boin (2009)	a. sense making; meaning making; b. discussion paper; c. Hurricane Gustav (USA).
Boin and Gralepois (2006)	a. sense making; decision making; b. discussion paper; c. no specific crisis.
Boin, Kuipers, and Overdijk (2013)	a. learning; b. discussion paper; c. no specific crisis.
Boin and Renaud (2013)	a. sense making; b. discussion paper; c. no specific crisis.

Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

- The attribution of blame is shaped by direct experience and levels of political information.
- In a mayoral election following severe flooding, voters evaluated government on the preventive measures and individual experience with the flooding.
- Citizens attribute blame out of a desire to maintain a sense of control.

- Repairing physical and symbolic damage in the aftermath of crisis is important, because it communicates 'you are back'.
- Effective communications during recovery is transparent, honest, positive with a focus on the future.

- While the events further developed, people steadily became angrier.
- At 2:49 New York mayor Giuliani said the number of casualties will be "more than any of us can bear". Immediately afterwards, sadness and anger rose, anxiety declined.

- The combination of geographical and functional "spread" can easily create a power vacuum as it is not clear who "owns" the crisis and who must deal with it. These 'transboundary' crises thus typically has multiple "owners".
- Crisis leaders explain what is happening and what they do to manage the crisis. They must offer a convincing rationale, in order to generate public and political support.
- The mayor of Baton Rouge and the governor of Louisiana were successful at this in the context of Hurricane Gustav, by consistently repeating "New Orleans was saved and everything was under control". In two daily press conferences, governor Jindal provided a detailed overview of available resources and initiated activities.

- Growing complexity of social, corporate, industrial, financial, infrastructural and administrative structures and systems produces unforeseen disturbances. This complexity makes them harder for leaders to deal with.

- Authors present a framework to evaluate leadership performance before, during and after crises.
- The effectiveness of crisis management depends on making things happen, getting the job done, and fulfilling a symbolic need.
- Ten most important tasks of crisis management are early recognition, *sense making*, making critical decisions, orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination, coupling and decoupling, *meaning making*, communication, rendering accountability, learning and enhancing resilience.

- Misunderstanding and an 'appreciative gap' between the strategic and operational level hinders *sense making* and can cause stress between the levels working on the same crisis event.
- Crisis leaders should explain what type of information they need and why.

APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Continued

Reference	Type of study **a. task from framework Boin cs.;** **b. method;** **c. event.**
Boin and Smith (2006)	a. sense making, meaning making, terminating; b. discussion paper; c. none specifically; terrorist events in general.
Boin and 't Hart (2003)	a. meaning making, terminating; b. discussion paper; c. Air crash in Amsterdam (The Netherlands).
De Bussy and Paterson (2012)	a. meaning making; b. content analysis of 700 tweets with #qldfloods; c. Queensland floods (Australia).
Fairhurst and Cooren (2009)	a. meaning making; b. discussion paper; c. hurricane Katrina (USA); California wildfires (USA).
Gallagher, Fontenot, and Boyle (2007)	a. meaning making; b. non-reproducible analysis of communications strategies; c. hurricanes Katrina and Rita (USA).

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Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or
interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

- There's an increased dependence on critical infrastructures. In combination with the looming threat of terrorism, it brings challenges for both public and crisis management.
- Public authorities will have to engage with media and external actors to get their definition of the situation across to a scared or skeptical public. Public leaders' frame of the situation will most likely be contested by media and public.
- In case of a terrorist attack, public authorities must try to distil the right lessons from the crisis in order to ensure that it 'won't happen again'. At the same time, there will be pressure to move on and 'return things to normal'.

- In stressful situations, people look at their 'true leaders'. Successful performance in times of collective stress turns leaders into statesmen and restores confidence.
- Citizens expect to be safeguarded by their state; the idea that wholesale crisis cannot be prevented comes as a shock.
- In the aftermath of a crisis, leaders need some kind of policy compass; they must have a clear idea of what is worth preserving and what needs to be changed.
- Leaders want to provide victims with care, but they often fall prey to their own unrealistic promises.

- Queensland Premier Anna Bligh was perceived to have much stronger characteristics of transformational leadership than Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard during the 2011 Queensland flood crisis. Bligh was perceived to be inspirational and charismatic. She displayed emotion and showed she was proud on the resilience of Queenslanders. In contrast, the Prime Minister's communication style during the crisis was characterized as 'robotic and rehearsed'.
- Findings give strong support to the proposition that transformational style of leadership is highly effective at times of crises.

- Leaders have 'a certain presence'. Vice versa, a lack of leadership during crises (absence) has an effect in itself. Governor Schwarzenegger is regarded as a good example of presence. Governor Blanco was widely criticized for ineffectual handling of her state's response to hurricane Katrina floodings.
- Leadership also consists of mobilizing your professional network and making interventions and contributions visible.
- Leadership is not only defined by the person of the leader, but also the context in which he or she operates.

- Crisis communications is most effective when an organization acknowledges and takes responsibility for its role in the crisis.
- Blaming other government organizations involved does little good. They should work together to help improve their crisis response strategies.

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APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Continued

Reference	Type of study **a. task from framework Boin cs.;** **b. method;** **c. event.**	
Gasper and Reeves (2011)	a.	terminating;
	b.	data analysis of USA voting behavior after natural disasters in period 1970-2006;
	c.	natural disasters (USA).
Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010)	a.	meaning making;
	b.	Comparison of Giuliani and Nagin's response to disaster, based on analysis of press conferences, interviews and speeches days, weeks and months after the disasters.
	c.	9/11 and hurricane Katrina (USA).
Hadley, Pittinsky, Sommar, and Zhu (2011)	a.	sense making; decision making;
	b.	literature and expert interviews (N=182)
	c.	public health and safety issues (USA).
Harris (2011)	a.	meaning making;
	b.	discussion paper based on discursive analysis of three speeches in aftermath of hurricane Katrina;
	c.	hurricane Katrina (USA).
Haynes, Barclay, and Pidgeon (2008)	a.	meaning making;
	b.	qualitative interviews (N=61), participant observations and quantitative survey (N=173); during an ongoing volcanic crisis in Montserrat;
	c.	volcanic crisis Montserrat(British Overseas Territory).
Kapucu (2008)	a.	decision making;
	b.	discussion paper;
	c.	no specific crisis.

2

Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or
interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

- Governors are punished for natural disasters because of a lack of preventive measures.
- When the president rejects a request for federal assistance, the president is punished and the governor rewarded in polls. Granting a disaster declaration boosts support for president, but substantially smaller than the one received by the governor.
- When a disaster declaration has been issued, victims will be less angry because it acknowledges their situation.

- Restorative rhetoric appears to be applicable in situations when the crisis in question is not a result of an organization's unethical behavior or a grave company mistake. In those cases, not image restoration but regaining public confidence is the main goal.
- Appearance of authenticity was an important factor in both responses, where hope and more humanistic communications helped victims to make sense of what happened.
- Both mayors spoke of the brutal hardships that citizens had to endure. They spoke directly to the citizens– and then to the nation – making sure that constituents understood that their leader was concerned about their emotional and physical well-being.
- Both mayors also maintained a genuine presence throughout their cities. Giuliani leading from Ground Zero, and Nagin leading from areas hardest hit by the hurricane.

- Leaders must be able to process information quickly.
- High level of (intrinsic) motivation to lead in a crisis more generally contributes to greater leadership.
- Simply knowing and practicing crisis response plans may be inadequate for crisis leader efficacy.

- Speeches by presidential candidate Barack Obama, president George W. Bush and Ray Nagin, mayor of New Orleans all reinforced a hegemonic white masculinity. Nagin implied that women, together with children, needed to be cared for. Nagin referred to 'violent folks' as black men, reinforcing the idea that feminine folks are not the black folks who are violent.
- Women are cast as those who are worthy of and evoke sympathy. Men are referred to as the ones who have to secure feeding, clothing, housing.

- During a volcanic crisis, friends and relatives were among the most reliable sources, followed by scientists. Scientists were perceived to be more competent than public leaders. Their trust was partly based on previous experiences.
- Healthy skepticism in government is natural and not necessarily indicative of complete distrust.

- Disaster management during catastrophic disasters requires intense collaboration and cooperation between organizations.
- Public increasingly expects better public sector leadership before, during and after catastrophic disasters, with adequate emergency systems.

APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Continued

Reference	Type of study **a.** **task from framework Boin cs.;** **b.** **method;** **c.** **event.**
Kapucu and Demiroz (2011)	a. decision making; b. comparison of networks from content analysis (news reports, government documents, after-action reports) with networks from emergency plans; c. 9/11 and hurricane Katrina (USA).
Kapucu and Van Wart (2006)	a. decision making; b. interviews with 33 county emergency managers and 42 semi structured interviews with directors and senior staff; c. 9/11 and hurricane Katrina (USA).
Koven (2010)	a. meaning making; b. analysis based on 50 articles from New York Times in period 1-2 September 2005; c. hurricane Katrina(USA).
Lay (2009)	a. terminating; b. analysis of data from two pre-election polls (N=unknown) in New Orleans (USA); c. hurricane Katrina (USA).
Littlefield and Quenette (2007)	a. meaning making; b. textual analysis of 52 news articles in New York Times and Times-Picayune about Hurricane Katrina (August 29 to September 3, 2005); c. hurricane Katrina (USA).

Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or
interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

- The actual response network during 9/11 and Katrina differed from the emergency and disaster plans. - During catastrophic disasters, the network management is different from disasters, which occur on a more frequent basis.
- In contrast with routine disasters (e.g. yearly hurricanes in Florida), state and federal leadership is expected during more exceptional catastrophic disasters (such as 9/11). - The public expects professional managers and public leaders to do an excellent and consistent job, despite the duration of catastrophic disaster.
- In the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, media had a clear interest in attracting attention. Meanwhile, mayor Ray Nagin (New Orleans), the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi, the president and the director of FEMA were trying to "spin" the news and show 'strong leadership'. All tried to create an image of strong leadership and influence existing frames. Nonetheless, the overall image of Katrina is a situation of incompetence, and chaos in the city of New Orleans. - FEMA director and president Bush were both perceived to have shown poor leadership during the crisis. - Mayor Nagin was associated with the 'blame game', as he attempted to shift culpability onto others. Governor Blanco (Louisiana) was not media savvy. Critics considered here indecisive and a weak leader.
- Voting behavior after hurricane Katrina was primarily based on racial group interests, outweighing the unacceptable way in which mayor Nagin dealt with Katrina. Nagin appealed to the afro-American voters. - Voters blamed the federal, not local government for the broken levees and (lack of) response.
- During the coverage of hurricane Katrina, media stepped out of their role as observer and became an actor in the 'blame game' themselves. - Media coverage appears to happen in phases. At first, they describe the chaos surrounding the situation. Once they fulfilled this role, they began to evaluate on the performance of the authorities. - Positive coverage was related to active words like 'warned', 'prepared', 'evacuate'. Later on, coverage changed into ´lack of control' with words like 'overwhelmed', 'disorganized' and 'miscommunication'. - The point of view of a specific authority was often inconsistent with perceptions of other authorities or the public.

APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Continued

Reference	Type of study **a.** **task from framework Boin cs.;** **b.** **method;** **c.** **event.**
Martinko, Breaux, Martinez, Summers, and Harvey (2009)	a. terminating; b. analysis based on newspaper items and broadcasts (N=unknown); c. Hurricane Katrina (USA).
McBride and Parker (2008)	a. terminating; b. analysis of voting data in New Orleans during 2002 (N=297,000) and 2006 (N=298,000) mayoral elections (USA); c. hurricane Katrina (USA).
Mullin (2003)	a. meaning making; b. discussion paper; c. anthrax attack in New York (USA).
Noordegraaf and Newman (2011)	a. terminating; b. document analysis and interviews with residents and professionals (N=20 in Birmingham and N=12 in Enschede) in 2010 c. tornado in Birmingham in 2005 (UK), explosion fireworks factory Enschede in 2000 (The Netherlands).

2

Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

- During Katrina disaster, stakeholders had different perceptions about the need and responsibility for aid and rescue efforts following the hurricane. Level of blame depended on point of view of stakeholder.
- Governors and mayors should be aware that the public has a different perception of their actions. They had a tendency to attribute negative outcomes (failures) to situational factors (poor support of the national government, lack of money and small amount of busses), while the public tends to explain them with inferences about the actors' personal characteristics.
- The mayor was described in the media in terms of 'unprepared' and 'lack of leadership'. The poor relationship between the governor and the mayor added to this image.
- Governor Blanco blamed both mayor Nagin and FEMA in several circumstances. In media she was regarded as "unorganized and indecisive".

- For the black community, it was more important to continue the political power, even though they were heavily damaged by the floodings and Nagin was blamed for incompetence regarding hurricane Katrina.
- His apparent disappearance in the days immediately after Katrina created a leadership void at the local level, leaving him open to charges of 'abandoning ship'.
- In speeches and comments, Nagin changed the subject of the elections. It was race, not Katrina, which dominated the mayoral elections in 2006.

- Just after the 9/11 attacks, an NBC News employee in New York was diagnosed with skin anthrax. The mayor's public confidence during 9/11 was beneficial during the anthrax attacks.
- Mayor Giuliani held press conferences, flanked by other officials, which helped him to gain public trust. The mayor displayed both empathy and mastery over information and implicitly asked the public to trust the other officials.

- In Enschede, the mayor was seen as a ´hero´ and played caring and enabling roles. There was a stronger ethos of 'togetherness'. Preventive investments in social structures can be worthwhile for the aftermath of crises.
- In Birmingham, local politicians were sidelined by a public who had little trust in local democracy. Leadership came from within the community itself.

APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Continued

Reference	Type of study
	a. task from framework Boin cs.;
	b. method;
	c. event.
Pennebaker and Lay (2002)	a. meaning making;
	b. language analysis of 35 speeches (1993-2001) by mayor Giuliani of New York;
	c. several cases from New York (USA).
Pinkert, M., Y. Bloch, D. Schwartz, I. Ashenazi, B. Nakhleh, B. Mssad, M. Perez, Y. Bar-Dayan (2007)	a. meaning making;
	b. data collected from debriefings with hospital managers (N=unknown);
	c. ten days of riots in Nazareth (Israel).
Resodihardjo, van Eijk, and Carroll, (2012)	a. terminating;
	b. coded data based on analysis of 211 newspaper articles for period 22 August 2009 (day of the riot) until 28 February 2010 (month in which police chief resigned).
	c. riot in Hoek van Holland (The Netherlands).
Rinchiuso-Hasselmann, Starr, McKay, Medina, and Raphael (2010)	a. meaning making;
	b. eight focus group discussions with 7-10 citizens;
	c. no specific crisis.
Scholtens (2008)	a. sense making; decision making; meaning making;
	b. discussion paper;
	c. no specific crisis.
Stern (2013)	a. learning;
	b. discussion paper;
	c. no specific crisis.

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Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

- Media noticed a change in the mayor's style during the time of his divorce and diagnosis of cancer. Later on, the public at large witnessed a different mayoral personality immediately after the attacks of 9/11.
- Close friends associated Giuliani with warmth throughout his administration, suggesting that his personality was, in fact, composed of two Giuliani's; one public and one private.
- Over the years, Giuliani used language with more warmth in his speeches. In the wake of the WTC attacks, he connected linguistically with fellow New Yorkers. His use of social words was the highest, a mark of social connection and integration.
- In the aftermath of 9/11, Giuliani´s language became simpler and his focus was on the future, not present or past

- During ten days of riots in Nazareth, the local hospitals were faced with a crowd after a mass-casualty incident. Crowd control was achieved only after the city mayor's (personal) appearance.

- As the mayor shifted responsibility to the police chief, it was hard for the police chief to respond publicly. His position gave him less freedom to respond to allegations. Moreover, his responses were mostly internally focused on the police force.
- The police chef failed in an external blame response. His opponent (the mayor) was recently appointed, which worked in the mayor's favor.
- Denying their responsibility resulted in higher blame levels for the mayor, admitting responsibility led to higher blame levels for the police chief.

- In a series of focus groups, the mayor was regarded as the most trusted source, along the city health commissioner and a local cable news channel. Some stated (percentage unknown) that they would follow the directions provided by the city because they just didn't feel like they would have the choice not to.

- In The Netherlands, the mayor has legal authority to enforce. Incident evaluations show that during the acute disaster phase it is impossible to achieve central controlled coordination.
- Abandoning command and control gives mayors the opportunity to focus solely on being 'first citizen' or 'city father'.
- Mayors should not hesitate to show their uncertainty in crisis situations.

- One should take preparation seriously, in order to be ready for their next crisis.
- The responsibility of crisis leadership includes preparation for future challenges.

APPENDIX: TABLE 2 Continued

Reference	Type of study **a. task from framework Boin cs.;** **b. method;** **c. event.**		
van Wart and Kapucu (2011)	a.	decision making; terminating;	
	b.	qualitative and quantitative research among senior emergency managers(N=51) in the USA;	
	c.	no specific crisis.	

Findings and conclusions
overall findings and/or conclusions of study, with references to specific behavior or
interventions by public leader as part of crisis management when applicable

2

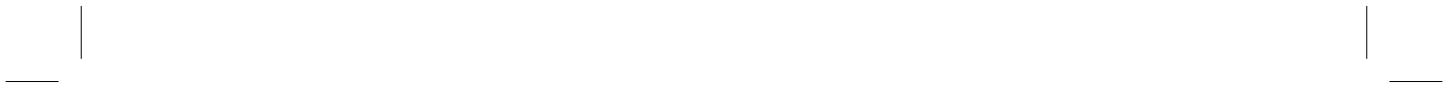- Ability to motivate becomes more important after the first phase of a crisis, when the leader has to deal with a broad array of individuals.
- Strong, incisive leadership is the dominant mode during crises, not the consultative, iterative and process-oriented leadership often found in making transformational changes. The public wants them to take responsibility. They cannot be half-hearted and bureaucratic.

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3

Meaning making by public leaders in times of crisis: An assessment

ABSTRACT

Public leaders are expected to provide information on a crisis situation and present a plan to restore a state of normalcy. This study, based on interviews with Dutch mayors who were personally involved in crises between 1979 and 2014, assesses the various roles of public leaders' meaning making. A total of 94 case studies were analyzed for this purpose. Responsibility and collective impact turn out to be closely intertwined phenomena, which influence the modus operandi as a public leader as perceived by the mayors themselves. The Public Meaning Making Model presented, shows four distinctive roles based on the meaning making by Dutch mayors: the roles of 'mourner-in-chief', 'orchestrator', 'advocate' and 'buddy'. All of these roles emphasize different elements that depend on the collective, emotional impact of a situation as well as on the political responsibility attributed to the public leader. This article discusses the characteristics and implications of each of the four roles.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the wake of a mass traumatic event, meaning making is a key aspect of crisis management when people expect their public leaders to appear on the public stage. For public leaders, the challenge of meaning making lies in effective communication while taking into account the politically charged issues of causation, responsibility and accountability (Ansell, Boin, & 't Hart, 2014). Despite the apparent relevance of meaning making for public leaders, empirical studies on the context of meaning making are limited. Because crises differ in context, the publić's expectations of their leaders might vary from one crisis to another. Vice versa, in order to better understand the concept of meaning making, the question arises whether public leaders change their meaning making behavior when the context of a crisis changes. A context in which stakeholders are both senders and receivers, in which they transact and cocreate meaning through the ongoing and simultaneous exchange of a variety of messages while using multiple channels (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). This empirical and exploratory study builds on recent research to better understand the concept of meaning making in relation to issues of responsibility and accountability, and addresses calls to examine the processes and outcomes of crisis management (Ansell et al., 2014; Boin & Gralepois, 2006; Jong, Dückers, & Van der Velden, 2016a). The framework used, analyzes 94 crisis cases dealt with by Dutch mayors that differ greatly in terms of political responsibility and collective impact. Subsequently similar case studies are analyzed and presented. Finally, an overview of overall findings can be found at the end of the article.

2. DRIVERS FOR MEANING MAKING

2.1. Public leader as communicator

In this study, the central theme consists of the modus operandi of the public leader on the public stage. When compared to the rhetoric of business counterparts, the rhetoric of public leaders has a distinct angle. Corporate crisis communications literature seems to emphasize the rhetoric from a point of view focused on reputation and repair of image and credibility for the crises they caused (Arendt, LaFleche, & Limperopulos, 2017). Public leaders, on the other hand, are often confronted with the public impact of crises and will also be held responsible for crises caused by others. This public role comes with a broader set of rhetorical functions, which include expressing sympathy to victims, symbolically framing the meaning of the event, regaining public confidence, and facilitating renewal through public commitments (Griffin-Padgett & Allison, 2010; Jong et al., 2016a, 2016b; Littlefield & Quenette, 2007; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003). The rhetorical arena may remain open in the after crisis stage, generating a "crisis after the crisis" (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010;

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Rosenthal, Boin, & Comfort 2001). The rituals to re-connect to citizens and to lower the possible impact of blame-games in such an aftermath of crises, is part of the communicative repertoire (Resodihardjo, Carroll, Van Eijk, & Maris, 2016).

People that experience a crisis, try to make sense of what happened and place it in a broader perspective (Stern, 2013). Public leaders support them in this process, interpret the situation, use rhetoric to make sense of the situation, make sure they are concerned about the emotional and physical well-being of citizens, and actively communicate what is happening and what needs to be done (Boin & 't Hart, 2003; Boin, 't Hart, Stern, Sundelius, 2005; Griffin-Padgett & Allison, 2010; Helsloot & Groenendaal, 2017; Jong, Dückers & Van der Velden, 2016b). Public leaders try to give an understanding of 'what is going on', to reduce uncertainty, to provide recognition, to offer hope (Jong et al., 2016b; Noordegraaf & Newman, 2011; Pennebaker and Lay, 2002), and to actively call upon resilience and pride (De Bussy & Paterson, 2012). At the same time, public leaders will try to restore trust in government and its public leadership in order to smoothen the political aftermath of crises and underscore the government is fully in chargé ('Boin, 2009; Pinkert et al., 2007). This meaning making is not only visible through words but also through actions. Public leaders join remembrances and sometimes visit families and the next of kin at home, to lend them a 'listening ear' and support them with practical issues (Jong et al., 2016b). Sometimes, crises evolve into "social icons" (Frandsen & Johansen, 2016). Those crises create long-lasting shadows in terms of remembrance and recurring media attention in the years and decades after the crisis occurred.

Leaders are supposed to be successful as soon as they attract support for processes and decisions, enhancing reputation and/or electoral prospects for leaders' parties and governments (McConnell, 2011). Davis and Gardner (2012) revealed that President Bush's use of charismatic rhetoric escalated following the September 11 terrorist attacks, and that during this time period he was also perceived as an effective leader. One is, therefore, not only evaluated on the basis of direct political responsibility and actions, but also on presentation and communication (De Bussy & Paterson, 2012). Presentational strategies are important but, when inappropriately used, can backfire (Resodihardjo et al., 2016).

Meaning making is intertwined with issues of responsibility and accountability (Boin & 't Hart, 2003; Gasper & Reeves, 2011; Lay, 2009; Resodihardjo, van Eijk, & Carroll, 2012), since people also wonder "how could this crisis have happened?". In general, the search for answers to the question "how could this have happened?" often degenerates into "blame games" in relation to responsibilities, where media appoint winners and declare losers (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013). According to crisis management and crisis communication theories, a higher level of responsibility for the cause of the crisis increases the blame level a public leader can expect. In a comparative study of the rhetoric

of mayors Giuliani and Nagin in the aftermath of 9/11 and hurricane Katrina, Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) note that when responsibility is high, image restoration rather than regaining public confidence becomes the main goal. As such, meaning making is a way to respond in the public arena to protect one's reputation and is crucial to the legitimacy of public leadership (Jong et al., 2016a).

1.2   The psychosocial impact
While reputations are certainly important for the process of political accountability, the purpose of public meaning making seems broader than the reputation of a governmental institution or public leaders alone. A public leader may be heading public rituals and commemorations, and has to take care of the practical and psychosocial interests of the bereaved individuals concerned (Jong, 2013; Jong et al., 2016b). A study on 54 mayors who were confronted with the aftermath of the MH17-disaster showed that these public leaders were expected to speak at memorials and attend community activities, even though they carried no direct political responsibility for this particular disaster.

Several studies demonstrated the importance of "social acknowledgement" and mental health following drastic events (Maercker & Müller, 2004; Park, 2016): meaning making is of importance for the resilience and recovery after stressful events (Park, 2016). Although these studies do not extensively focus on the role of public leaders, they do refer to concepts like "social acknowledgment". In other words, how does the victim experience the positive reactions from a society that shows understanding of his or her unique position, and acknowledges the victim's current difficult situation (Maercker & Müller, 2004). In a study among adults who experienced the events of 9/11, findings suggest that meaning supported adjustment by reducing the fears of future terrorist attacks (Updegraff, Silver, & Holman, 2008). But whether or not Giuliani's public leadership did positively or negatively influence this process of meaning making, remains unknown.

3. FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS MEANING MAKING

In order to meet our goal and compare meaning making efforts under different crises circumstances, we take the stance from public leaders themselves, since they take the final decision to deliver on meaning making. We set up a qualitative analysis of interviews with those involved in crises and looked for similarities in their self-perceived meaning making efforts in crises that are comparable in terms of collective impact and political responsibility. This approach is scarce but useful in addition to existing mediated case studies and experiments (Coombs, 2007; Ewart, McLean, & Ames, 2016; Liu & Fraustino, 2014; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011). The study is descriptive in terms of meaning making efforts and behavior, and does not explore whether or not particular behavior was either good or bad.

The heuristic framework we introduce consists of two dimensions. The (political) responsibility as the main driver from public administrative literature is used in order to divide crises in two sections, with either high or low political responsibility. Since the political responsibility is not static, the concept of "crisis responsibility" is used, which represents the amount of responsibility for a crisis that stakeholders attribute to the organization (Coombs, 1995; Coombs, 2007; Coombs, 2015). It does not only take the mayor's formal responsibility into account, but also his perceived responsibility in the aftermath of a crisis. The psychosocial impact on society, an important driver in psychosociological literature, is our second dimension and can vary between high and low as well. While there will always be a certain impact on the victims and their families, the collective psychosocial impact seems to differ greatly from one crisis to another. The expected collective impact of an event increases when a social system, such as a neighborhood or community, is emotionally more affected by the events (Barton, 1969). The number of fatalities can be an indication, although the collective impact of a similar situation in a small town versus a larger city can also differ tremendously.

The combination of the two dimensions enables us to assess different aspects of public meaning making under crisis circumstances in a categorized manner, as we expect to find similarities in meaning making among crises with perceived similar high/low collective impact and/or high/low political responsibility. Of course, it is possible to plot crises based on the dimensions using information from a variety of stakeholders (e.g. media, city councils, affected citizens, independent evaluation committees). The current study explores crises on the basis of the perceptions of mayors themselves.

4. METHOD

In order to assess the different circumstances under which public leaders consider meaning making as a method of intervention, we analyzed 94 existing case studies. A total of 91 case studies is based on interviews with mayors in the Netherlands discussing their personal crisis experiences. Three case studies are based on secondary sources. The crises differ in the amount of responsibility on the side of the mayor as well as the collective impact. From the local impact of a brutal murder to major disasters, such as the explosion of a fireworks factory in Enschede (23 fatalities) or the crash of an El Al Boeing in an apartment complex in Amsterdam (43 fatalities). The Dutch Association of Mayors was in charge of conducting these interviews between 2005 and 2015. The interviews describe crises that occurred between 1979 and 2014. Only one mayor declined to participate in the project. The interviews with mayors lasted on average one and a half hour. Participants were asked to give their lessons on crisis management in order to share them with colleagues and their advisors. The interviews also included the role of the

media since public authorities engage with media during crises and those in authority should use the media to identify how their words and actions are perceived by the public (Littlefield & Quenette, 2007). The interviews were semi-structured and asked mayors about the developments of the crisis, their decisions, the way in which they publicly performed, their lessons in terms of crisis communications, the role of the media and how they managed the political aftermath. The transcripts of the interviews were edited.[1] After a factual check by the interviewees, the interviews were published online and/or used for publications by the Dutch Association of Mayors (Jong, 2013; John & Johannink, 2005, 2007, 2009; Jong & Van der Post, 2008).[2] The secondary sources could be used because the mayors themselves spoke about their own experiences in terms of meaning making in these sources. One case study was based on the memoires of a mayor (Eenhoorn, 2012), two other studies were based on two contributions of mayors to remembrance books (De Haas, Vogelenzang, Jong, & Strating, 2009; Smilde, 2016).

In their analysis, the author and a co-researcher used the public leaderś descriptions of the crisis situation to value the size of the collective impact on the level of the local society. As such, the author and co-researcher weighed the perceptions and observations which were shared in the various interviews. Coding was done by hand. For the size of the political responsibility, we valued the responsibility that according to the public leader was attributed to him or her regarding the cause of the crisis or the aftermath. In other words, the perceptions the mayor displayed were leading. A similar approach was taken to judge the size of the collective impact. As an example, one mayor told the story about two fatal fires in his community. In the first fire, two girls from the community died. A public memorial gathering was organized at the town square; the entire community was in shock and the collective impact was regarded as "high". A few months later, in the same town, the 3-year-old son of a family of tourists died while on holidays. It had hardly any collective impact since the community did not personally know this boy. The collective impact was regarded as "low".

The author coded both dimensions in either high/low, leading to four different categories. Mayors did not code the crises at the time of the interview. To minimize the impact of changing perceptions over time, mayors were not asked to re-interpret the findings from their earlier interviews.

The author and co-researcher independently rated the set of case studies on low/high collective impact and low/high responsibility, based on the perceptions the mayors shared in the interviews. Cohen's Kappa (N = 94; P < 0.001) was calculated using SPSS 20 and found to be 0.88 for collective impact and 0.91 for political responsibility. Differences

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1   The author personally conducted the interviews for 60 case studies. He edited these interviews and another 24 interviews that were conducted by others, before these were published in print and online.

2   Interviews (in Dutch) can be retrieved from www.burgemeesters.nl/research.

were found in cases based on five interviews. Four of these cases involved accidents in which no local citizens were hurt. After discussing the relative impact of the crisis on the local society, the researchers found full agreement in 93 cases (Cohen Kappa 0.98).

After all 94 crisis case studies were labeled in one of four categories, an analysis was made in order to specify whether or not the type of meaning making of crises within one cluster showed similarities.

A detailed breakdown of all interviews, including the categorization of interviews, can be found in the Appendix to this study.

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

5.1. General findings on political responsibility and collective impact
Table 1 shows a summary of the empirical findings. In total 36 interviews dealt with crises with a low political responsibility and high collective impact, 27 cases describe situations of high political responsibility and high collective impact. A total of 20 cases describe situations of both low political responsibility and collective impact. Finally, 11 interviews describe cases with a high political responsibility and low collective impact.

Mayors often describe their own role as "*citizen-father*", a literal translation of the Dutch word 'burgervader' (or citizen-mother: 'burgermoeder' depending on the gender of the mayor). The label fits their symbolic role as a leading representative of the society in crisis (Jong, Dückers & Van der Velden, 2016b). In situations with high collective impact, the emphasis on actions by mayors are on remembrances, memorials and gatherings, to share their feelings, their disbelief and show they feel similar pain. Those are the situations which mayors themselves describe as "*impressive*" and often "*one of the most difficult moments in my career*". In visiting the victims and their families, some mayors explicitly remark that they pay the visit on behalf of the community. "*It is not about me. I represent the mourning and sorrow of the community*". The community aspect is, of course, an important indicator of the public impact. Referring to the impact of the MH17-disaster, one mayor adds: "*We were all in dismay. But these are also the moments a community shows its strength. We managed to stay together, help each other and incorporate the family in our community and our hearts*". The interviewed mayors are aware of a possible misbalance between the interests of the collective emotions of society on the one hand, and the personal interests of the next of kin on the other. "*We discontinued the annual commemorations, as the parents did no longer appreciate the massive scale*", one mayor says.

When the collective impact is regarded as low, the focus shifts towards smaller entities within society that are directly affected by the crisis situation. Mayors support those in grief, but feel collective gatherings would be disproportional, as it would call upon citizens who have no or only a low degree of interaction with the victims.

In situations of electricity outages or similar disturbances of daily life, the situation usually asks for a different and less emotional tone of voice. In these cases, the sharing of factual information, the description and explanation of procedures, and fulfilling practical needs are far more important. Even though a local society is affected by the outage, interviewed mayors indicate that society does not respond in a highly emotional manner. In other words, when the collective psychosocial impact drops, the purpose of meaning making shifts to a factual explanation of the situation rather than finding the right words for the emotions present.

Mayors not only pay visits to the community in crisis, but widely use the media to give meaning to an existing situation as well. They hold press briefings in order to answer the question "*what is going on*?" According to most mayors, this comes with the job of public leadership. As one mayor puts it: "*When a mayor is present, you're supposed to talk to the media*". That said, some mayors nevertheless believe that the priority should be with their citizens, not the media. As one of the interviewed mayors adds: "*How can we approach a crisis from a human perspective, without being guided by the interests of the media, our own reputational interests or the threat of being held accountable afterwards*". Whenever mayors feel it is necessary, they ask the media to show restraint towards victims or their family.

5.2. Low political responsibility, high collective impact
In all the cases in this first category, meaning making by mayors was present, although it differed in content and form depending on the characteristics of the collective event. It is important to notice that many interviewees mention that, despite the lack of political responsibility in terms of accountability, they felt responsible to act and lead with authority, show compassion and restore trust in government. As described by one mayor: "*It's my duty to keep society together in times of crisis. It is all about confidence. These are the moments you have to show up.*" Others mention that "*just being there when needed*" is of importance. As one mayor expressed "*It sounds arrogant, but that is how it is*".

Mayors contribute to meaning making by restoring safety and stability, and providing the basic needs to a local society in shock. They lead with authority and show compassion. Mayors see themselves as the personification of government; mayors set things in motion and use their proximity to society to weigh the perceived impact. At the same time, interviewees are aware of the possible impact of their appearance as a public leader and try not to make the story bigger than strictly necessary and "*react proportionally, not overreact*". In some cases it is part of the communications strategy, as described by an interviewed mayor "*we care, we do, we provide perspective*".

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TABLE I. Summary of aspects of public meaning making under crises

Examples of crises *Number of cases*	**Attributed Political** responsibility **(low/high)**	**Collective** impact **(low/high)**
MH17 disaster. Plane crash in Amsterdam neighborhood, brutal murders, fatal accidents with youngsters, firefighters who died while on duty. *36 cases*	Low	High
Fatal explosion of fireworks factory in residential area (permission for location granted by municipality), riots, demonstrations and problems with public order. *27 cases*	High	High

	How did mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media
	Defining the mayors role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** collective	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals	
	Meaning making is needed in order to stimulate a sense of belonging. Stay together, and help each other. Show that we care, we act and we provide perspective.	Attend or organize remembrance gatherings. Attend funerals. Lead with authority and show compassion. The situations hardly led to political debate. Society fully agreed with the steps taken.	Visit victims and their families, and ask media and others to show restraint when needed.	Media are used to give meaning to the situation, to show compassion and give insight in 'what is going on'.
	Meaning making is needed in order to channel emotions and explain the deliberations of a mayor during the crisis. Restoring trust in government is key in order to 'survive' blame games during the political aftermath.	Focus on the collective impact by organizing gatherings, attending funerals and memorials. Focus on regaining trust, safety and commitment. Communicate to find common ground and acceptation for the decisions taken by the public leader. Leaders try to put blame-games on hold until evaluation committees present their reports.	Visit victims and their families and ask media and others to show restraint when needed.	Media are used to give meaning to the situation, to show compassion and give insight in 'what is going on'.

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TABLE I. Continued

Examples of crises *Number of cases*	Attributed Political responsibility **(low/high)**	Collective impact **(low/high)**
Hazardous goods in small parts of community, death of people from outside community. *20 cases*	Low	Low
Preventive evacuations, electricity outages. *11 cases*	High	Low

	How did mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media
Defining the mayors role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** collective	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals		
When the incident is regarded as nuisance, people primarily request factual information. When a small part of society is affected, people expect you to show your compassion with them.	Provide information on the processes of crisis management, provide instructions and set up sessions in the aftermath to look back, show some compassion with the situation and draw lessons. A local gathering to channel emotions can be regarded as an exaggeration and disproportional.	Focus on the people who are directly or indirectly affected by the situation. Visit victims and their families and ask media and others to show restraint when needed.		Media are used to keep people informed about the instructions shared by the government and give insight in 'what is going on'.
When the incident is regarded as nuisance, people primarily want factual information. When a small part of society is affected, people expect you to show your compassion with them.	Ask for resilience. Factual information about the measures taken is welcomed. Show how you use your position to put the pressure on other institutions involved. When a small part of society is affected, show your compassion with those people.	Focus on the people who are directly or indirectly affected by the situation. Visit victims and their families and ask media and others to show restraint when needed.		Media are used to keep people informed about the instructions shared by the government and give insight in 'what is going on'.

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Meaning making is not always regarded as the task exclusive to the public leader. Sometimes mayors lend support to sporting clubs, churches or schools, especially when these institutions are a central focal point within the crisis and the community.

5.3. High political responsibility, high collective impact
When both political responsibility and collective impact are high, it seems to be a core competence to be able to balance between the two forces. Examples of situations where people attribute a political responsibility to the mayor are the search for a pyromaniac, the harassment of a former detainee, the appearance of a local sex offender and raging dune fires that ask for a mandatory evacuation since they are an imminent threat to the local community. In those cases, the mayors decided to use elements of meaning making as a form of aftercare. These mayors set up town hall meetings, in which they explained their (political) position, discussed the emotions involved and drew lessons.

In one interview, the mayor was confronted with the outbreak of East-Asian longhorned beetles. The community concerned is known for its nurseries, particularly woody plant and perennial nurseries, and the beetles were an imminent threat to the local businesses. The mayor positioned himself as a lobbyist and spokesperson on behalf of these local businesses. Citizens attributed more political responsibility to him than he, legally speaking, had. He operated as a mayor who built bridges between the ratio of the ministry and EU regulations on the one hand, and the emotions of the nurseries on the other. As he managed to negotiate the right quarantine measures, he increased his impact and support within the local community.

In a case where a small fireworks factory, located in a densely populated area, exploded and resulted in more than twenty fatalities, the mayor was highly appreciated for his leadership. Even though the local government was held responsible for permitting the factory in the area, the meaning making of the mayor silenced the political discussion. He gave priority to the collective impact, showed leadership in finding the right words to describe the disaster, and attended funerals and memorials. The political aftermath – including blame games – was put on hold until the investigation committee presented its report one year later. In another crisis, the death of a fireman led to the community blaming the municipality for the insufficient training of the fire brigade. His death led to political turbulence and a harsh report by the investigation committee. The mayor kept the support of the local community, however, since people and media showed compassion with the fire brigade. In both cases, the mayors restored trust in government and public leadership.

Again, compassion overruled the blame game. It is in line with the central themes in the communications of other mayors in this setting: regaining trust, restoring safety and commitment. In a situation of public disorder, one mayor states that she closed down the area in order to protect the citizens. "Hooligans from outside Utrecht came to riot.

We called them "riot tourists". In order to protect the residents in the area, I felt I had to guarantee their safety." She connects with the residents and shows she cares about them. In the end, the feeling of togetherness results in a cleanup gathering after the riots. Meaning making in high impact-high responsibility cases may also focus on crisis management itself. In one case it became clear for the mayor that the police operation during a riot was disproportional. He organized a meeting, where he publicly apologized for the police, which had been operating under his control. The citizens accepted this statement.

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Most incidents in this category happened by accident. In few cases, mayors positioned themselves deliberately in a position of confrontation with society and used their legitimate powers to intervene. In one situation, a town had major problems with youngsters who drove drunk on scooters on the night before Queen's Day each year. The mayor banned their tradition, believing the risk was too high. It resulted in riots, when the residents responded emotionally to the banning of their tradition. He had little support when the riots escalated. People listened to the informal leadership of vicars instead. A colleague found himself in a similar situation, when he tried to ban New Year gatherings that resulted in riots year after year. In the latter situation, the mayor tried to discuss the issue with key figures from the community, which can be seen as an act of meaning making, but did not succeed. In the other situation, the mayor did not mention any meaning making in order to reduce the risk of further escalation.

Sometimes, mayors feel that responsibility is based on the perception of citizens. In those cases, people attribute the responsibility for a situation to the mayor, while the mayors are in fact only partly responsible. During an outbreak of foot-and-mouth-disease, the national government took measures to contain the situation. According to the interviewed mayor, it was difficult to show commitment, as the national government urged to kill the animals and the mayor was regarded as part of the same governmental structure. "The focus of the national government was on the containment of the disease, not on the social impact and consequences."

5.4. Low political responsibility, low collective impact
The cases with low political responsibility and low collective impact consisted of situations where the local community did not emotionally respond to a crisis, either because it was not affected at all (such as the stranding of a humpback whale), or the situation was regarded as an inconvenience. Unlike situations of high collective impact, their focus was not on the community as a whole, but was specifically aimed at the needs of the affected groups. In some situations, victims did not come from the local community. After a crash of a Turkish Airlines plane at Schiphol Airport, the mayor showed empathy towards the people from the plane. In the interview, he notes: "No residents were among the victims of the plane crash. We did, however, organize a

meeting for the people living nearby Schiphol Airport, since they were worried and felt unsafe. We understand their feelings were twofold. On the one hand, they were faced with the risk. On the other hand, they agree that Schiphol is an important economic power in the region." During crises with hazardous goods, mayors focused on a select group of people who wanted or needed to be informed. The main focus of the meaning making process was on providing instructions, information leaflets and small-scale town hall meetings in the aftermath, during which mayors explained their actions to specific groups from society.

5.5. High political responsibility, low collective impact
Finally, the interviews labeled as "high political responsibility, low collective impact" showed cases which were mainly regarded as an inconvenience or "*nuisance*", rather than a stressful crisis situation. As the level of emotions stayed relatively low, meaning making by mayors was limited to a request for solidarity and to show they cared, sometimes through actions. The situations did not ask for offering hope or a call upon resilience and pride. Mayors were attributed responsibility in order to solve the crisis and pressure others (e.g. network operators or electricity companies) on behalf of the community to take the necessary measures. The mayors took decisions and sometimes ordered a preventive evacuation, but it did not result in stressful situations among residents, since their houses and lives were not under direct threat. One mayor publicly spoke about the pressure he had put on the electricity company to solve the problem of a long-lasting outage.

Furthermore, crisis communications in this part of the continuum, when the collective impact is low, mainly consists of factual instructions and information. "*People easily find their way, as long as you give them time to prepare*", a mayor says. Again, aftercare was an aspect of meaning making which seems appropriate to end the crisis situation and give the signal that the situation returned more or less back to normal. After a mandatory evacuation because of potential flooding, the overall collective emotion was one of solidarity. The situation surely had impact on people, but people started to help each other to leave the area in a structured manner. Afterwards, the municipality arranged a small welcome package for every house, including a small cake. It led to a sense of happiness and gratefulness.

6. DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to assess the influence of perceived political responsibility and collective impact on meaning making behavior by mayors during a crisis. We used interviews with Dutch mayors as a source for this research question.

Findings show that the mayors' meaning making behavior depends on perceived levels of collective impact and responsibility. The specific context of a crisis has an influence upon communication activities, and these communication activities in return influence the context (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). That said, these public leaders tend to be more publicly visible in situations of large collective impact than in situations with lower impact. Higher responsibility increases the need for apologia, image repair and/or restoration response strategies. In situations of low responsibility, leaders put an emphasis on a caring response aimed at the unique needs of circumstances and the individuals affected (Simola, 2003).

Within a typology of crises (high/low responsibility, high/low collective impact), similar approaches can be found of public leaders' meaning making. The clustering of crises on the basis of two dimensions helps to find similarities among miscellaneous crises and distinguish cases that at first sight look similar in terms of cause and number of fatalities. In two such similar cases, three firemen died while on duty. In one town 6.000 people attended a large, public gathering where the mayor spoke and showed compassion. All three firemen were well-known in the small village. In the other town, no public gathering was held and the impact was limited to people related to the fire brigade. The mayor visited the fire brigade and attended the funeral, but his public role was limited.

When a Turkish Airlines plane crashed near Schiphol-Airport, the local impact was relatively low, since there were no local inhabitants among the casualties. The focus of the mayor in his meaning making was solely on the victims and their families. In another plane crash in Amsterdam, people died on the ground and, according to the interviewed mayor, the disaster "*will never fade*". As a result, the meaning making was more intense and lasted longer in the second case.

Often, mayors describe crisis situations as "*the most difficult moment in my career*", which leaves a personal impression on the public leader as well. It indicates that mayors were profoundly touched by the incidents they managed, which is a stimulus for trust in their leadership (Caza, Zhang, Wang, & Bai, 2015) and possibly contributes to even more authentic public leadership. "*Being there when needed*" is of importance and implies that societal perceptions define when *public leadership* is required. When the collective impact is high, the interviewed mayors tend to respond in a more emotional way with a focus on belonging, restoring hope and trust. They are aware of the balance between the impact on direct victims and society as a whole, as public rituals and memorials otherwise may give individual bereaved the impression that 'their' private grief is appropriated by the community. Even without a local gathering or memorial, mayors feel that victims and their families usually seem to be touched by the interests shown. This confirms earlier findings on the role of Dutch mayors in the aftermath of the MH17-disaster, where they received distinct appreciation from victims' families, whenever they visited them in the privacy of their homes to lend an ear, and to discuss their material needs (Jong, Dückers & Van der Velden, 2016b).

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Regardless of the combination of collective impact and political responsibility, media are always present. When crises have a relatively low impact, the focus of the media shifts from the general public towards the victims and their families. Mayors follow similar paths. Under those circumstances, they focus on a more factual exchange of information on the crisis at hand with people who are directly affected by the crisis and put less emphasis on society at large.

Audiences sometimes incorrectly attribute responsibility to a public leader. As a consequence, there is a grey area where leaders are held responsible, while legally speaking they are not. When the perceived political responsibility increases, mayors put more emphasis on explaining their (political) position, clarifying their decisions and discuss what they practically do to solve the problem. Especially when both collective impact and political responsibility are high, mayors believe it is difficult to lend a listening ear when people hold them accountable for a situation. According to these interviewees, the most difficult crises are the crises where the role of "citizen-father" conflicts with political responsibility.

In situations of higher responsibility, meaning making is complicated by the long political aftermath. While society and victims ask for meaning making during or in the immediate aftermath of crises, the political aftermath can last for months. Evaluation and investigation committees usually deliver their reports a long time after a crisis happened. In cases with high collective impact, political turbulence in the aftermath seems to make it even more difficult to return to a state of normalcy. Under those circumstances, the political arena becomes a prominent audience for the discussion of the responsibility for permits, the management of disorders and the like. It sometimes asks for another round of meaning making, when the political situation revives emotions among society and victims. This also implies that the role of a mayor towards a given audience might shift over time.

7. TOWARDS A PUBLIC MEANING MAKING MODEL

Within combinations of responsibility and public impact, we found similar approaches of meaning making. In the framework below (Fig. 1), we come to a set of four different roles. As a *mourner-in-chief*, mayors are expected to deliver on *meaning making* by attending public memorial services and community activities, and visit the victims and their families with a listening ear (Jong, Dückers & Van der Velden, 2016b). The expression of sympathy, one of the corner-stones of a "care response" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012), is the central element in this role.
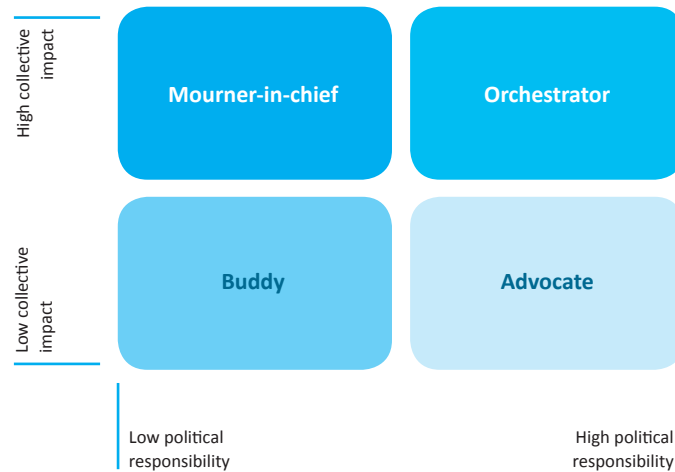
FIGURE I. Public Meaning Making Model

As an *orchestrator*, the public leader performs similar to a public affairs professional keeping an eye on his public, personal and political interests. Through *meaning making*, the mayor bridges competing frames and anticipates on the political aftermath. He gives collective meaning to the community and victims, but is simultaneously aware of the way his meaning making behavior influences the political aftermath, context and blame games. The mayors who managed to give the impression to speak on behalf of their own citizens, were most successful in balancing their responsibilities and surviving the political aftermath. It appears to be a balancing act, since the mayor is sometimes confronted with the rationale of the political accountability and the emotional impact of society. In this part of the framework, concepts of apologia, image repair and restoration are most suited to the public leader (Arendt et al., 2017; Coombs & Holladay 2012; Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger, 2007).

As a *buddy*, the focus of the public leader is not on society as a whole, but primarily on meaning making towards affected groups within society. The emphasis will be on the mayor as a listening ear for the victims and their families. The corner-stone of the public leaders' communication role is the expression of sympathy, which is similar to that of the mourner-in-chief but directed at a smaller audience.

As an *advocate*, the public leader uses his meaning making to speak on behalf of the citizens, presents himself as their spokesperson or lobbyist and puts pressure on other stakeholders to solve the crisis at hand. The public leader might put himself in the spotlight in order to amplify media coverage and speed up crisis response. The situations in this section consisted of long lasting power outages and evacuation orders for potential flooding. The longer the "nuisance" lasts, the higher the potential

anger, and other negative emotions come to surface. From that point of view, the aftercare can be vital to public leaders, to finalize the situation and to thank citizens for their patience and solidarity.

8. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This qualitative research study is meant to be exploratory. The main limitation of this study is that both the collective impact and political responsibility are interpretations, based on interviews with mayors who shared their own perceptions of the crisis at hand. This does raise the possibility of self-presentation bias. Divergent perceptions, interpretations, and interests may cause serious trouble in crisis management (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997), including in relation to meaning making. This study relies on a series of perceptions, shared in interviews with sometimes wide-ranging time distances between the crisis and when the interview was conducted. However, as an insufficient appraisal of the situation would most probably have had repercussions on the (political) position of the public leader, it decreases the potency of this concern. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to explore perceptions from other stakeholders as well, such as earlier mentioned media, city councils, and affected citizens, or secondary sources as reports from independent evaluation committees and the like. Such studies might not only confirm the validity of the Public Meaning Making Model, but also show the implications for situations where public leaders and their stakeholders make different estimates of the collective impact and/or political responsibility.

Furthermore, all case studies are based in The Netherlands, where the mayor might have a very specific role compared to public leaders elsewhere. That said, we believe the current study gives the impression that the concept of meaning making might be multilayered and can be broadened to other public leaders as well, since the two dimensions of collective impact and political responsibility are universal.

Based on the interviews, we only found one full apology, which can be regarded as a specific form of meaning making. It is likely that more mayors apologized, although this has not been mentioned in the interviews. Earlier studies showed that after crises, politicians are more likely to offer partial apologies than full apologies, since partial apologies give politicians the opportunity to allude to their responsibility without going as far as giving a formal apology (Liu, 2007). Even when the leader is convinced that he or she is not to blame, an apology may be necessary depending on public perceptions (Yang & Bentley, 2017). Further study on the consequences of a public apology on the well-being of victims and their families is welcomed since it might shift their perceptions of a given crisis situation.

Because this methodological approach is based on case studies described in interviews with mayors, we still sail in the waters of public administration and crisis communication. In future research, taking the relevance for the wellbeing of affected citizens and the social acknowledgement into account will help to improve our understanding of the concept of meaning making by public leaders even further (Dückers, Yzermans, Jong, Boin, 2017). This might be done with research among victims and their families, in order to look for the benefits and drawbacks of the appearance of public leaders in times of sorrow and grief, but also in situations where the perceived collective impact is low.

When we assess our public leaders during crisis, it seems relevant to embed the crisis leadership in the broader context of leadership studies. Based on the cases described, we have an indication that the mourner-in-chief appeals to concepts of hope, trust, togetherness and social connectedness. These are elements that ask for empowerment and leadership from the school of transformational leadership. The elements on the lower right side of our framework, however, seem to emphasize a call for more directive leadership. In those situations, the leader is asked to arrange things in a more rational way. Further study might give us more insights in the difficulties for the specific role of the public leader as an 'orchestrator' in the upper-right corner, where these two types of leadership seem to collide.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The results contribute to our knowledge of crisis communications and meaning making by public leaders. The main conclusion of this paper is that meaning making by public leaders, i.e. mayors, depends on their (perceived) responsibility of public leaders on the one hand, and their perceptions of the collective impact on society on the other. Meaning making by public leaders appears not to be a one-size-fits-all concept. The analysis of 94 case studies, which were based on interviews with mayors who were personally involved in crises that occurred between 1979 and 2014, resulted in four different roles of meaning making. A public leader can either emphasize his or her role as mourner-in-chief, orchestrator, advocate or buddy. It helps public leaders to proportionally give meaning to a given situation, either towards victims, their families or the public as a whole. It also helps public leaders to recognize the characteristics of a crisis and anticipate on appropriate meaning making in relation to the scale of the political aftermath. The presented Public Meaning Making Model provides more depth to the concept of meaning making and builds on existing studies in public leadership literature.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A. Supplementary data associated with this article can also be found, in the online version, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.09.003.

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	19790915 Ouwerkerk	Polluted soil in Lekkerkerk	No	Low	High
	19921004 Van Thijn	Crash of an El Al 747 cargo Boeing in Amsterdam[1]	Yes (43)	Low	High

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Al_Flight_1862

	How mayors deliver on meaning making		Role of media	[General remarks by author]
Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	"We just tried to deal with the situation. But the people had to leave their houses. It took some time before the relationship between government and residents was restored."	"I turned into the personification of the local government. People expected that I would solve all problems." "The Queen visited the residents. It worked like medicine."	"We tried to be as transparent as possible towards the media."	Discovery of severe soil pollution at Lekkerkerk. Chemical waste was used as building material to level the soil for a newly developed suburb. The dumping of the waste, causing the area to be uninhabitable, resulted in an unprecedented scandal.
"As a mayor, you know: *'I am supposed to lead this crisis situation'.*" "I used 'caring government' as an overall theme. We set up care centers, organized alternative housing, set up social care." "I visited the disaster scene the same night. I wanted to see the chaos with my own eyes and to hearten the emergency workers. I will never forget what I saw." Later on, I also visited the DVI (disaster victim identification) team. It was terrible to see all these victims."	"One week later, we organized a memorial meeting. I spoke, though for a brief moment only. With just one sentence: 'We are all one in our sorrow, even though everyone pays respect in his own way'." A memorial march is joined by 15.000 people. Along the route, music groups and choirs pay tribute to the different ethnical backgrounds of the people who died in the crash. Next day, I visited the disaster scene with ministers, the Queen and crown prince. Afterwards, the Queen spoke with survivors in our care center, which was highly appreciated.	The mayor pays attention to a long-term after care plan. His motto is: "No one should say: I was all by myself when I cried". "The essence of after care is that it may take several years." "For most people, the disaster will never fade. It may take years before people show stress effects." "I met survivors. I realized I was quite unemotional and professional. Even though I am quite emotional under different circumstances. It surprised me that I was able to respond less emotionally."	We held press conferences twice a day.	

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	199502 (February 1995) Bloemendaal	Evacuation because of risk of flooding in Culemborg	No	High. Mandatory evacuation order.	Low
	199502 (February 1995) Van Tellingen	Evacuation because of risk of flooding in Tiel	No	High. Mandatory evacuation order.	Low

	How mayors deliver on meaning making		Role of media	[General remarks by author]
Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (**victims and their families**)		
	"To us, it was hard to imagine what would happen when the dike would breach. It was, therefore, difficult to answer the residents´ questions." "At the time the people were allowed to come back home, we arranged a small ´welcome package´ for every house, including a small pie. It led to a sense of happiness and gratefulness."		We used our local radio station Stad Radio Culemborg.	Threat of flooding. In the end, the dikes did not breach. Even before the evacuation becomes mandatory, 64% of the people had already left the area. There was a sense of belonging. According to the mayor, people were helping each other formidably.
"Trust is one of the cornerstones in crisis management." "Looking back, I was too much involved in crisis management procedures and should have paid more attention to my role as citizen father. I was too much of a technocrat. I could have visited an elderly home, for instance. As a mayor, you are supposed to show you care."	"I wanted to prepare people for the possible upcoming evacuation order. In that way, it enabled them to think about alternative places to stay, what they wanted to take with them and how they were going to organize themselves." "Some people regarded this approach as 'stimulating panic', but we just wanted to enable people to prepare." "In reality, people easily find their way, as long as you give them time to prepare." "People are self-sufficient. You can use that capacity." "In a survey, people showed they were satisfied with the information provided."		"Evacuated people stayed with friends and families all over the Netherlands. They checked the media for updates."	

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	**People died? Y/N**		
	19960715 Welschen	Military plane crash in Eindhoven[2]	Yes (34)	High (for fire brigade procedures at the airport)	High
	19971230 Ouwerkerk	Riots in Groningen	No	High. Riot police did get the situation under control.	High
	19990110 IJssels	Violence with two fatalities in Gorinchem	Yes (2)	Low	High

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[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996_Belgian_Air_Force_Hercules_accident

[3] A so-called 'silent march' (stille tocht) is a custom way to remember the people who died. Usually, residents walk silently through the city's streets in memory of the victims.

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			**Role of** media	**[General remarks by author]**
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (**victims and their families**)		
	"I wanted fulfill my role as citizen father to the rescue team as well."	"It is difficult to be a listening ear, when people hold you responsible for the situation as well."	Contact with the next of kin was of personal importance to the mayor as well, as he was touched by the incident. Generally speaking, the mayor had a positive relationship with the victims' families. However, some pointed out their grief towards the mayor. Over the years, the group of victims' families divided into two different groups. One blaming government, others just got on with their lives.	Media were looking for answers to questions about the slow response time of the fire brigade.	The disaster let to an intense political aftermath. The fire brigade started too late with their rescue operations, since they presumed the cargo flight had no passengers on board.
		Apparently the main focus of the mayor was on the political debate and the process of accountability in the city council rather than on contact with the residents themselves.			Riots took place in the Oosterpark district in Groningen. It eventually led to the resignation of mayor Hans Ouwerkerk.
	"In the end, it is all about taking your responsibility as a mayor. At crucial moments, the mayor is the authority with leadership. As a positive note, everyone appreciates it when a mayor takes the lead." The municipality organized a gathering, where people were able to share emotions. It enabled the mayor to prevent further tensions among groups of youngsters in the city.	"A silent march[3] is a useful tool to share emotions collectively." "I learnt that you can show your own emotions in these kinds of gatherings. In essence, the challenge lies in using the emotions from the local society and yourself for something useful and positive. It enables society to go forward."	"We involved the parents in our decision to organize a silent march. I did the same with the Turkish mosque." "We had hardly any contact with the family of the shooter. His Turkish family felt ashamed and was not very cooperative." "We discontinued the annual commemorations, as the parents no longer appreciated the massive scale."	"On behalf of the parents, we asked the media not to attend the funeral." "I believe it was our duty to support the parents and keep media out of sight. They did not ask to be at the center of attention. People from the Communications Department behaved as a kind of 'spokesperson bodyguard'."	Two girls die when they leave a club in Gorinchem after being shot by a man who was denied entrance. The shooter is from a Dutch-Turkish background. As a result, the killing has impact on the Turkish community in the town.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	199902 (Winter 1999) Haanstra	Outbreak of legionellosis in Bovenkarspel[4]	Yes (32)	High. The mayor was also the chairman of the flower exhibition foundation, which organized the exhibition where the outbreak took place. He received full support for this role from city council.	High
	20000513 Helder (deputy) The deputy supported mayor Mans in this disaster. That said, the main tasks regarding remembering and meaning making were done by Mans, not Helder.	Explosion fireworks factory Enschede[5]	Yes (23)	High. The municipality permitted the fireworks factory in the residential area.	High

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[4]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1999_Bovenkarspel_legionellosis_outbreak

[5]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enschede_fireworks_disaster

	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)	Role of media	[General remarks by author]
			How mayors deliver on meaning making		
	"Look for a role which suits you. There's nothing wrong with showing compassion and emotions. Just live up to the expectations people have. I was their companion."		The mayor makes a statement towards the victims: acknowledging that something extraordinary happened to them.	The mayor organized a press conference in order to reach possible victims who lived elsewhere, since the visitors came from all over the country. The director, the mayor and a lung specialist spoke at the press conference, given at the local hospital.	The mayor was also the chairman of the flower exhibition foundation, organizer of one of the largest indoor flower exhibitions in the world. In total, 32 people died because of legionellosis. The mayor remarks that blame games are an essential part of the aftermath; usually an expression of disbelieve and uncertainty. He advises to not take it too personal.
	"A disaster like the fireworks disaster of Enschede puts a lot of pressure on the shoulders of the mayor. More than a single person can take. For me, as a deputy, I took some of the tasks in order to relieve mayor Mans."	"I spoke at two funerals. I made clear that I spoke on behalf of the entire population of Enschede. There was a lot of solidarity. There was also a lot of support from the colleagues from the fire brigade. You're supposed to do anything in the interest of the victims' families. The institutional interests are secondary."			

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	**People died? Y/N**		
	20000513 Mans	Explosion fireworks factory Enschede[6]	Yes (23)	High. The municipality permitted the fireworks factory in the residential area.	High
	20001216 Rombouts	Riots in Den Bosch	Yes (1)	High (mayor is head of the police)	High

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[6]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enschede_fireworks_disaster

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"To calm a situation." "Important to show that you're in the lead." "Sometimes, being a mayor is a lonesome job." "The task is incisively. I underestimated the impact of being a citizen-father. Everything is framed from that perspective."	"People who did not witness the disaster, are getting tired of it over time." "How often you should organize a memorial, when and with whom. Those are all valid questions to ask."	"Whenever needed, I visited them or they visited me. We had dinner together, with the wives of the firemen who died in the incident. But there will always be sensitivities." "I hope the victims felt the support they expected from the government."	"Use the media to show that you care. People should trust the government for doing the right things in a disaster situation." "Facilitate the press whenever possible." "Be clear. Don't try to polish the story. State what you know, but also: express what you do not know." "Every year, 13 May 13 is a day of remembrance, but also a day of press attention and a day on which old conspiracy theories receive a new yearly impulse."	A fire at a fireworks factory led to an enormous explosion which killed 23 people including four firefighters. It was one of the biggest post-WWII disasters in the Netherlands.
	"During riots, it is usually best not to be visible. Otherwise, you'll become part of the problem." "In the aftermath, inform people and try to connect." "Everything depends on context and the situation."	"Just do whatever you believe is valuable to the city. In the end, the mayor is the one and only person who takes responsibility for public order management. But you became a mayor in order to take tough decisions, your are not there for just the pretty stuff."	"Even though the man was killed by a police bullet, I visited the family. It was a situation with respect towards each other."	"Be available to the media and regularly provide them with facts and figures."	A police bullet killed a man. Informal leadership in the neighborhood played an important role in easing the situation after days of riots.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	200103 (Spring 2001) Burgering	Riots in Kootwijker-broek	No	High, even though the crisis was mainly managed by national government, the mayor was regarded as the representative of national government by his local citizens.	High
	20010430 Plomp	Riots in Genemuiden	No	High, as the mayor decided to ban a tradition, because he believed the public order was in danger.	High
	20010801 Kramer (deputy)	Outbreak of meningococcal disease	Yes (3)	High. But only for crisis management and distribution of vaccines, not for the cause of the crisis.	High

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	"You can only fulfill the role of a citizen father when you are supported by other governmental institutions. In this case, the institutions had different goals."	"Since the national government urged to kill the animals and the mayor was regarded as part of the same governmental structure, the role of the citizen father was a complex one. The focus of the national government was on the containment of the disease, not on the social impact and consequences." The mayor tried to be in contact with all parts of the community. This turned out to be an unfortunate undertaking. The town of Kootwijkerbroek is a largely orthodox Calvinist and closed community. People express their solidarity and direct their frustration to the government and to the farmer where the disease was detected.	"A mayor is not only a citizen father, but can easily turn into a laughing stock when society turns against him." The people from the national government visited the emotional farmers unprepared. According to the mayor, this part of government had no clue about the underlying emotions in his community. The mayor was threatened during and in the aftermath of the crisis.	"I attended the press conferences twice a day. I tried to emphasize my local position, in contrast to the national government which tried to contain the disease."	Farmers from Kootwijkerbroek did not believe there was a case of Foot and Mouth disease in their village. They started riots to prevent their cattle from being destroyed.
	As the mayors interventions were seen as the cause of the riots, the mayor lost his support in the community.			Not specifically mentioned.	The town had major problems with youngsters who drove drunk on scooters on the night before Queens Day each year. The mayor banned their tradition. He had little support when the riots escalated. People listened to the informal leadership of vicars instead.
	"When three children die because of an infectious disease in a small community, people expect you to take action."	"Explaining the necessary measures, as well as the decision <u>not</u> to take certain measures. Even though people understand the decisions, one hesitates to accept it because of the emotions when children are hit by an infectious disease."	Mayor is in direct contact with the affected families who lost their child. Strangely enough, the mayor says, unlike the rest of the community, they díd understand the decisions the mayor took.		Political responsibility for the crisis management itself. Mayor seen as responsible for the cooperation with the national public health service.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20020306 Bruinsma	Hazardous goods in Vlaardingen	No	Low	Low
	200205 (Spring 2002) De Winter	WWII torpedo at beach of Egmond	No	High (decision to detonate)	Low
	20020506 Opstelten	Murder of political candidate Pim Fortuyn in Hilversum[7]	Yes (1)	Low	High

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[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_Pim_Fortuyn

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
				It is the media that mainly defines the image of the mayor.	Vessel catches fire while in a dry dock in Vlaardingen.
					Apparently, the emphasis is put on crisis communications and instructions, not so much on the management of emotions.
		The torpedo was pointed at the beach. There were no houses in the surrounding area, which minimized the potential impact.			A WWII torpedo needs to be detonated. The torpedo is pointed at the beach of Egmond.
					No real role for mayor as a citizen-father
	"It was not a personal loss to me personally. But I was certainly shocked." "Under these circumstances, people look for leadership. Just be there when needed. It sounds arrogant, but that's how it is. People will follow you more easily. " "Most decisions are taken intuitively. Intuition is a combination of personality, character and experience. "	"The city of Rotterdam was in shock. Everyone was stunned. We needed to do something. We opened city hall. People lined up to offer their condolences." "Fortuyn was the leader of the largest local political party. It made it a crisis for all of Rotterdam. " City hall and his own residence were the two places where people left flowers. "You want to express solidarity. Government is there to calm people, inform them and take action. You must know when you are needed." Heading a march through the city was a way to publicly let off steam.	Focus of the interview lies on the public impact of the death of the leader of the largest political party in the city council. Contact with the family of Fortuyn was primarily managed by the Prime-Minister.	Not specifically mentioned.	Assassination of Dutch right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, who led his anti-immigration party to a position of prominence in the Netherlands. Fortuyn was the leader of the largest local political party in Rotterdam and leader of one of the national parties. He was assassinated in Hilversum, nine days before the National Elections.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20020820 Brink (deputy)	Rail accident with hazardous goods near station of Amersfoort	No	Low	Low
	20021022 Schrijen	Senseless violence in Venlo[8]	Yes (1)	Low	High
	20030323 Pop	Fatal fire with casualties among firemen in Haarlem	Yes (3)	High	Low

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[8]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Rene_Steegmans

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals** (***victims and their families***)		
	"I did not want to take any risk. Whatever happens. it's your own city. Your own people. And your own [political] future. If communications become confusing, the credibility of the mayor is at stake."	"I gave priority to informing the general public. To my surprise, the members of the city council felt they were ignored."		"We held press conferences with short statements every hour." "A member of parliament made statements in the press which undermined the credibility of the crisis team. Later that evening, I gave an interview which was broadcasted live. The rain pouring down on me did not help to show a sense of control."	A train with hazardous goods starts to leak at Amersfoort Central Station. The focus is on the accountability and the role of the media in 'setting the stage', and much less on the interaction with citizens.
	"You are a citizen father, representing the city and there to give words to the emotions." "Apparently, I did something which felt close to the peoples' emotions. I engaged, but kept a professional distance."	"I used the authority of a mayor, asking for solidarity and unity." "We had to do something with the collective emotions after the brutal death of the victim."	"I visited the family at home. And I kept visiting them in the months after the incident." "We were not involved in the funeral, other than making it possible." One of the directors was in contact with the family of the offender. The mayor's focus was on the family of the victim.	The mayor updated the media with regular intervals. "I was invited by (national) media in Amsterdam, but decided to stay close to my citizens."	Mr Steegmans addressed two youngsters for driving recklessly. While driving on their scooter, they almost hit an older lady. According to witnesses he asked for some respect for the elderly. They then attacked Mr Steegmans, kicking and beating him several times. He died.
	"Visiting the fire brigade is appreciated after such a shock."	"We organized a meeting with all firemen, to mourn together."	The mayor is in contact with the family members. "The family could choose for a funeral with honors, or a more private funeral." The mayor speaks at the funeral, with words of solidarity, compassion and mutual trust among the firemen. "We were involved until the commemoration, one year later."	"We set up a press conference, which was a mix of emotions and ratio. We gave the facts on what had happened. Emotionally, we were deeply involved with the fire brigade and the families."	Three firefighters die while fighting a church fire. A church wall collapsed on five firefighters, killing the three and seriously injuring two others.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	200304 (Spring 2003) Majoor	Bird flu in Weert[9]	No	High, as the mayor was regarded as a representative of national government.	High
	20030424 Leers	Collapse of a balcony in Maastricht	Yes (2)	High	High
	20030714 Mittendorff (deputy)	LNG truck on fire in Eindhoven	Yes (1)	Low	Low
	20030826 Burgman	Breach of canal dike and floodings at Wilnis	No	Low	High

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[9]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Influenza_A_virus_subtype_H7N7

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"You are expected to follow the national guidelines. At the same time, you try to respect local circumstances." "One of the farmers denied accepting the killing of his animals. I could have fulfilled a role as a citizen father, but I was not allowed to do so [by national government]." "Considering the emotional stress and the disappointment among the farmers, I prefer to take a different action in the future."	The national government did not match the public perception. "We underestimated the emotional impact of the killing of animals on hobby farmers."	"As I had hardly any influence on the way in which the crisis was managed, my role as a mayor and citizen father was undermined."		
	"People face fear and have concerns. It's your duty to take the concerns away. Share the emotions with victims whenever possible. That's what people expect."	"Management of emotions is more important than ever before. One expects decisiveness from a mayor."	"You're supposed to know when the time is right to show compassion."		Two residents of a brand new apartment complex in Maastricht die when their balcony collapses.
	"An area had been evacuated. I visited the people who were sheltered."		"I gave a press conference later that day, to put things in perspective." Later on, the mayor says, the media were used in order to get the point across to stop the transport of hazardous goods through the municipality. The crisis was used as an opportunity.		An LNG truck is on fire on the main highway. An area is evacuated and people are brought to care centers. No reason given *why* the mayor decided to visit the care center.
	"It took some time before I was able to visit the rest center. I felt the need to answer the questions people had."	"People blamed me for giving more attention to the media compared to the affected people."	"In the care centers I met the people who had to leave their homes. I felt compassion with them. During press conferences, I did not show the emotions I showed at the care center."	Gave press conferences and joined the media in a tour around the disaster area.	She felt left on her own and missed direct contact with other mayors in order to share experiences.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20030927 Meijer	Amercentrale power plant boiler accident in Geertruidenberg	Yes (5)	Low	Low
	20031231 Buijserd	New Year riots in Veen	No	High, as the mayor was responsible for public order management on New Year's Eve	High
	20041001 Lodders (deputy)	Car accident with youngsters Zeewolde	Yes (2)	Low	High
	20041017 Lodders (deputy)	Car accident with youngsters in Almelo	Yes (5)	Low	High
	20041102 Cohen	Murder on columnist Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam[10]	Yes (1)	Low	High

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[10]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theo_van_Gogh_(film_director)

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (*victims and their families*)		
		Not.	"I promised them to inform them personally, as soon as I could."	"Informing press through press conferences, to update them on the rescue operation. " "The media were depending on us, [as they had no access to the disaster scene]."	Incident at a power station. Five victims were employees who lived elsewhere. Mayor and his team were in close contact with their families. No general impact.
	Mayor tried to discuss the issue with key figures from the community. There was, however, a strong anti-government sentiment.	The community threatened the mayor, because of the measures he wanted to take in order to minimize the disturbances during the New Year celebrations. Only after New Year, he managed to involve part of the community, as they were ashamed for what had happened.		According to the mayor, the media fuelled the situation.	Year after year, Veen is a trouble hotspot during the New Year celebrations. Setting car wrecks on fire has become somewhat of a tradition. The ban by the new mayor of Veen led to an uproar.
		The mayor did not participate in a remembrance gathering organized by the victims´ school in a neighboring community.	Police first asks family if they appreciate a visit by the mayor. Mayor visits the mother of one of the boys who died in the accident.		Two youngsters died in an accident. The gatherings were concentrated in and around the school.
	"It had a large impact on the local community. It was the only subject people talked about those days. To me, it was an indication that there was a role for the municipality and mayor as well. We facilitated a memorial meeting, organized by friends and the churches."	Friends of the victims gathered in the local church. The mayor visited them over there.	The mayor contacted the families of the victims, to check whether or not they appreciated a silent march by friends.	"Media will find you under these kind of circumstances."	Five youngsters died in a car accident, two weeks after another incident where two young people died. Mayor coordinates all kind of different initiatives in the local community and supports the church in its activities.
	"It is my duty to keep society together in times of crisis. The mayor is the personification of government; it is all about confidence. These are the moments you have to show up."	The municipality organized a gathering in the center of the city. The mayor consulted the family about it.	"Having contact with the parents of Theo van Gogh is part of my job. Not necessarily in front of the cameras, but of course you get in touch."	Citizens look for confidence in government. A mayor is the personification of government. You have to express confidence towards victims, citizen and media."	Well-known columnist stabbed to death by a Muslim terrorist.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20041203 Weerwind	Large fire at local cheese factory with evacuation order in Winkel	No	Low	Low
	20050108 Waaijer[11]	Family tragedy in Zoetermeer	Yes (3)	Low	High
	20050404 Waals	Local tensions at the mosque in Venray	No	High	High

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[11]   Interview by Ruud van Bennekom.

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience **(*public speaking & remembrance*)**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals **(*victims and their families*)**		
	"Visited the school, because of the impact on the children who had been evacuated. " "Also lending an ear to the factory workers, who were afraid to lose their job. "				According to the mayor, the fire did not have an emotional impact. It was rather seen as an inconvenience. Mayor held gatherings for the residents and visited schools, the factory and farmers after a large fire in a local factory.
	"As a mayor, you double check whether or not everyone who needs to be informed is in fact informed; the local school, for example." "Everywhere, you just ask if there is anything you can do."	"We informed the neighborhood and set up a meeting for the people nearby."	"I met the father, who did not live with the mother at the time of the murders. I gave him my deepest condolences on behalf of the community of Zoetermeer. You represent the community. There is not much more you can do than ask if there is anything you can do." "I was asked to join a gathering with family members and, on his request, I joined the father at the identification of his children."	"We were able to keep the media at a certain distance."	Mother and father did not live together anymore. Mother committed suicide, after killing both of their children.
	"Important to let them feel safe. 'You are my fellow citizens, we are here to protect you. When you are harmed, I feel similar pain'."	The mayor talked to people, in order to channel the public emotions.		"Local tensions were exaggerated by the media. The crisis mainly existed in the media, more than in the local community itself." According to the mayor, he is both citizen father and spokesperson.	Quote by mayor: "As a mayor, you are not prepared for every situation."

Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N	
	20050406 Waaijer[12]	Family tragedy after mother and children went missing in Zoetermeer	Yes (3)	Low	High
	20050801 Fellinger (deputy)	Family tragedy in Tolbert	Yes (2)	Low	High

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[12] Interview by Ruud van Bennekom.

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			**Role of** media	**[General remarks by author]**
Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)			
"At the time it became clear that the father was a suspect, I urged the Public Prosecutor to inform the neighborhood, since they participated in the search operation." "We sent a door-to-door letter to ask the people to join us at the police station, where we informed them. I was asked to tell the sad news." "Your own ego should not be leading. Be restrained. Be there when needed, but don't push it."	"I contacted the director of the school; the same school had had a tragedy in January of that year, when a mother killed herself and her two children." The municipality opened a book of condolences. At the day of the funeral, the children at the school launched white balloons. "Those are emotional moments, for me as well."	The mayor attended the funeral. Later on, he visited the parents of the mother to offer the book of condolences. "Later on, I also contacted the parents of the father. In the end, they lost their grandchildren as well, regardless of what their son had done."		After the mother and her two children went missing, it turned out that the father had killed them. A search operation, in which people from the neighborhood participated, changed into a murder case. The mayor adds: "In my role, you have to take your decisions step by step. In a smaller community, the role of a mayor will be different."
"You realize that it is about something important. It is easier to chair a crisis team during a large fire, than a family murder with all emotions involved." "In a gathering for our citizens, I became a kind of '*pater familias*', the citizen father. People want to talk to you. Under those circumstances, you represent the local government. I believe it is correct that people expect such a role of a mayor." "It was the most emotional situation in my professional career as a deputy mayor."	"There was solidarity among the people who came to help us at the city hall." "I also visited the policemen who had been at the scene. People sometimes forget the impact these kind of situations have on first responders." The municipality organized a gathering for their citizens, to share emotions. We opened a condolence registry at the city hall. We collected teddy bears, which were left as a remembrance.	"I did not attend the funeral, as I believe it is something which belongs to the family." "I never had direct contact with the parents. I sent a letter to both parents."	"We set up a press conference. The press was not allowed to the gathering we organized for people in the neighborhood." The mayor tells a journalist that citizens are disappointed in the way in which he described the situation.	Two children were killed by their mother's new boyfriend. The mother survived. The mayor was asked to do an interview later on. He rejected the request, as he did not want to give the suggestion he wanted to gain an electoral benefit from the situation.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N	
	20050920 Mulder	Stranding on ridge near Hulst	No	Low	Low
	20051026 Bezuijen (deputy) The first day after the fire, mayor Hertog was abroad. Bezuijen was in charge as the first deputy mayor. Later on, Hertog became chairman.	Fire in prison Schiphol-Oost[13]	Yes (11)	High. The mayor resigned afterwards.	Low
	20051026 Hertog The first day after the fire, mayor Hertog was abroad. Bezuijen was in charge as the first deputy mayor. Later on, Hertog became chairman.	Fatal fire in detention center at Schiphol-Oost[14]	Yes (11)	High (Shared responsibility with minister, as ministry of Justice was the owner of the building)	Low

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[13] https://www.onderzoeksraad.nl/en/onderzoek/1490/fire-at-the-detention-centre-schiphol-oost
[14] https://www.onderzoeksraad.nl/en/onderzoek/1490/fire-at-the-detention-centre-schiphol-oost

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
				In media, the mayor is more a spokesperson than citizen father. As long as there is a lot of uncertainty about the risks, the mayor is regarded as the spokesperson who updates the outside world.	Container vessel Forwairet stranded on a ridge close to the town of Hulst. The vessel hogged severely as the tide fell. Threat of possible spill of hazardous goods towards the city of Hulst.
	"In the role of a mayor, everything comes together. From empathy towards victims, focus on the media, political responsibility and the aftermath."	The mayor visits the site of the disaster. "I was touched by the memorial, when I saw the next of kin." "I also visited the first responders at the local fire brigade, who had a hard time as well."		"Even CNN International reported on the fire. At that point you realize this is getting large. We organized press conferences in order to lessen the pressure of media at the site of the disaster. We answered truthfully to all questions regarding the crisis."	The 11 victims did not come from his own municipality. His focus is on other circles with emotional need, such as the people at the fire brigade.
	"I wanted to behave as a "*caring government*" from the beginning."		Apart from the independent inquiry into what had happened, the mayor organizes a remembrance gathering for survivors and their families. "I met the father of an asylum seeker who died in the fire. Those are terrible things. I was deeply touched."	"All in all, even media discussed my resignation as truthful and with integrity."	Fire in detention center where asylum seekers were detained. Both ministers of Justice and Spatial Planning and Housing resigned, together with the mayor who felt responsible for the building instructions on the premises.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20051125 Loohuis	Power outage after extreme snowfall in Haaksbergen	No	High, as the mayor is attributed responsibility for managing the impact of the crisis.	Low
	20051125 Mulder	Electricity outage in Hulst	No	High, as the mayor is attributed responsibility for managing the impact of the crisis.	Low
	20060105 Zuidgeest	Environmental activists Schinveld	No	High, as the mayor took the final decision to allow the felling of the trees.	High
	20060329 Bruinsma	Mass hysteria in Vlaardingen	No	Low	High

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	"I believe it is important to show that you care. I visited the care center, and paid a visit to the local supermarket and the farmers outside the village. We showed we cared and asked how things were going." "People expect and hope you will be there for them. I tried as much as I could to cope with those expectations."	"We set up care centers, where people could ask their questions and get the information they needed." "I was proud of the citizens, as they cared for each other and showed neighborliness." The mayor showed publicly that he put pressure on the electricity company, to solve the problem.	"The visits [to the farmers] also gave me feedback. People told me they had heard me on the radio and said I explained clearly what we had been doing." "Every crisis has its own emotions."	"We had a good understanding with our regional television station." "The media enabled me to show that I cared and what we did to solve the crisis."	Outage of three days in village of Haaksbergen in winter time.
		"We cared about the people who depend on electricity."		"We gave press briefings with updates on the situation."	Outage lasts for two days in wintertime.
	"Government is supposed to get in through the front door. We're supposed to be transparent." As the mayor supports the felling of the trees, the local community turns against him.	Residents joined the environmental activists, as the residents did not like the AWACS airplanes either. Residents provided the activists with food and drinks. The mayor says he should have organized a debate with local residents, to discuss the situation.		Press conferences were held. The activists were enabled to speak with the media as well. A journalist of the regional newspaper Limburgs Dagblad was embedded at the crisis team for a week.	NATO requested the cutting of a local forest, as the trees were "in the way" of certain low level flight take off and landing practices of AWACS airplanes on a nearby airfield.
	Approximately ten children felt ill. Six ambulances and an emergency helicopter came to the scene. "To me, it is obviously a situation where it is important to show your compassion at the scene. When children are involved, you're not supposed to wait for updates from the town hall."	"The next day, we set up a meeting with the school and the parents of the children involved. Our purpose was to take away existing tensions and emotions."	"During the town hall meeting the next day, I started with asking the children how they felt."	"I spoke to media on the scene. Under these circumstances, when a mayor is present, you're supposed to talk to the media."	Mass hysteria among ten schoolchildren.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20060506 Buddenberg	Riots in Pijnacker	No	High, as the mayor is head of the police and responsible for public order management.	High
	20060701 Verbeek	Removing a WW II bomb in Purmerend	No	High, as the mayor took the final decision to detonate the bomb.	Low
	20060806 Den Besten (deputy)	Collapse of the canal stairs in Utrecht	Yes (1)	High. You realize you have quite some responsibility (in the crisis phase) You realize you will be held accountable, since the municipality owned the stairs.	High

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	The riot police did not really get the right tone of voice in their approach of the youngsters from the little town of Pijnacker. The improper treatment caused an escalation of the tense situation. According to the mayor, he was misinformed by the police and was unaware of what had really happened during the riots.	"It became clear to me that the police operation had been disproportional. I decided to organize a meeting, where I publicly apologized. The citizens accepted this statement."	"It was hard to behave as a citizen father, as I had been responsible for the police operation as well. I could not let the police down, as long as there had not been done any investigation."		Thousands of people attend the festival week in Pijnacker. One night, riots start as the people come back from one of the concerts. The appearance of the police fuels the riots, instead of easing the situation.
		"People understood why it was necessary to evacuate. "		"We set up a care center. Media were not allowed inside."	A second world war bomb needs to be detonated. A mandatory evacuation order is issued. Residents receive all necessary information. No real role for mayor as a citizen-father.
	"I knew instantly that this was something 'bigger'." "We wanted to hearten the victims."	The mayor visits the site of the disaster. City hall is opened, in order to comfort people and offer coffee to bystanders.	"When you meet victims, you do not think about the political accountability process." "I visited the victims in the hospital." "We supported the victims' family in organizing the funeral." "We attached a commemorative plaque on the site where the incident happened."	"We gave regular updates to the media and we organized press conferences. We communicated whatever we knew." "We kept the media away from the funeral."	The mayor realizes that she'll be held accountable, but also notes that it does not influence her role towards victims.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* **Name of mayor**	Event	Attributed Political responsibility **(low/high)**	Collective impact **(low/high)**	
		Description of event	**People died? Y/N**		
	20060825 Aalderink	People die by lightning in Vorden	Yes (2)	Low	High
	20061201 Fränzel	Murder of 8-year old at school in Hoogerheide	Yes (1)	Low	High

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"In a broader context, government should facilitate society, in order to enable people to meet up and support each other." "The informal part of a gathering is more important than the formal part."	"As a governmental organization, you're supposed to facilitate." The mayor organized a gathering, where people were able to share their feelings and emotions. People were told that they showed normal reactions to an exceptional event. The church organized a gathering as well.	"When you can trust the experts in their psychosocial support, it gives you room to pick up the role as a citizen father. Everyone has its own responsibility under these circumstances."	"We held a press conference. I wanted to show the mayor was present. It was an opportunity to present myself as a citizen father." "We had a good understanding with the media. We provided them information, but also asked them not to record the gatherings and funerals."	Lightning struck during a funeral in a small town. Two people died.
	"The public was shocked. Both in The Netherlands and abroad. To prevent unrest and fear, we decided to inform all parents [from the school] that same day." "I feel it is my duty to restore calm, safety and stability. It was not in the interest of the community for me to talk about it on national television. I chose to stay at home and put my focus on the town of Hoogerheide."	"We held a remembrance service in the church later that weekend. I spoke, trying to find words on behalf of a shocked community." "We also decided to organize a silent march. The parents would not join, but supported the initiative." "We announced the silent march as late as possible, to prevent it from becoming a national event. We were hoping that primarily people from our own community would join." "Our focus was on the school. We forgot the impact in other circles, such as the scouting group of the boy."	"I visited the parents of the boy the same day. It was one of the most difficult moments in my career. It was comforting to see that there were so many people to support them." Later, the mayor visits the family, together with his wife. "We handed over a book of condolences from the City Hall and some of the teddy bears which were put in front of the school." Four months later, the mayor visits the parents of the man who killed the boy. "They are victims as well, although in a completely different way."	Media from all over the Netherlands and abroad were interested in the story. "A funeral is an intimate moment for the family and friends. I rejected the request to broadcast it on television. We facilitated the funeral."	A young boy was killed, stabbed by an unknown man at a primary school in Hoogerheide.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)	
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20061212 Slagman-Bootsma	Brutal murder of a girl in Valthermond	Yes (1)	Low	High
	20070112 Hoornstra	Fatal car accident with youngsters in Wapenveld	Yes (4)	Low	High
	20070130 Cammaert	Large fire on stern trawler in harbor Velsen	No	Low	Low

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How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
"As a mayor, I wanted to share my feelings of disbelief and care with the community. I felt it was time to express my commitment, even though the investigation was not finished yet." "I tried to keep the community together, with respect towards each other." When it becomes clear that the perpetrator comes from a neighboring village, the mayor says she is proud of how the people in the other village manage their emotions.	The mayor visited the school of the murdered girl and talked with classmates. "I wanted to talk with the children about Suzanne, who she was and what she liked'. We also discussed the fears the children had." Even though there was not much information to share, as the investigation into the murder continued, the mayor decided to organize a meeting where people were able to share their emotions: "The main purpose was to have a session where people could share their sorrow."	The mayor asked if she was welcome to visit the mother of the murdered girl. "I visited her and we discussed the funeral. We decided to use the sporting facilities as a location for the funeral. We facilitated it as a municipality."	We lowered the media pressure by enabling them to take a picture of a corner of remembrance that was set up in the school.	Psychosocial experts advised parents in the community.
There were tensions among youngsters in the community. When the accident happened, the mayor realizes the victims of this week were the perpetrators of last week. He adds: "I wanted to contain the situation, without choosing one of the parties. In the end, you are everyone's mayor."	Friends of the youngsters who died organized a silent march. "To me, remembrance is something private for *intimi*. I chose not to join the silent march."			Mayor says: when I look back on my career, of which I have been a mayor for more than 20 years, I realize that you never forget these kinds of crises. I doubt if it will be different for my colleagues.
"I became spokesperson for the fire." "We communicated that there were no problems, but people did not believe it."	"In the aftermath, we received criticism that we did not inform a wider group of people." Next time, we should be better prepared for all the questions people could have."			A ship is on fire. Large clouds of smoke in the surrounding areas.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	200703 (March 2007) Brouwer-Korf	Riots in Ondiep district in Utrecht	Yes (1)	High, as the mayor is head of the police and responsible for restoring the public order.	High
	20070306 Aalderink	Family tragedy in Hengelo (Gld)	Yes (3)	Low	High
	20070404 Salet	Hazardous goods from refinery in Spijkenisse	No	Low	Low

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			**Role of** media	**[General remarks by author]**
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	"I feel it as my obligation to care for the people who are affected by the threat of riots." "Hooligans from outside Utrecht came to riot. We called them ´riot tourists´. In order to protect the residents in the area, I felt I had to guarantee their safety." "At one moment, I chaired the crisis team. At another moment I wanted to connect with the people in the area. And at the same time, I had to answer questions from the media."	"The mayor shows she cares for her residents. She asked the residents to participate, to clean up after the riots." "In the weeks after the riots, we had six meetings with residents to discuss the future of the neighborhood."		The mayor regularly gives press conferences, to update the media on the situation.	A man was killed by a police bullet. Afterwards, riots started. Most of the people involved in the riots came from elsewhere.
	"We supported the school professionally. Our focus was on the neighborhood, which was shocked by the events."	"As a government, we wanted to facilitate the people. Victim Support Netherlands[15] was involved." "I asked the public prosecutor to share more facts with the general public, in order to enable myself to pick up my role as a citizen father. It was impossible for me to share emotions, when the most relevant questions by the public could not be answered. "	"I got in touch with the families from both sides. Even though I realized the father was the perpetrator. Both families were in shock."		Father and mother decided to commit suicide; father survived. Grandparents from both sides lived in same village.
		"There was a lot of uncertainty. We tried to inform the people as best as we could. We wrote information leaflets and handed them out door-to-door." "All parties involved came to the City Council, to explain what had happened and what they had done to contain the situation."		"The hardest thing is to keep up to speed with the media".	Remark by mayor: An incident never asks if it fits in your diary. People were informed and in the aftermath a gathering was held at the City Hall, to update people on what happened.

Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20070415 Jacobs	Cloud with hazardous particles in Helmond	No	Low	Low
	20070914 Boot	Accident with thirteen teens in Arkel	No	Low	High
	20070930 Bloemen[16]	Two young women die in an accident with a raft in Berkel	Yes (2)	Low	High

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[16]   Interview by Roy Johannink

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How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)**		
"I believe it is the duty of a mayor to reduce the uncertainty and impact of an incident and not fuel it." "It is a mayor's duty to contain the unrest. That is only possible when your information position is right." "During the crisis, you should already think about the impact an incident might have on citizens and victims."			"It is a difficult task to be informed with the same speed as the media."	
"I decided to take the lead in a complicated scenario, with children coming from three different municipalities, and the parents, children and schools which were involved."	"Later that day, I started to realize the impact the incident had on the teachers at the school where the children were heading to." "We placed an advertisement in the local newspaper in which we thanked the emergency workers and bystanders for their help."	"I went to the scene of the disaster. It is the choice between either going to City Hall and wait for information, or go to the scene and show your compassion. " "Informing the families was my first priority. We set up a gathering to inform everyone else later that day. " "Later on, we had a meeting where the Prosecution Officer explained the court case against the driver. In this way the children were informed before reading about it in the newspapers."	"Media were alarmed by the police. We organized a press conference in the afternoon. They kept asking for interviews, but we thought the priority should be with the children, the schools and their parents."	A group of teenagers bikes to school. They are hit by a car from the opposite direction. Thirteen teens are severely hurt.
"I went to the scene of the incident. We brought the survivors to the local fire brigade. I felt it was my duty to tell the women that their colleagues had died in the incident."	"As a mayor, you must realize that others are affected as well. I decided to visit the farmers near the weir, and the rental company where the women had rented the raft. The employees were truly distressed."	Since the women came from another municipality, the mayor contacts his colleague to guarantee some sort of aftercare for the women involved.		Two young women died at an accident with a raft on the Dutch stream "de Berkel". A big raft with 18 women on board descended the Berkel and capsized at one of the weirs. Psychosocial care was arranged for.

Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	200710 (Autumn 2007) Rodenboog	Pyromaniac in 't Zandt	No	High. The mayor is regarded as the one who is ultimately responsible for solving the quest for the pyromaniac, of course while working closely together with police forces, the public prosecutor and the military.	High
	20071022 Hekman[17] (deputy)	Fire in museum Amersfoort[18]	No	Low	Low

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[17]   Interview by Roy Johannink

[18]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armando_(artist)

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience **(*public speaking & remembrance*)**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals **(*victims and their families*)**		
	"I wanted to show my commitment. Since it took time to find the pyromaniac, the unrest among the population increased. Children slept badly, because they were scared new fires would appear." "We organized several meetings to discuss the situation [with the public]." "I expected the tolerance of people would decline, but they saw the police and military did their utmost to find the pyromaniac."	After the arrest of the pyromaniac, the mayor asked the community to support the parents of the pyromaniac, who lived in the same town where the fires occurred. "At the New Year's Reception, people thanked me for my role as a mayor under these difficult circumstances."	"When the man was arrested, the mood among policemen was euphoric. I realized the position of the man and his family and the drama they were facing. As such, I did not say we were 'happy'. I chose to say we were *relieved* instead." "I have been in touch with the family of the pyromaniac. I asked the community to support them."	From time to time, we updated the press.	Police arrested a man in connection with a spate of arson attacks in the village of 't Zandt. At least 17 fires were set in the village since August 2007, mainly in empty houses and barns.
	"I met the people of the area around the museum in our City Hall. Meeting them gave me quite a good impression of what was happening among the residents."	The mayor visits the area where the fire hit the museum. He speaks with residents. "A meeting with local residents was held. It is more emotional than the press conference. Residents appreciated that I informed them directly. They appreciated the mutual contacts, trust and our involvement. "		The facts on the approach of the local fire brigade are given in a press conference.	Mayor speaks with residents. The fire hit the museum. He does not emphasize his role as a citizen father; he just talked to people and wanted to get an impression of what happened.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20071105 Urlings	Possible case of mass hysteria at a pet shop in Hoogeveen	No	High. The mayor takes the decision to keep people in quarantine.	High
	20071212 Van den Bosch	Power outage in Zaltbommel	No	High, The mayor is seen as responsible for managing the impact of the crisis.	Low

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"People were brought to hospitals after they were decontaminated. As a mayor, you have to realize that there are more pleasant things in one's life than shower in the freezing cold on the order of a mayor."		"As part of our aftercare, we set up a meeting to inform the people who had been in quarantine. It gave us the opportunity to explain what we did and answer their questions."	Media were alerted by the developments in the pet shop. When the pet shop was put in quarantine, one of the journalists was not allowed to get out either. He gave a live report from within the quarantined area. "It does not really matter whether you do an interview with one journalist, or many." "When you respect the media, it is no problem to deal with them."	A young pet caiman was found dead in its terrarium in a pet shop in Hoogeveen. Shortly afterwards, 23 people fall ill. The most likely cause is mass hysteria.
	The mayor wants to be a citizen father and to lend a listening ear to his population. He feels constrained by the fact that he is supposed to join the regional crisis team, which consumes a lot of time. The regional focus is on crisis management whereas the local focus lies on the management of emotions and compassion.	"People were looking after each other. There was a strong sense of neighborliness and togetherness." "We wanted to facilitate people in the aftermath, in order to help them to get compensation for the outage."	"I wanted to put the priority on visiting the families and companies which were hurt by the outage."		On December 12, a Royal Netherlands Air Force AH-64 Apache Attack helicopter, crashes into High Voltage power lines. It results in a blackout affecting over 50,000 households. Zaltbommel and surrounding areas have no electricity for three days.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility **(low/high)**	Collective impact **(low/high)**
		Description of event **People died? Y/N**		
	20071224 Schouwenaar	Four children die in a fire in Arnemuiden Yes (4)	Low	High
	20080112 Reitsma	Death of a soldier from IJlst while on duty in Afghanistan Yes (1)	Low	High

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	"As a mayor, you do not visit victims and their families as a person, but as a representative of the community. I represent their mourning and sorrow."	"Always inform the people as fast as possible. Such as the bystanders, for example. When you provide information, you prevent rumors from spreading."	"I visited the parents on the evening of the fire. We could hardly talk. It's not important, when you realize the situation you are in. I showed compassion and lend a listening ear. But professional help is more important at that time. You come very close to the family; under those circumstances, it is better to return later."	"As long as you are genuine and sincere, you usually have a good understanding with the media."	Four girls aged between one and eight died in a fire in their parents' Chinese restaurant in Arnemuiden on Christmas Eve. The family lived above the restaurant, which was open at the time of the blaze. All the guests were evacuated safely.
	"In the aftermath, I became more practical. The community collected money for the family. I checked whether or not the family had to pay taxes for this contribution. Furthermore, we discussed what to do with all the bears and flowers in front of the restaurant. You should not decide on those kind of things out of emotion."	"We also informed the school and the parents of classmates of the girls. The school was supported by Victim Support Netherlands." "All people in the village were affected." "You cannot channel the collective emotions right away, but if you look for the needs, it is possible to deliver." "I also asked the churches to speak about the incident."	"I believe a mayor is supposed to join a funeral. Always. I just join a funeral, but usually they'll ask me. The Chinese family explicitly asked me to speak at the funeral and asked me to give words to the emotions of the community."		
	"The death of the soldier had an enormous impact on his family and our community." "Visiting the next of kin is one of the duties for a mayor under these kind of circumstances."	"We opened a book of condolences." The municipality supported the youth center, where all the friends of the soldier gathered. Those friends organized a silent march as well. The mayor visits the center. "All you need to do is listen and show compassion." In the City Council meeting, the mayor asked for a minute of silence in memory of the soldier.	"I visited the parents, even though the church and family are more important under these kind of circumstances." "You are confronted with all the emotions and the anger about the fact their son died. You can lend a listening ear." "In my visit to the parents, the main question was: what can we do to relief the situation for you." "Together with the family, we discussed their wishes and the way in which we could facilitate the funeral. They decided what they wanted. It was not up to the municipality to decide."	Media maintained a cautious attitude. "We asked media not to visit the neighborhood where his parents lived. They could ask the communications departments whenever they had a question." The mayor was 100% available for the media, which – according to him - lowered the pressure on the family.	

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20080314 Lonink	Fatal incident with a diver from the fire brigade Terneuzen[19]	Yes (1)	High. Fire brigade is part of local government.	High
	20080430 Lonink	Senseless violence in Zaamslag	Yes (1)	Low	High
	20080509 Kosmeijer (deputy) The first day after the fire, mayor Rijpstra was abroad. Kosmeijer was in charge as the first deputy mayor.	Fire with casualties among firemen in De Punt	Yes (3)	High. Fire brigade is part of local government.[20]	High

[19] https://www.onderzoeksraad.nl/en/onderzoek/1574/diving-accident-terneuzen

[20] The structure of Dutch fire brigades changed from municipal to regional fire brigades in January 2014.

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (**victims and their families**)		
		"People and media showed compassion with the fire brigade." "The evaluations and investigations afterwards were harsh. It takes a long time before the reports are presented."			A diver of the local fire brigade died during a mission.
	"In my press statement, I said that apart from grief and support we should not condemn each other, as the friends and family of both victim and perpetrator live in the same village." According to the mayor, his contact with the widow was crucial. She played an important role in preventing an escalation of the situation. "The sole appearance of a mayor has its immediate effect. Just 'being there' is of importance."	"We enabled the community to share their emotions. You should realize that there are subcategories within a larger community. No one should feel excluded. You have to make it possible for everyone to share their sorrows and emotions, for example by organizing a gathering."	The mayor was in contact with the widow, who asked others not to condemn.		At the Queens Day party, a man from Zaamslag, a small community in the municipality of Terneuzen, is killed in a fight. The perpetrator lives in Zaamslag as well.
	"Even though I was the deputy, I do not believe people regarded me as a substitute citizen father." "Under these kind of circumstances, the most important thing is to find the words which touch the families in their hearts." "Investigation reports cause turbulence in the community, as it revives all the memories of the terrible events."	The mayor spoke during the silent march, a memorial gathering with 6.000 participants. "We felt proud that so many people showed solidarity with the victims' families."	"We confirmed that three people died, without mentioning their names. Nonetheless, the families did not believe this was appropriate. They should have been informed first." "We visited the victims' families. It was a difficult task."	"On the one hand, your priority is with the families and informing them. On the other hand, you have to inform the press as well."	The way in which the families are being informed by the authorities is part of the deliberations of the crisis team as well.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20080509 Rijpstra[21] The first day after the fire, mayor Rijpstra was abroad. Kosmeijer was in charge as the first deputy mayor.	Fire with casualties among firemen in De Punt	Yes (3)	High. Fire brigade is part of local government.	High
	200809 (Autumn 2008) Cornelis	Unrest in Gouda	No	High	High
	20081101 Mikkers[22]	Sex offender in Veldhoven	No	High	High

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[21] Based on his contribution to remembrance book *'De Punt 9 mei 2008',* Municipality of Tynaarlo. Vries, 2009.

[22] Interview by Roy Johannink

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (**victims and their families**)		
	"I was abroad [in Switzerland]. But under these circumstances, you just want one thing: get back home."	"We visited the fire brigade. It was my duty to visit them."	"Together with our deputy, I visited the families. The most important thing is just to 'be there'. Nothing more and nothing less. Everyone understands you hardly have anything to offer. But you share you condolences on behalf of the family. You try to offer support."		The mayor explains that he feels it as his duty to support the fire brigade both in good times, when they win prizes, as well as in bad times like these.
	"As a mayor, I joined the fire brigade when they won prizes. I frequently visited the fire brigade, just because we were proud of them."	"We wanted to give the three firemen respect with a funeral with honors."			
		"A silent march was organized. Almost 6.000 people attended. It was impressive. People showed compassion. With each other, with the widows and families."			
	"Gouda became a vehicle for a wider problem. Colleagues, at work, at birthday parties and the like, asked people about the riots in our town. All because of the disproportional attention by media and members of parliament. I rebalanced the discussion and rebuilt commitment and trust."				After a series of incidents, bus drivers do not drive through a specific neighborhood in Gouda for a while. According to bus drivers, they were being spit on, threatened and robbed by mainly Moroccan youth. It gave the impression that there was an intense problem with Moroccan youth in Gouda.
	"I understood the emotions, but could not accept the paint bomb and anonymous letters. I wanted to show support towards both the community and the man's girlfriend, who lived in the same house."	"We organized a town hall meeting, to enable people to discuss the situation."	The mayor is in contact with the girlfriend of the pedophile. She feels supported.	The mayor does not actively seek the media, but they contact him. He gives an interview, but does not allow media to attend the gathering.	Paint bomb attack on home of a pedophile. Delivery of anonymous letters in neighborhood. Man was sentenced, but sentence did not yet come into effect.
	"I did not want to make the story bigger than strictly necessary."	At the end of the town hall meeting, someone summarizes the situation and compliments the municipality for its communications.	The mayor reads out a letter by the pedophile during the gathering, giving voice to the suspects side of the story as well.	Local press was subtler than national press, according to the mayor.	
				Looking backwards, the mayor says they should have supported the residents in their contacts with the media.	

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20081214 Boekhoven	Fire with two casualties in Workum	Yes (2)	Low	High
	20090209 Horseling	Threat of school shooting in Weesp	No	Low	Low
	20090225 Weterings	Plane crash of Turkish Airlines at Schiphol Airport[23]	Yes (9)	Low	Low

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[23]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_Airlines_Flight_1951

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"It is my duty, but do not underestimate the impact on a mayor himself." "Even though you cannot do a lot, it is valuable to be present [as a mayor]."	"We opened a book of condolences. It gives people a place to visit in remembrance." "We organized a gathering. Not only to mourn, but also to answer questions." "I contacted the school and asked if they needed any help. It is valuable when your support helps them to cope with the incident."	"I kept in touch with the parents involved. One and a half year later, they arranged a concert in our village, to thank the community for their support."		Two children died in a fatal fire. Parents left the community, but returned after rebuilding the house.
	After police informs the mayor about the threat of a school shooting, the mayor wants to inform the schools. 'I want to prevent the threat to cause any commotion.' The mayor wants to keep it low profile.	I wanted to be comforting towards the parents of the school. But I could not give too many details, as the investigation was still going on.		Media is alerted after a press release is issued. It becomes a media hype.	Pupils make a mass school shooting threat. They are arrested shortly afterwards.
		"No residents were among the victims of the plane crash. We did, however, organize a meeting for the people living nearby Schiphol Airport, as they were worried and felt unsafe. We understand their feelings were twofold. On the one hand, they were faced with the risk. On the other hand, they agree that Schiphol is an important economic power in the region."	"It takes time before the Disaster Victim Identification knows who died. I tried to clarify this to the Turkish wife of a man who was still not identified. I told her she should take into account that her husband had died in the accident, even though we could not formally confirm it yet." "Some hospitals do not want to share victim information, based on privacy regulations. I believe the privacy of patients is not more important than the principle that you should be able to inform their families as fast but adequately as possible."		

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N	
	20090226 Bezuijen (deputy)	Plane crash of Turkish Airlines at Schiphol Airport [24]	Yes (9)	Low	Low
	200904 (Spring 2009) Horselenberg	People randomly stabbed in Lelystad	Yes (1)	High (Attributed responsibility for solving the crisis, together with police and public prosecutor)	High
	20090430 De Graaf	Attack on royal family in Apeldoorn[25]	Yes (8)	Low	High

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[24] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkish_Airlines_Flight_1951

[25] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_attack_on_the_Dutch_Royal_Family

[26] See 20090225 Weterings

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (victims and their families)**		
	The crisis team mainly focused on the international and diplomatic contacts and trying to obtain the passenger list of the Turkish Airlines flight. The mayor was chairman of the crisis team. In the aftermath, he connected with local citizen to discuss their fears of living close to an international airport.	"In my statement, I directed some words to the nearby residents, who were frightened as a plane had crashed in their immediate surroundings. We organized town hall meetings with residents in the aftermath of the crisis, to discuss their fears."		"We organized a press conference, not only to provide the necessary information, but also in order to decrease the media pressure at the site of the disaster"	The nine victims in the crash did not come from his own municipality. His focus is on the impact on the citizens who live nearby the airport and are shocked about the plane crash.
	"The man stabbed people randomly. A public alarm was generated by this situation. I tried to react proportionally and to not overreact."	"Friends and family organized a silent march. I did not join. As an alternative, I chose to visit the next of kin at their home." "I involved the city council as well, to update them during the time we had not captured the man who stabbed people in our community."	"I showed the family of the victim who died that I cared."		Four people were stabbed with a knife by a mystery attacker in Lelystad. One victim died. The perpetrator is arrested in February 2010.
	"Intuitively, I chose to give priority to the victims and their families. We needed to be able to give an overview of the people who were hurt and to which hospitals they were transferred as soon as possible."	"We organized a memorial session later that week. The royal family attended as well. They were placed on the balcony, so that they would not attract all attention." "Emergency workers and victims met each other after the memorial gathering . I was touched to see how they re-united."	"We informed our colleagues when we knew people from other municipalities were involved. It was a lesson we learnt from the Poldercrash[26]" "We pledged to present all evaluations and investigations on one and the same day. According to us, it was the least thing we could do for the victims."	In press conferences, the mayor shows his empathy. "In regular exercises, journalists usually ask you nasty questions. In this case, all journalists at the press conferences had been at the scene when the attack happened. There was mutual understanding between us and the journalists." "I did not want to do any 1-on-1 interviews, as it might suggest that I gave priority to my own ego instead of to the victims."	A man drives his car at high speed into a parade, which included Queen Beatrix, Prince Willem-Alexander and other members of the Royal Family. The vehicle drove through people lining the street watching the parade. No members of the Royal Family were harmed. It was the first attack on the Dutch Royal Family in modern times Eight people, including the driver, die.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20090928 Boekhoven	Fire with one casualty in Workum	Yes (1)	Low	Low
	20091003 Hoekema	Fatal car accident in Wassenaar	Yes (2)	Low	High
	20091012 Van Eijk	Bankruptcy of large employer in Wognum	No	Low	High

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"A 3-year old boy who was on holidays in our community died. There was hardly any impact on the community. I tried to support the parents."		"I supported the parents and the fire brigade. But compared to the fire where two children from our community died, the collective impact was low."		A three year old German boy dies in a fatal fire, while on holidays in the community of Workum.
	"You should not make mourning too collective, and bypass the individuals." "I asked if it was necessary to come to the scene of the incident, but I was not needed over there." "Two youngsters from my city died. I am sure the case would have been different if the two youngsters had been from elsewhere. There was a close connection with our town and I knew the social context." "I took decisions intuitively."	"The youngsters had graduated from school just a couple of months before the accident. Their former high school fulfilled a central role in the aftermath. Otherwise, the local government might have done more." "People put flowers and little teddy bears. I discussed this with the parents and we decided to bring some of the flowers to the graves on the day of the funeral." "I attended both funerals. You attend as a representative of the community in mourning." "A mayor should weigh the collective impact of emotions."	"I visited the parents at home. They were in shock. There is no manual for these circumstances. You show sympathy and share the bewilderment. It is an essential part of our job. You just have to be there as a citizen father." "From time to time, I am still in touch with the parents."	No remarks made on his relationship with the media.	A group of five youngsters gets involved in a car crash. Two of them die. The group comes from the town of Wassenaar, where they grew up. They all left high school just four months before. As such, their former school is still a focal point in the process of mourning during the aftermath. The mayor asked rescue services whether or not it was necessary to visit the scene of the accident. It was not needed. Later on, he visited the local fire brigade, to show his sympathy towards them as well.
	"I cared for the people after the bankruptcy of the DSB Bank. The community was thrown into an emotional crisis." "I wanted to lend a listening ear to the entire community, since it was affected at large by the bankruptcy." "We set up a meeting, in order to share emotions, but also to take a step forward and inform people on what could be next in terms of jobs and personal impact."				A regional but large bank went bankrupt in 2009 in the middle of the economic crisis. This resulted in the loss of hundreds of jobs at the head office. Other employers who were dependent on the bank, got into trouble as well. Together with other mayors from the area, the mayor starts to lobby to find alternatives for the employees.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N	
	20091029 Barske	Large fire near elderly home Stein	No	Low	Low
	20091106 Van Delft-Jaarsma	Cloud of hazardous particles in Dronrijp	No	Low	Low
	201001 (Winter 2010) Rijsdijk	Outbreak East-Asian longhorned beetle in Boskoop	No	High, even though the main responsibility was with the Ministry of Agriculture.	High

How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (**public speaking & remembrance**)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
The cause of the fire was possibly arson. The mayor says: "The outside world does not always make a clear distinction between the public prosecutor and the mayor. For many people, these are more or less part of the same authority'.	Focus primarily on residents and the way in which the municipality was able to help them in a practical manner.	The municipality opened a care center. The municipality supported the people in their practical needs.		Fire in the middle of the night. Flat with elderly people needs to be evacuated.
People informed each other instantly, even before the public warning pole alarmed the residents.	"We set up a meeting for the residents of Dronrijp. I did not make the story prettier than it was. I said I could imagine the people were shocked since I was also shocked myself." "We were able to answer many questions the people had. The cloud had no consequences for the people in the community."			Due to a failure at the local milk factory, a cloud of nitric acid is released. The people of Dronrijp receive the alarm of this hazardous cloud too late.
The beetle had an enormous impact on the businesses in Boskoop. As the mayor says: "There is a history of 600 years with plants in this community". The mayor becomes a spokesperson on behalf of his local businesses and lobbies with the ministry of Agriculture for the right quarantine measures.	"I have always been a mayor with a local focus. The Ministry explained what needed to be done. I supported them, but they told their part of the story." "I operated as a mayor who builds bridges between the ratio of the ministry and EU regulations, and the emotion of the nurseries."	"I visited a lot of nurseries. To lend a listening ear. But also with ordinary people, who also had to remove trees and plants. When you have to remove the birth tree that was planted on the day you were born, it sets off a lot of emotions in the family. I had never realized this before."		An outbreak of a beetle in an area full of nurseries. The Dutch Plant Health Association implements a 2 km quarantine zone.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	**People died? Y/N**		
	20100112 Van Dok	Impact of earthquake in Haiti on community of Niedorp	Yes (3)	Low	High

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	"The couple was actively involved in the local community. We decided, together with the family, to organize a remembrance ceremony. Almost 600 people attended." "People expect 'something' from their mayor, especially when there is an emotional impact." "Under difficult circumstances, people look at their mayor. They wait for the mayor's response." "There are two sides. The emotional impact and the more practical needs. We can support people with both." "As a mayor, you can get things in motion. They will follow you, after you take the first step. As a mayor, you have to anticipate on such actions."	"We organized the gathering on behalf of the family." A remembrance gathering was preferred to a silent march. "In the remembrance gathering, close friends and families were surrounded by a wider circle of people from our town. That little detail made sure it was manageable for the family." "I spoke during the remembrance gathering. I referred to the many friends the couple had made during the three years they lived in our community."	"I visited the grandparents of the couple who died. We supported them in their material needs. We also discussed what was collectively needed." "Many people find it difficult to be in the center of all collective attention. We managed to create a combination of collective mourning and their personal more intimate mourning as a family. It is our duty to take care of that process."	No remarks on the role of the media.	A family from Niedorp visits Haiti to adopt a child, when the earthquake strikes. They died in the disaster.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20100308 Meijerman	Fire with casualties among firemen in Veendam	Yes (1)	High. Fire brigade is part of the municipality.	High
	20100409 Eenhoorn[27]	Fatal shooting in a shopping mall Alphen aan den Rijn[28]	Yes (7)	Low	High

[27]   Based on his own memoires in Eenhoorn, Herman Bastiaan. *´Drie minuten...: een persoonlijk relaas over het schietdrama in Alphen aan den Rijn´*. Kluwer, Alphen aan den Rijn, 2011.

[28]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphen_aan_den_Rijn_shopping_mall_shooting

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards** individuals (***victims and their families***)		
	Based on earlier experiences in De Punt (Kosmeijer/Rijpstra), the municipality involves the family in the organization of the remembrance. In the memorial service, the mayor explicitly pays attention to the position of the family members. "I wanted to keep the situation as small as possible and as large as needed." "People expect you to take the lead. Show who takes the decisions and who is in charge."	Mayor visits fire brigade to join them in mourning. In the aftermath, the mayor emphasizes the need to coordinate evaluations and investigations, in order to lighten the pressure of research committees on the firemen who were at the scene when their colleague died. "Advisors emphasize the role of 'citizen father', although it is not the only role. In the end, a mayor is chairing a crisis team as well, with all his own legal responsibilities. In other words, being a mayor is more than being a citizen father alone."	Mayor joins the fire fighter's wife to jointly tell the terrible news of his death to their children. "It was a funeral with full honors, but in line with the preferences of the family."	A press conference was set up in the morning, where news about the fatal incident is confirmed.	A fire fighter is killed in a fire caused by arson.
	"During crises, crisis communication is even more important than crisis management." "People responded by saying that they regained their trust in government." "Even when you are emotional yourself, people expect you to take the lead." "I tried to balance taking care, caring for the families and supporting them in their grief."	"We had a national memorial. I believe it was a good thing to do, as it showed that many, many people supported the victims." "I attended several funerals." "Our communications strategy consisted of: we care, we act and we provide perspective."	"I visited the parents of the gunman. In a certain way, they were victimized as well. I understand that people got angry with the parents of the gunman. In the end, it was them who raised him. But they have done as much as they could. They could not prevent the shooting." "We also facilitated talks with the people from the neighborhood and the parents [of the shooter]. Just to ease the situation."		Shooting by a young gunman who lived in Alphen aan den Rijn. Parents live in the same town.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20100414 Hafkamp	Dune fires in Schoorl and Bergen	No	High	High
	20100504 Snijders	Murder case in Ruinen	Yes (1)	Low	High
	20100702 Verhoeven	Forest fire at Strabrechtse Heide	No	Low	Low

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How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)**		
"We had to evacuate the area, because it was unclear how the fire would develop. In my role as a mayor, I needed to convince people to leave their houses and that the area would be protected."	"Many people were really concerned about the impact on the nature of the dunes. " "We organized a meeting a couple of days after the fire. It enabled us to explain the measures we had taken and why it had been necessary to evacuate. We were able to answer most of the questions." "Everyone was concerned, especially because we tend to believe that it is a case of arson. "			A fire in the sand dune area near Schoorl and Bergen destroys 150 hectares of typical dune landscape. The fire is an eminent threat on the village.
"We assessed how the village would react to the fact that the murder case appeared to be solved after 17 years". "We decided to organize a meeting. People were relieved the case was finally solved."	"Everyone was in solidarity with the parents. We realized we were relieved on the one hand, but were in tears as well. That is what I shared with the community during the meeting we had."	"I contacted the parents of Andrea, the girl who was murdered in 1993, just before the general meeting. I asked for their permission to organize this session and they believed it was the right thing to do, indeed." "During those conversations, you realize what it means to be a mayor. You not only express your personal emotions, but represent an entire community."	"In our press conference, the Public Prosecutor explained what had happened. I focused primarily on the impact on the community."	Man was arrested on suspicion of the murder of a well-known local girl in 1993.
			"I should have talked to the news station earlier on, in order to inform the residents on what was going on and what the emergency workers and crisis team were doing."	No evacuation order for citizens, which resulted in relatively small impact on society. The people were mostly curious and wanted to see the damage with their own eyes.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20100806 Ravestein	Death of several babies in Nij Beets	Yes (4)	Low	High
	201010 (October 2010) Broertjes	Preventive measures for outbreak of Q-fever in Beilen	No	Low	Low
	201109 (Autumn 2011) Slinkman	Martens in Tolkamer	No	Low	Low

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)**		
	"I had similar questions as the residents, mainly "what had happened?""	"We wanted to enable residents to ask questions. How was this possible? Why did no one notice? People were just astonished that this had happened. People were saddened, but not angry. Disbelieve was the overwhelming emotion. People were just supportive to both the mother and her family." "We organized a gathering and delivered a leaflet door-to-door. The gathering enabled people to ask their questions and share emotions. Victim Support Netherlands attended the meeting as well." "We made posters with the phone numbers people could call for psychosocial care and displayed them in public places."	Neighbors and the community helped to dispose the flowers in front of the house where the babies were found. "I was in contact with the family of the mother involved, knowing their amazing circumstances. When people appreciate my company, I'll be there for them."	Media came to the small town of Nij Beets. News stations interviewed the mayor on what had happened and her experiences with the community gathering. "I could have chosen to join national television shows, but I felt my support was needed in the community. The community was my first priority."	A woman has been arrested on suspicion of killing four of her babies and hiding them in suitcases in the attic. Schools and residents were supported with psychosocial care.
	"I wanted to be there for the people, lend a listening ear. People are not only angry and full of grief, but have many questions as well."	"As long as there was no fear among the general public, there was no need to organize a gathering."	"I visited the farmers who were hurt by the outbreak of Q-fever." "I was a farmer myself. As a mayor, however, I also had to comply with the guidelines from the national government. The farmers accepted my difficult position."	"Media wanted to take pictures at the affected farms. We managed to keep them away whenever farmers were against this."	Disease among goats. Apart from the farms involved, the general impact in this area was small.
	"Martens built their nests in a primary school. The pupils had to move to an alternative location. I supported the school at the meeting they organized for the parents. It was clear there was no alternative."	"I supported the population in their quest against the martens. It is a difficult situation, since martens are a protected species. But they become s nuisance. I became the spokesperson for the population and tried to solve the situation."			

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event		Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N		
	20120313 Van de Vondervoort	Fatal bus incident with children in Switzerland[29]	Yes (28)	Low	High
	201205 (May 2008) Kompier	Protest in a camp of approximately 300 asylum seekers outside Ter Apel refugee centre	No	High. The mayor was responsible for the decision to dismantle the camp.	Low
	20121212 Giskes	Stranded humpback whale near Texel	No	Low. But responsible for managing the crisis.	Low

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[29]   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sierre_coach_crash

	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations on aspects of meaning making	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the collective audience (*public speaking & remembrance*)	How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)		
	"The Belgian government was involved, but almost silently. They did what was needed to do, in the interest of the parents, brothers and sisters. It is something we can learn from our Belgian colleagues: How can we approach a crisis from a human perspective, without being guided by the interests of the media, our own reputational interests nor the threat of being held accountable afterwards."	"The municipality of Lommel organized a collective remembrance gathering. The Dutch crown prince attended the gathering as well. They managed to balance the collective aspect with the human dimension. It was tailored to people's needs."	"I was in contact with the family of the girl who was most likely killed in the accident. I also was in contact with the school, fire brigade, police and the embassy." "Due to the international dimension of the crisis, we tried to solve any bureaucratic issues as smoothly as possible." "In my visit to the parents and grandparents, I shared my condolences on behalf of the community."	Dutch press attended the press conference in Belgium. According to the mayor, they behaved differently from their Belgian counterparts. Less emotion, and chasing for accountability and responsibility.	A bus carrying school teachers and pupils crashed into a wall in the Sierre Tunnel in Switzerland. Most children were from a school in Lommel (Belgium), close to the Dutch border. One girl lived in The Netherlands in the community of Bergeijk.
	Mayor was in contact with spokespersons of group of Iranian and Somali refugees. Visited camp site several times, but mostly from a public order perspective.			Media came to camp site, interviewed refugees and recorded the dismantling of the camp.	Iranian and Somali asylum seekers wanted immigration minister Leers to re-examine their cases. People from own community were not affected; took many decisions, but hardly any as citizen mother.
	The mayor was not so much the citizen mother, but rather a 'figure head' or spokesperson on behalf of the crisis operation. The crisis had no impact on the citizens of her own community.	People organized a silent march in remembrance of the humpback whale, which had ultimately died.		Media wanted to report on the whale, but they were not allowed to film. Only one camera team was allowed to record the event. It led to some uproar among journalists.	A humpback whale strands on a sand bank near Texel. The beach is cordoned off. The mayor was responsible for managing the crisis, together with other governmental institutions.

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Appendix A. Continued

Nr	Date *yyyymmdd* Name of mayor	Event	Attributed Political responsibility (low/high)	Collective impact (low/high)
		Description of event	People died? Y/N	
	20130101 Waanders	Fatal accident at New Year bonfire in Raard	Yes (1)	Low	High
	20140521 Gerbrandy	Death of a girl during sporting event Twijzel	Yes (1)	High. The municipality owns the sporting facilities.	High
	20140717 Mak[30]	Impact of MH17 on community of Neerkant	Yes (6)	Low	High

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[30] Based on his contribution to remembrance book by Slachtofferhulp Nederland, Smilde, Miek.
 'Er is geen draaiboek voor verdriet – de ramp met vlucht MH17´.
 Slachtofferhulp Nederland, Utrecht, 2016.

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	How mayors deliver on meaning making			Role of media	[General remarks by author]
	Defining the mayor's role and considerations **on aspects of meaning making**	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards the** collective audience (***public speaking & remembrance***)	**How did the mayor operationalize meaning making towards individuals (*victims and their families*)**		
	"The community showed its resilience. Everyone was trying to help. We set up a meeting, in order to share emotions and answer the questions people had. Most of them were just shocked about what had happened."	"We took the initiative to set up a plan for aftercare. Together with the school, psychosocial care, and the police we discussed what was needed. We provided aftercare, without insisting people should use it." "We set up an e-mail correspondence, in order to update everyone when necessary."	"The community realized that it was not the car driver´s fault either. She had not taken any alcohol. She was just blinded by the fire. On behalf of the community, I contacted her and expressed the feelings of the community."	"We had several press conferences. We also politely asked the media to keep distance from the church, where we had a memorial service one week after the accident. They respected our request." "The press did not chase people who were not willing to talk to the media."	Around 40 people were watching the New Year bonfire when the car drove into them. One man dies.
	"In every [crisis] training they teach you to stay away from the scene of the disaster. But I went there, because I wanted to show my compassion. In as far as possible, I wanted to help them."	"The mayor visits the sporting facilities, but also the schools involved." "I did not realize during the day, but the crisis had a tremendous impact on our own people. They were parents and many of them volunteered at the sporting event when the roof collapsed. Many people at the City Hall are part of the same local community. It leaves its mark on them."	The mayor visits the parents several times. According to the mayor, the relationship between him and the family is difficult from time to time, as the municipality is the owner of the dug out and is responsible for its maintenance.	"We organized a press conference to update them on the developments. "	A 10-year old girl passed away after the roof of a dug out on a sports field collapsed. The girl dies from her injuries in hospital.
	"We were all in dismay. But those are also the moments a community shows its strength. The people in the entire country shared their sorrow after we had had our first shock to what had happened." "As a mayor, I look back with pride and am satisfied with the way in which we managed to cope with the tragedy. We managed to stay together, help each other and incorporate the family in our community and our hearts.	"We shared our sorrow and listened to each other." A committee of residents took the initiative for a remembrance meeting. Furthermore, the community set up a monument in our town. Consisting of six benches, representing the six members of the Wals family who had died in the incident.			

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Decision Making in Times of Crisis:
A Simulation Study on Complexity
among 135 Dutch Mayors

ABSTRACT

This study assesses the complexity experienced by public leaders in times of crisis. We examined the influence of collective impact and political responsibility on the perceived complexity of crisis-related decisions. For this purpose, we used a computerized vignette study. The simulation contained four real-life crisis situations, each presenting four dilemmas with differing levels of collective impact and political responsibility. Dutch mayors (n=135) rated the perceived complexity of these 16 dilemmas. Contrary to our hypothesis, perceived complexity was neither associated with collective impact and political responsibility levels, nor with age, gender or time in office. Instead, the results showed that as soon as it became more difficult to take the interests of all citizens, network partners and other stakeholders into account, mayoral decision making became increasingly complicated as well. Thus, what mayors consider complex appears to be related to challenges in crisis communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Existing research on decision making in public environments tends to focus on the context of policy decisions (Avellanda 2013). In response, this study seeks to attain a better understanding of the complexity of public leadership during a crisis, a type of event that occurs in complex contexts under extreme conditions. The overall objective is to uncover key phenomena and relations that threaten stakeholders' expectancies (Coombs 2015) but that might not otherwise be revealed (Haerem et al. 2011). When crises such as airplane crashes, hurricanes, terrorist acts or floods occur, public leaders must make decisions on issues that they do not encounter on a daily basis (Boin, 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius 2016), and do so within a context of time pressure, uncertainty, and necessary coordination with other actors (Ansell, Boin, and 't Hart 2014). Meanwhile, context requires public leaders to "read" the situation in order to adapt their standard or preferred leadership style to one appropriate to the specific crisis (De Vries 2016).

According to Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1997), complexity is defined by contradictions both within and beyond the crisis team, where advisors and stakeholders share divergent perceptions, interpretations, and interests, which may create difficulties given the need for resolute and effective responses to a severe threat (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997). Christensen et al. (2016) present this as a mixed order within and between partly conflicting capacity dimensions, such as between horizontal and vertical coordination; between delivery capacity and analytical capacity; between various legitimacy dimensions such as input (resources), throughput (procedures), and output (results); and between capacity and legitimacy. Although complexity research is evolving in promising directions, current insights tend to focus on the organizational level, and research on complexity is fragmented with regard to public leadership specifically (Crosby 2018). The organizational level poses unique challenges, yet complexity is not restricted to the government agencies involved. Rather, public leaders also face particular challenges, as they may need to overcome institutional dilemmas on a personal level. Their decisions may depend on personal preferences, as decision-making styles can be related to specific differences in social orientation (Geisler and Allwood 2018).

Ultimately, a public leader's personal deliberations in times of crisis are close to what United States President Truman once popularized: "*The buck stops here.*" This study is guided by Truman's remark about dealing with dilemmas and accepting ultimate responsibility for the decisions that need to be made. The term "dilemma" refers to a "tension such as that each competing alternative [of the dilemma] poses clear advantages and disadvantages" (Smith and Lewis, 2011, 396).

Given that public leaders are supposed to make strategic decisions, and the study of public administration in general should aim to analyze how public administrators make decisions in the face of dilemmas (O'Kelly and Dubnick 2006), this study takes the complexity of crisis-related dilemmas on a personal level as the central perspective. It

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seeks to provide an insight into the ways in which public leadership changes when the context moves from simplicity to complexity (Vogel and Masal 2015). As it is likely that some decisions are perceived as less complex than others, the following research question is posed in order to tackle the complexity associated with Truman's statement about responsibility during a crisis: *Under what crisis-related circumstances do public leaders value their ultimate and personal responsibility for decisions as complex?*

2. HYPOTHESES

Whereas a relatively simple context may require only a straightforward response, a more complicated context like a crisis requires expertise to judge the potential effects of choices (Snowden and Boone 2007). Expertise can be built throughout a career, bringing us to our first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1 **(H1)**: When confronted with crisis-related decisions, public leaders who are older, have spent more years in office and govern a relatively large municipality perceive their decisions in crisis situations as less complex compared to their counterparts.*

Earlier studies have demonstrated that public leaders are subject to conflicting interests across the people and stakeholders they serve (Jong and Dückers 2018; Resodihardjo and Carroll 2018). Indeed, public leaders may find themselves in conflicting situations such as the European migration crisis or public order issues in Charlottesville and Ferguson, as well as in everyday small-scale incidents that receive less media attention but necessitate similar forms of leadership. As an example, following a crisis, a group of citizens may seek to hold a memorial gathering without the support of the next of kin or other groups within the municipality. One of the tasks of public leaders is to balance such needs on a societal level on the one hand, and the expectations of the people involved on the other (Jong and Duckers 2018). This brings us to our second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2 **(H2)**: Public leaders consider decision making in a context of high collective impact more complex than decisions with low collective impact, as the potential for conflicting interests within society increases.*

Crises challenge the competence of the institutional guardians of security, i.e., the state and its political-administrative leadership ('t Hart and Boin, 2001). Various case studies demonstrate that the aftermath of a crisis typically presents leaders with new and complex challenges that may threaten their political survival (Ansell, Boin, and 't Hart 2014; Schmidt 2019). When taking potential political accountability into account, this brings us to our third and final hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3 **(H3)**: Public leaders consider decision making in a context of high political responsibility more complex than decisions with low political responsibility.*

3. METHOD

In order to assess the perceived complexity of decision making, we use the Public Meaning-Making Model developed by Jong (2017). This model defines four different roles in meaning making, contingent on the collective impact of a crisis (H2) and the political responsibility of the public leader (H3). These dimensions are potentially important drivers of complexity, as described in the hypothesis.

In his model, Jong (2017) defines the roles of the public leader as a mourner-in-chief, buddy, advocate or orchestrator. As a mourner-in-chief, mayors are expected to deliver on meaning making by attending public memorial services and community activities. As a buddy, the role of the mayor is similar, but (s)he primarily focuses on meaning making toward affected groups rather than on society as a whole. The advocate uses meaning making to speak on behalf of citizens, presents him/herself as their spokesperson or lobbyist, and puts pressure on other stakeholders to solve the crisis at hand. Finally, the orchestrator is faced with a high collective display of emotions, while his/her perceived responsibility for the (cause of the) crisis is considerable as well.

When applied to the framework presented (Jong 2017), one might expect that in situations in which the perceived, collective and emotional impact of a situation (H2) and/or the perceived political responsibility attributed to the public leader are high (H3), crisis-related decisions will be experienced as more complex. This is particularly true in the case of the orchestrator, as the public leader must negotiate both a high collective impact and substantial attributed (political) responsibility.

Vignette study

A computerized vignette study with four crisis-related scenarios was used to test our hypotheses. The study made use of the *Mayor's Game* (Burgemeestersgame), a Dutch game that provides online strategic dilemma training for crisis management scenarios using a serious game format (van de Ven, Stubbé and Hrehovcsik 2014). Dilemmas for this simulation and previous scenarios are based or founded on real crisis situations in the Netherlands, which were shared by mayors in interviews and meetings with the Dutch Association of Mayors. This context is highly pertinent, as experimental studies are most compelling when they are tested in relevant environments (Druckman et al. 2006). In one of the early tests of the game with an actual target audience, participants indicated that the game afforded them the opportunity to practice responding to dilemmas and scenarios that they perceived as being true to their role and experience as policy makers (van de Ven, Stubbé and Hrehovcsik 2014).

In this experiment, scenarios and dilemmas were presented in a context in which one of the four meaning-making roles (*mourner-in-chief, buddy, advocate,* or *orchestrator*) is applicable. As an example, the *mourner-in-chief* scenario provides four dilemmas that are

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all presented within a context of high collective impact and low political responsibility. In this particular case, the dilemmas were presented in a context in which the public leader had to make crisis-related decisions in the aftermath of a fatal car accident that was affecting his/her community. Participants played the game individually after logging in using a personal code. The game was played in Dutch, and approximately 30 minutes were required to complete the 16 dilemmas. Table 1 summarizes the roles, scenarios and dilemmas (for a complete overview of the 16 dilemmas we refer to table 4 and the translated scenario in appendix I).

Within each scenario, participants received valuable but conflicting information and argumentations from virtual advisory team members (the crisis management advisor, the town clerk, the head of communications, and the police, as explained in figure 1) in order to simulate the varied perceptions of stakeholders, as mentioned by Rosenthal and Kouzmin (1997). Participants were free to ignore such input. Within each scenario, participants had to decide how to handle four dilemmas in a critical timeframe (with a total of 16 dilemmas).

For the purpose of the present study, participants were recruited from among Dutch mayors to ensure that all respondents had personal experience in public leadership. Each participant played the same scenarios but in a random order. In order to answer hypothesis 1, data regarding age, gender, time spent in office and size of municipality were gathered from each participant. In terms of days in office, one's entire career as mayor was considered, including service in previous municipalities. All mayors gave their informed consent.

Participants
All Dutch mayors (395) were invited to play the game online during the holiday period, between 13 July and 7 September 2017. Given that some mayors were in transition during this period, the number of mayors (395) exceeded the number of municipalities in the Netherlands (388). A total of 135 mayors participated in the game (34.2%). In the introduction to the scenarios, the participants were asked to pretend to be a mayor of a town of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, because most mayors began their careers in small towns and would therefore be able to relate to a settlement of this size. It should be acknowledged that experiences with the *Mayor's Game* over the past 10 years indicate that all mayors find it rather easy to imagine that the decisions they are required to make are applicable to their current situation, even when their own municipality is larger than the town used in the gaming environment.

TABLE 1: Roles, scenarios and dilemmas

Role	Scenario	Dilemmas in scenario
Mourner-in-chief (where public leaders attend public memorial services, community activities, and visit victims and their families). Contains dilemmas *hockey* 1 – 4.	***Scenario hockey*** Two youngsters die in a car accident. They are well-known members of the local hockey club. The club holds a memorial to commemorate them.	Dilemmas are based on the stance a mayor takes toward the sporting club. Does (s)he set up a public memorial or does (s)he just support the sporting club in their own grief. Also, the mayor is asked to what degree (s)he supports the youngster who caused the car crash.
Orchestrator (bridging public, personal and political interests, anticipating the political aftermath). Contains dilemmas *riots* 1 – 4.	***Scenario riots*** A thirty-year-old man from St Paul is killed by a police bullet. A demonstration against police violence is organized. According to protesters, policemen have a short fuse and shoot whenever there is the slightest criticism. Some protesters come from the neighborhood, while others join them from other parts of the country.	Dilemmas are based on the stance a mayor takes toward the family of the man killed by the police. Also, questions arise about the communicative impact of curfews and cancelling a friendly football match under these tense circumstances.
Buddy (meaning making towards affected sub-groups within society, as the impact of a crisis is only felt by a smaller community). Contains dilemmas *train* 1 – 4.	***Scenario train*** A local train crashes into a car with two German tourists and their three-year-old son. The son dies instantly. You are shocked when you hear the news from the police. It is the second deadly accident in three years.	Dilemmas are based on the involvement toward the tourist family and the owner of the camping site. Also, mayors are asked whether or not they would close down the dangerous railway crossing.
Advocate (public leader uses meaning making to speak on behalf of the citizens, presents himself as their spokesperson or lobbyist and puts pressure on other stakeholders). Contains dilemmas *power failure* 1 – 4.	***Scenario power failure*** During winter, your town is hit by a major power failure. Due to a transformer explosion at a utility switching station, St Paul is expected to be left without power for a number of days. The failure occurs at a time when temperatures are close to freezing point during the day.	Dilemmas are based on media exposure and whether the mayor would appear on a television talk show, or alternatively stay at home and join his/her community. Also, the mayor is asked whether or not (s)he publicly expresses his/her disappointment in the director of the electricity company.

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FIGURE 1. Translated example of dilemma 'contact board' in the scenario of mourner-in-chief

Measures

Once participants had solved a dilemma, they were asked to rate its complexity on a three-point scale (simple=-1, neutral=0, complex=1).

Analysis

We first computed the complexity scores of the 16 dilemmas. Based on the results of the Shapiro-Francia test of normality, we concluded that the assumption of normality concerning the complexity score had not been violated.

A series of regression analysis was conducted to assess the associations between collective impact and political responsibility on the one hand, and reported complexities on the other. In model 1 we first assessed the extent to which the characteristics of the mayors predicted reported complexity (Model 1).

In model 2 we added predictor variables reflecting the y-axis (low vs. high collective impact) and x-axis (low vs. high political responsibility) of the Public Meaning-Making Model to test hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively. To this end, a dummy variable was created to compare the average complexity of the eight high collective impact dilemmas with the eight low collective impact dilemmas. Similarly, a dummy was computed to compare the average complexity of the eight high political responsibility dilemmas with the eight low political responsibility dilemmas.

In model 3, we combined model 1 with three dummy variables to compare the complexity scores of the dilemmas belonging to the *buddy*, the *orchestrator* and the *advocate* to the *mourner-in-chief*. This model enabled us to test hypothesis 3 and to ascertain whether certain contexts were deemed more complex than others.

The *mourner-in-chief* was randomly selected as a reference for the other three contexts. As an extra check in case a particular scenario turned out to be more complex, we decided to compare the four dilemma scores of that scenario with the other 12 dilemmas. Akin to the previous models, this was performed in a new model containing the characteristics of the mayors and a dummy for each of the four dilemmas belonging to the more complex scenario. This was because we did not want to misinterpret one or two dilemma effects for a scenario effect (model 4, if applicable).

Finally, given that mayors' reports on the complexity of the 16 dilemmas did not constitute independent responses, it was important to apply multilevel analysis. The 16x135=2160 dilemma complexity scores were nested in 135 mayors, rendering it meaningful and even necessary to verify whether differences in complexity were attributable to differences between mayors that were not directly measured. In the final model we took the multilevel structure of the data into account.

A deviance test was used to compare each model with its predecessor; deviance can be regarded as a measure of lack of fit between model and data, with the larger the deviance (-2 loglikelihood; IGLS), the poorer the fit to the data. It is a tool to assess whether each subsequent model leads to a substantial reduction in deviance. All analyses were performed in Stata version 13 (StataCorp LP).

4. RESULTS

Participants

In our experiment, the average age of participants is 56 years (compared to 57 years for Dutch mayors in general), while 21% of participants are female (compared to 23% in general). Although age can be deemed an indication of personal life experience, experience of a participant as mayor (days in office) says more about the extent to which the respondents were familiar with a mayor's role and institutional and social work setting. The size of a municipality can be connected to perceptions of complexity, because it is likely that mayors of larger municipalities are more regularly confronted with the dilemmas incorporated within the scenarios than are their colleagues in smaller communities. Furthermore, mayors in larger cities might have to deal more often with complex problems linked to every aspect of public life (including education, health care, infrastructure, economic development, livelihoods, and safety) than their colleagues from smaller municipalities.

TABLE 2. Distributional Information and Correlations

	Distributional information		
	N	**Mean**	**Min-Max**
Age (Year of birth)	135	1962	1981-1949
Gender (0 = men; 1 = women)	135	.21	0-1
Days in office	135	2766.82	22-10442
Inhabitants	135	30747.24	941-182304

Note. N = Number of responses, Min-Max = Minimum and maximum value,
IQR = Inter-quartile range.
* *p* < 0.05. ** *p* < 0.01. *** *p* < 0.001.

The average complexity score assigned by the mayors to the 16 dilemmas is -0.20 (simple=-1, neutral=0, complex=1; IQR: 1; N = 2160). The characteristics of the mayors and intercorrelations are presented in table 2. Most of the participants are male (80%), and females have a lower number of days in office. The strongest association between variables is a negative correlation between year of birth and days in office (r=-.48; p<0.001).

Model testing
The results of the regression analyses are presented in table 3. According to model 1, gender, age, days in office and number of inhabitants did not explain the reported complexity of the 16 dilemmas, and this effect remained the same in the four other models tested.

The results of model 2 show that neither the distinction in political responsibility nor the distinction in collective impact affected mayors' perceptions of complexity. Based on the deviance, test model 2 therefore does not appear to be a better model than model 1.

The third model compares the complexity of the four scenarios. The *buddy* scenario seems to be perceived as more complex than the *mourner-in-chief* scenario, which is the scenario with the lowest average complexity score by far. The other scenarios are not significantly different in terms of complexity. However, model 3 does not exhibit a better fit than model 2.

Distributional information			Correlations	
IQR	**Age**	**Gender**	**Days in office**	**Inhabitants**
13	1			
0	.03	1		
3254	-.47***	-.22***	1	
19984	-0.02	0.12***	.19***	1

4

Model 4 shows that the higher complexity of the buddy scenario is caused by dilemma 7 [*dilemma: closing the railroad crossing immediately*]. This model has a significantly better model fit than the previous one ($p < 0.001$). The final model includes the hierarchical nesting of the data. The intra-class correlation of 12% indicates that some mayors, regardless of the nature of the dilemmas, consider them more complex than their colleagues. The variation at the mayor level is significant ($p < 0.001$). The multilevel model, or model 5 (2,160 dilemma complexity scores nested in 135 mayors), is an improvement compared to the single-level version ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4 presents the specific complexity scores of each dilemma, arranged according to their means (from high to low). On average, the complexity of the dilemmas ranges between -.44 and .10. Indeed, the mayors considered some of the dilemmas more complex than others. The columns on the right-hand side of table 4 show that participants' decisions on what to do with the most complex dilemmas in terms of "YES" or "NO" ranged between 36% and 64% (dilemma 7), and 39% and 61% (dilemma 15). In less complex dilemmas, the division between "YES" and "NO" answers varied between 97% and 3% (dilemma 12), and 42% and 58% (dilemmas 14 and 2). Thus, even in situations in which the participants deemed the dilemma less complex, the group was still divided on the most appropriate decision to make.

TABLE 3. Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Perceived Complexity by Mayors Participating in Vignette Study

	Model 1	**Model 2**
Variable	Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)
Average (intercept)	4.24 (4.58)	4.25 (4.58)
Age (year of birth)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Gender (women vs. men)	0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
Days in office	<0.0001 (<0.0001)	<0.0001 (<0.0001)
Inhabitants	<0.0001 (<0.0001))	<0.0001 (<0.0001)
High (vs. low) responsibility	-	0.01 (0.03)
High (vs. low) impact	-	-0.04 (0.03)
Scenario 2 (vs. 1)	-	-
Scenario 3 (vs. 1)	-	-
Scenario 4 (vs. 1)	-	-
Dilemma 5 (dummy)	-	-
Dilemma 6 (dummy)	-	-
Dilemma 7 (dummy)	-	-
Dilemma 8 (dummy)	-	-
Log likelihood	-2421.3929	-2420.6525
Deviance test	Reference	$p = 0.48$

Notes: SE = Standard error
* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Note: Five models are tested in sequential steps. The complexity of each dilemma as perceived by mayors is estimated: (1) with gender, age, days in office, and number of inhabitants as predictors, (2) model 1, while also considering the difference between high and low responsibility scenarios, and between high and low impact scenarios, (3) model 1, while also considering differences in complexity between the four scenarios (3 dummy variables; scenario 1 is point of reference), (4) model 1, while also considering differences between the dilemmas of the buddy scenario and the other dilemmas (4 dummy variables), and (5) model 4, including the multilevel structure in the data: 2,160 dilemma complexity scores are nested in 135 mayors.

Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)	Estimate (SE)
4.19 (4.58)	4.22 (4.56)	4.22 (7.71)
-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	0,01 (0.07)
<0.0001 (<0.0001)	<0.0001 (<0.0001)	<0.0001 (<0.0001)
<0.0001 (<0.0001)	<0.0001 (<0.0001)	<0.0001 (<0.0001)
-	-	-
-	-	-
0.09 (0.05)*		
0.05 (0.05)		
0.06 (0.05)		
-	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.06)
-	0.00 (0.07)	0.00 (0.06)
-	0.30 (0.07)***	0.30 (0.06)***
-	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.07 (0.06)
-2419.5587	-2409.5791	-2346.3992
$p = 0.14$	$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.001$

4

TABLE 4. Mean Complexity Score and Percentage of Responses per Dilemma

Dilemma
7. Sub-scenario train (role: buddy). Close the railroad crossing immediately.
15. Sub-scenario riots (role: orchestrator). Cancel a planned soccer game.
11. Sub-scenario power (role: advocate). Express dissatisfaction with national news concerning the power provider's broken promise to restore power supply on the same day.
3. Sub-scenario hockey (role: mourner-in-chief). Continue with the commemoration on Friday despite a request from next of kin to postpone it by one day.
4. Sub-scenario hockey (role: mourner-in-chief). Increase the municipality's financial commemoration contribution.
6. Sub-scenario train (role: buddy). Take measures to keep media away.
12. Sub-scenario power (role: advocate). Approve the safety region's request to evaluate the crisis response.
5. Sub-scenario train (role: buddy). Go to campsite on the same day to meet German family.
14. Sub-scenario riots (role: orchestrator). Order a ban on assembly to prevent potential riots.
16. Sub-scenario Riots (role: orchestrator). Participate in public clean-up activities initiated by local inhabitants.
9. Sub-scenario power (role: advocate). Accept invitation for late-night talk show on national television.
8. Sub-scenario train (role: buddy). Attend funeral in Germany on behalf of the community.
13. Sub-scenario riots (role: orchestrator). Visit family of victim on the same day.
10. Sub-scenario power (role: advocate). Visit agricultural companies in the neighborhood.
2. Sub-scenario hockey (role: mourner-in-chief). Invite hockey club to speak at commemoration ceremony.
1. Sub-scenario hockey (role: mourner-in-chief). Meet driver of fatal car crash in which two adolescents died.
Total

[a] ANOVA with Bonferroni Post Hoc Test * $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$.

Mean	% Simple	% Neutral	% Complex	Different from dilemma[a]	% Yes	% No
0.10	22	45	33	1** 2** 5* 6* 8** 9** 10** 12* 13** 14** 16**	36	64
0.09	24	44	33	1** 2** 5* 8** 9** 12* 13** 14* 16*	39	61
0.04	28	39	33	1** 2* 10* 13*	57	43
-0.01	27	47	26	1**	21	79
-0.18	36	45	19	-	52	48
-0.20	37	46	17	-	29	71
-0.24	40	44	16	7* 15*	97	3
-0.24	47	30	23	7* 15*	88	12
-0.26	39	47	13	7** 15*	42	58
-0,26	42	41	16	7** 15*	67	33
-0.27	47	33	20	7** 15**	12	88
-0.27	41	44	15	7** 15**	36	64
-0.29	47	34	19	7* 11* 15*	64	36
-0.30	46	38	16	7** 11* 15**	90	10
-0.30	41	47	11	7** 11* 15**	42	58
-0.44	55	35	10	3** 7**11** 15**	76	24
-0.20	**39**	**41**	**20**		**52.97**	**47.03**

5. DISCUSSION

Complexity linked to age, years in office, gender or size of municipality (H1)?
Our multilevel study (model 5) shows that regardless of the nature of the dilemmas, as well as respondents' age, years in office, gender or size of municipality, mayors had wide-ranging perceptions of the complexity of crisis-related dilemmas. Further study is necessary to clarify these findings, which may be explained by factors not included in our study, such as personal traits or political orientation.

The overall non-existence of a gender effect corroborates the findings of a previous study on American mayors under non-crisis-related circumstances (Ferreira and Gyourko 2014). In contrast to most research on the influence of female leadership, Ferreira and Gyourko (2014) found no gender effect among American mayors on policy outcomes related to the size of local government, composition of municipal spending, (un) employment, or crime rates.

The fact that neither age nor days in office were related to the attributed complexity of dilemmas may seem counterintuitive. Again and again, mayors feel the burden to solve a crisis in a complex setting in which politicians, media, the public and other stakeholders exert pressure on the crisis team. Apparently, the public leaders in our experiment feel that "*the buck stops here*". Even with more time in office, this perception does not fade away.

Complexity linked to collective impact and responsibility (H2 and H3)?
Reflecting differences in collective impact and mayors' responsibilities, our empirical study did not find significant relationships between the contexts in which crisis-related dilemmas were presented and the complexity of such dilemmas. Unlike hypotheses 2 and 3, complex dilemmas were not bound to one of the roles from the Public Meaning-Making Model. The scenario of the orchestrator was no more complex than the other three scenarios in our vignette study. As such, the current operationalization of dilemmas per scenario did not result in support for hypotheses 2 and 3. Generally speaking, scenarios with high collective impact are not necessarily experienced as more complex than scenarios with low collective impact, and an increase in (perceived) political responsibility does not axiomatically lead to an increase in perceived complexity. The meaning-making role of a public leader does not correlate with complexity of a dilemma as such. We also found that complexity is not equally distributed across the 16 dilemmas. Table 4 shows that the top three dilemmas in terms of complexity (dilemmas 7, 15 and 11) come from three different scenarios.

Given that both hypotheses 2 and 3 are rejected, we can only conclude that complexity in decision making is not bound to specific circumstances in which the public leader presents him- or herself in the role of mourner-in-chief, buddy, advocate or orchestrator (Jong 2017). Rather, the findings merely show that any dilemma in any scenario can potentially be perceived as complex, regardless of the role, gender, days in office and

age of the public leader involved. In terms of citizens' expectations, this might sound like a leadership paradox: contrary to the expectations of citizens concerning experienced leaders and their abilities to manage complexity, assessment of the experienced mayors did not differ from their more junior colleagues. In order to find a sound explanation for differences in complexity across the 16 dilemmas tested, the next paragraph discusses our findings regarding the single dilemmas from table 4.

Complexity linked to the nature of individual dilemmas?
As the objective of our study was to understand under what crisis-related circumstances do public leaders perceive as complex their ultimate and personal responsibility for decision making, our final step is to analyze the findings presented in table 4. This table shows that the nature of the individual dilemmas matters in terms of complexity, regardless of the overall scenario to which they belong. Indeed, complex dilemmas can be part of any scenario. The devil is in the detail, so to speak: any single dilemma can present complexity to the crisis team. When the relative complexity of dilemmas is taken into account (table 4, column 6), we are able to define three coherent groups of dilemmas.

From this approach, we come to the following insights:
Least complex crisis-related dilemmas. The least complex are dilemmas 1, 2, 10 and 13. These dilemmas embody elements of empowerment. They comprise questions such as whether or not a mayor accepts a request to meet a driver who caused a fatal car accident, if (s)he wants to visit people who suffered from a crisis, or if (s)he contacts the board of the hockey club in order to propose speaking at a commemorative ceremony. Even though all of these dilemmas include aspects of *meaning making*, the answers to these dilemmas can be kept "behind the door of the crisis center" and thus limited to private meetings. The dilemmas demonstrate aspects of empowerment, as in most cases the mayor is asked to make decisions following up on citizens' requests. The dilemmas touch upon a more psychosocial role of the mayor, who supports and cares about the emotional well-being of his or her citizens.

More complex crisis-related dilemmas. More complex are dilemmas that demand (or result in) a public appearance. Dilemmas with a complexity rating between -0.25 and 0 are predominantly those requiring presence on the public stage, and therefore increase visibility in the political arena or the media.

Most complex crisis-related dilemmas. The three most complex dilemmas stand beyond the previous categories. According to the participants, dilemmas 7, 11 and 15 are most complex, with an average rating between 0.04 and 0.10. They obligate the mayor to deliberately take a clear and public position in a crisis situation, preventing them from

agreeing with all stakeholders. The answers to these dilemmas can no longer be kept "behind the closed doors of the crisis center". Regardless of the initial crisis situation, developments necessitate a decision with broader impact. The mayor is asked to use his/her position and professional influence, and to demonstrate decisiveness. Such crises may include publicly revealing a difficult relationship with a network partner, canceling a football match in the aftermath of a deadly stabbing, or closing down a dangerous railroad crossing following a fatal incident. These dilemmas share an overall theme: the decisions required make it hard to be "*everyone's mayor,*" as they may lead to resistance from (part of the) citizens or network partners. Either some of one's own population will oppose the decision (cancel a football match, close a dangerous railroad crossing), or network partners will disagree with the mayor on public remarks. Furthermore, these highly complex decisions all require aspects of directive leadership, where the public leader uses his/her legislative and emergency powers to decide irrespective of conflicting interests among stakeholders.

In more general terms, the findings suggest that within a given context, new mini-crises can be triggered. A fatal incident with a tourist family on a railroad crossing demands a mayor who can act as a *buddy* toward the next of kin and the owner of a nearby camping site. However, the resulting decision to close the crossing triggers a new situation with a larger (collective) impact on the community as a whole, therefore necessitating a different communicative approach. The decision to close the railroad crossing cannot be kept hidden behind the doors of the crisis center. The public leader must face resistance from those citizens who do not agree with the closure.

Anticipation

Our findings raise the question of whether mayors should anticipate a potential shift in arenas, as different stakeholders might appear due to developments within the crisis context. Under such circumstances, crisis communication is not only about communicating the outcome of current decisions; it is also about contextualizing the crisis through suitable rhetoric, and anticipating the impacts of decisions on current and future stakeholders and groups within the society.

An appropriate response in terms of crisis communication is largely contingent on personal perceptions of the public leader and the choices (s)he makes. In the results we noted that participants do not produce unanimous answers to even the least complex dilemmas. Indeed, even in situations which the participants did not consider particularly complex, the group was divided in terms of most appropriate response. Apparently, the "right answer" is not clear-cut. Disagreement among mayors does not necessarily result in complexity, while unanimity does not automatically imply that dilemmas are simple.

Explaining unpopular decisions

Nevertheless, our findings suggest that mayors regard decisions in which the impact to one specific group of stakeholders is greater than to other(s) as most complex. Clearly explaining unpopular decisions and still earning wide stakeholder support leads us to believe that decision making and crisis communication are intertwined processes. Contrary to Helsloot and Groenendaal's (2017) suggestion, this implies that a public leader cannot be successful by "just being visible" and personally stating to the public that their shattered world will be healed. A successful leader needs to do more. (S)he must be able to convince stakeholders of the logic and reasoning behind a decision, even where it conflicts with the latter's interests and beliefs. Although Helsloot and Groenendaal (2017) do not elaborate on this point, we believe that conveying decisions and their impacts to stakeholders is more successful when it addresses all of those involved. Merely "being visible" disregards the fact that some stakeholders might not be convinced. Under complex situations, other forms of appropriate 'meaning making' are required to explain and solve the crisis at hand.

We agree with Seeger (2006) that the importance of crisis communication is underestimated when it is regarded as a straightforward and tactical discipline that solely communicates the decisions made. The public leader's choice of crisis communication strategy has more implications than just being "visible", when used to raise support for complex decisions. Crisis communication is a central part of the decision-making process, as consequences in terms of loss of public confidence can be severe when complexity increases.

Given the results of the experiment, it is possible to conclude that the question "*can we explain our point of view?*" actually stands at the core of the decision process itself, defining its complexity. Closing down a railroad crossing requires a public explanation, as citizens must take a longer, alternative road. Not closing down the railroad crossing asks for a public explanation as well, as the mayor takes a deliberate risk and must have a response ready in case another accident occurs. At the same time, the mayor might be hesitant to jump to conclusions, not wanting to close down a dangerous railroad crossing as long as it is unclear what caused the crisis. The same applies for the dilemma about the football match. Canceling an important match needs to be explained to citizens who support the teams. If the mayor decides against canceling the match, (s)he risks facing riots, which also demands a public explanation when things go wrong. Given that these decisions come down to the legislative powers of public leadership, public leaders must realize that it is always harder for leaders to gain stakeholder support in a crisis when they are somehow held responsible for the event (James and Wooten 2005). From major crises like hostage takings, kidnappings and bombings, we know that decision makers anticipate the potential for future discussion in parliament or the city council (Muller 1994). In parallel, the complexity of the two most complex dilemmas

(railroad track, football match) is not restricted to the decision itself. Rather, part of the complexity can be explained in anticipation of a secondary question: "*Can we also explain when things eventually go wrong in the near future, despite the decision taken here and now?*"

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Our experiment shows that perceived complexity for public leaders in crisis management is not restricted to large crises and disasters. Indeed, complexity can be found in relatively small, local incidents as well, rather than only mega-crises such as airplane crashes, hurricanes, terrorist attacks or floods. This implies that in order to avoid complex decisions being uniquely associated with large-scale crises, training programs or simulations on crisis management should also include small-scale scenarios with different levels of collective impact and political responsibility. While the stages of learning and evaluation judge public leaders who carefully deliberate on which decisions to make in situations of large-scale crises (Boin, Kuipers, and Overdijk 2013), the complexity of decisions in small crises should not be overlooked.

With regard to crisis communication as a discipline and *meaning making* as a specific field of interest, more attention should be given to the most complex situations in which stakeholders do not axiomatically adopt the decisions made by a governmental crisis team. As our study suggests, communication is required to gain public confidence and to be "*everyone's mayor*" under complex circumstances. Public leaders need to communicate with citizens, network partners, the media and other stakeholders to underscore the fact that the government is accountable and "fully in charge" (Boin, 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius 2016; Griffin-Padgett and Allison 2010; Pinkert et al. 2007). Especially under crisis situations, attributes such as charisma and inspiration appear to be important (Davis and Gardner 2012; de Bussy and Paterson 2012; Oc 2017) in order to convincingly utilize the communicative aspects of public leadership.

Crisis management and crisis communication should incorporate the concept of *procedural justice* (Brockner and Wiesenfeld 1996; Sunshine and Tyler 2003), briefly defined as the perceived fairness of a process. Sunshine and Tyler (2003) have used *procedural justice* in the context of police legitimacy. Certainly, if the public judges that the police exercise their authority via fair procedures, it will view the police as legitimate even in cases when it disagrees with the outcome of the decision. However, if they experience unfairness in the application of authority, the results will include alienation, defiance, and noncooperation (Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Within the context of crisis *decision making*, public leaders should not only communicate the outcome of the decision making process, but also explain why these measures are necessary

given the complexity of the particular dilemmas they are facing. Such an approach is congruent with that of Helsloot and Schmidt (2012), who argue that citizens are far more reasonable in their risk perceptions than expected, especially when asked to decide as a public administrator.

7. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research might confirm whether public leaders integrate the question "*can we explain our point of view?*" in their decision-making processes during crises. Further research may also shed light on the usefulness of "procedural justice" as a practical heuristic to overcome complex decisions, by incorporating the fairness of procedures in public leaders' meaning making efforts. This would involve a form of meaning making in which public leaders – besides explaining the rationale behind a decision – (a) exhibit their awareness of the emotional impact of their decisions (psychosocial crisis management at the strategic level); and (b) explain that they are aware of the possible negative implications for their citizens and network partners. The value of this kind of *meaning making* might be equally relevant in situations where crisis management and public policy tend to become intertwined, such as in the aforementioned public debates pertaining to the migration crisis in Europe and racial tensions in the United States. Future research should expand experiments with *meaning making* to these and other public leadership contexts. A deeper examination of resemblances and differences in public leadership in crisis and non-crisis circumstances might also enrich our insights regarding the contextual complexity of public leadership as a whole.

8. LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of this study is that participants were not able to share their private perspectives of the findings. Indeed, there was no space for them to explain their deliberations while playing the game and before making their decisions, or to clarify their ratings on complexity. Greater insight into such deliberations may thus have enriched our study. Furthermore, even though the dilemmas can be regarded as "realistic" and the scenarios were based on real-life experiences, mayoral behavior under real crisis situations might be influenced by processes beyond the scope of our study. Finally, even though the sample of participants can be regarded as representative of Dutch mayors, further research is required to confirm the findings for public leaders outside the Netherlands. In this study, mayors were asked to rate

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perceived complexity on a single three-point Likert scale. We chose this scale to minimize mayors' potential burden and to optimize participation and response. However, further research should utilize scales with multiple terms in order to improve the reliability of the results.

9. CONCLUSION

The simulation study's findings indicate that public leaders' perceptions of the complexity of decisions during and following crises vary. Even in situations where the participants considered a dilemma fairly simple, the participants were divided on the most appropriate decision. Furthermore, the study has revealed that there was no relationship between perceived complexity and collective impact, political responsibility, age, gender or time in office. The results suggest that mayoral decisions become increasingly complex when a mayor is no longer seen as "everyone's mayor" and must make decisions that are not favorable to all citizens and network partners.

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Appendix I - Translated scenario with 16 dilemmas

Mourner in chief (High collective emotion, low responsibility)

It is a Thursday night during winter in St. Paul. Two young people, aged eighteen and nineteen, are killed in a serious car accident. Two others, who were in the same car, get off without injuries. One of them was the driver during the fatal accident. Emergency responders at the scene are horrified.

The four youngsters were born and raised in your municipality. They were also active members of the local hockey club. There is an enormous level of grief at the hockey club.

The boy, who drove during the accident and survived, seems to have made some statements in the hospital. Apparently, he said that he suffered from long-standing psychological problems. He is currently being chased by various media who want to discuss these allegations. Friends and family in St. Paul are also chased by media.

He calls your secretary and asks for an appointment at town hall, no later than tomorrow. He wants to discuss the situation with the mayor. Your secretary presents this request to you.

Dilemma 1
Do you re-schedule your diary in order to meet him?

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: You are everyones mayor, including the driver. You cannot refuse his request. (YES)
· Town Clerk: You can ask the media to keep some distance, but I do not believe it is necessary to meet him in person. (NO)
· Communication Advisor: The driver did not want this accident either. He plays a role in the story as well. It is your job to listen to everyone involved in this terrible incident. (YES)
· Police: The driver might not be in jail, but we still regard him as a suspect. It would be premature to talk to him tomorrow. (NO)

The hockey club starts organizing a major memorial service. The hockey club uses volunteers from their various internal committees to set up a beautiful, dignified gathering to mourn and remember. At this time you have not yet received a request from the board of the hockey club to speak at that service too.

Dilemma 2

Do you contact the board to offer to speak?

Advice:

- Crisis Management Advisor: By offering the hockey club to speak at the service, you can emphasize that the impact of the accident is larger than just the hockey club. (YES)
- Town Clerk: Wait for their request. This memorial service is not your responsibility. (NO)
- Communication Advisor: The impact on our citizens is high. These are the moments a mayor should be there for his fellow citizens. (YES)
- Police: So far, it is still unclear what happened. I would advise to keep some distance. (NO)

In the meantime, the municipality supports the hockey club in organizing the memorial service. You agreed to conduct the service on Friday. It is the best option, because it won't interfere with a very important protest against a proposed municipal redivision. The protest is scheduled for Saturday.

However, the family of one of the victims contacts you and asks to reschedule the memorial to Saturday. Otherwise, one of the family members who lives abroad won't be able to join the gathering.

Dilemma 3

Do you stick to your plan to conduct the memorial service on Friday, in order to have the scheduled protest on Saturday?

Advice:

- Crisis Management Advisor: We cannot ignore this request, if we believe the wishes of the family members are important. It would be a slap in the face if we stick to our own plan. (NO)
- Town Clerk: To organize the memorial service and the demonstration on the same day would be rather inappropriate. The demonstration is of great importance for the independence of our municipality. (YES)
- Communication Advisor: We are trying to take the family into account in the memorial. If family members are unable to join, it is a paradox I cannot explain to the media. (NO)
- Police: The family must realize that they do not have the exclusive ownership to the memorial service. We try to accommodate them, but rescheduling the demonstration presents far too many practical problems. (YES)

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The memorial service becomes increasingly bigger. It is clear that the two deceased boys were very much loved. They were seen as talented hockey players, not only at St. Paul's hockey club but also in the wider region. Hundreds of people are expected to attend the memorial service. The expense is increasing accordingly.Traffic controllers are hired for the memorial service to manage the situation on the site. Also, a professional audiovisual company from St. Paul will make a video of the memorial service and takes care of sound and lighting in a professional way. The municipality promised to contribute up to 10,000 euros to this memorial service to cover the expenses, with the assumption that the club itself will contribute another 5,000 euros.

As the plan of action takes shape, it becomes clear that the necessary budget increases towards 22,000 euros. The chairman of the hockey club calls you. He calls for your confirmation that the municipality can be depended upon for the remaining 7,000 euros.

Dilemma 4
Do you stick to the earlier proposed contribution of 10,000 euros?

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: If you resist, things will escalate and you will suffer from a long-lasting, distorted relationship with our citizens. (NO)
· Town Clerk: The municipality already provided a generous offer. Even though it is a memorial service, money does not grow on trees here in St. Paul. (YES)
· Communication Advisor: Necessity knows no law. I cannot explain it if in the case of these beloved boys we allow money to cause an issue. (NO)
· Police: What happened is very sad. However, what is wrong with a simple cup of coffee and a slice of cake? Nowadays, people get crazier ideas by the day. (YES)

Buddy (low collective emotion, low responsibility)
The summer season is important to the people in St. Paul. Camping *Venzicht* is located near a lake in St. Paul, bordering the woods. The campsite can be reached in two ways. The most frequently used is also the shortest route and consists of a sand path connecting the campsite to the village. This sand path crosses a railway line with an unguarded level crossing. Twice an hour, a local train to and from the neighboring town passes the crossing.

At the beginning of the summer season, things go wrong. On the crossing, a local train crashes into a car with two German tourists and their three-year-old son. The son dies instantly. The tourists are staying at Camping Venzicht. You are shocked when you hear the news from the police. It is the second deadly accident in three years' time.

Dilemma 5

Are you going to the campsite to speak with the German parents the same afternoon?

Advice:
- Crisis Management Advisor: The tourists lost their son. They are in a horrible situation. The least you can do is to show some compassion by visiting. (YES)
- Town Clerk: The campsite owner has been discussing this crossing with National Railways for years. If you go there, you will probably be forced to take sides in the discussions between National Railways and the campsite owner. One thing leads to another. (NO)
- Communication Advisor: It fits your role to visit. You show your support to the campsite owner and comfort the German family. The other guests are shocked. They will appreciate your presence as well. (YES)
- Police: The mayor has a completely different role in Germany. They will probably wonder why you visit them all of the sudden. Be realistic. There is very little you can do to them. (NO)

During the afternoon, more and more media visit the campsite. The owner asks if you can keep the media at a distance. He tells you that he and his guests do not appreciate their attention right now. They do not want to process the terrible events in the media spotlights.

Dilemma 6

Do you use your legislative powers to keep the media at a distance?

Advice:
- Crisis Management Advisor: You can declare an emergency ordinance. However, I doubt if it is proportional for the situation at hand. I do not think you look forward to yet another public reprimand, issued by some Law professor. (NO)
- Town Clerk: It is not in the interest of the campsite visitors to have the media present. Under the pretext of 'free press,' they only want to record tear-jerking stories. Give the guests time to process the accident and declare a media ban. (YES)
- Communication Advisor: The media have their own responsibility. You can appeal to that responsibility. A ban is too much. (NO)
- Police: Our spokesperson is present and can speak to the media. In addition, the police can close off the entire campsite. (YES)

From your conversations with the campsite owner, it becomes clear that he has a great interest in keeping the crossing open. The alternative to the sand path is a three-kilometer-long paved road with a guarded level crossing. That long, safe road is "bad for business," as the owner of Camping Venzicht carefully puts it. According to him, it is unattractive for tourists to go to the village by the alternative road. At the same time, you are aware that this is the second fatal accident in a short period of time.

National Railways already told you that putting a guarded crossing in place is a two-year process which costs 700,000 euros at least.

Dilemma 7:
Do you use your mayoral powers to close the crossing immediately?

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: The campsite owner knows the local situation very well. If it really was that dangerous, he would not want to use that crossing either. (NO)
· Town Clerk: During crises, a well-known motto is "the crisis as an opportunity." Enough is enough with these two fatal accidents in a short period of time. (YES)
· Communication Advisor: The media create the image that you suffer from a "risk regulation reflex", asking for immediate measures while the actual risk is low. Apart from the two recent accidents, there has never been a problem the last ten years. (NO)
· Police: Do you know what is "bad for business" in St. Paul? More fatal accidents! That unguarded level crossing has to go. (YES)

After you showed your compassion with the parents of the deceased child, they inform you that they greatly appreciate your involvement. Therefore, they invite you to the funeral in the south of Germany.

Dilemma 8:
Are you going to the funeral in Germany on behalf of the municipality of St. Paul?
Yes = empowerment

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: I understand that the parents would have appreciated it, but a nice letter in which you wish them all the best should be sufficient. (NO)
· Town Clerk: I have children of that age as well. I cannot bear to think that this happens to me. But with all due respect to the parents, the south of Germany is quite a journey. We still have many issues to deal with before the summer recess begins. (NO)

· Communication Advisor: If you want to send out a strong signal in lobbying to the National Railways, it may help you to share their grief and join them during the funeral. After all, you will make the plea to do something about the crossing on their behalf as well. (YES)
· Police: Imagine what it is like to lose your son on vacation. It must be a very traumatic experience for these people. The acknowledgment you bring with your presence is priceless. For you, it is a relatively small effort to attend the funeral. (YES)

Advocate (low impact, high responsibility)

During winter St. Paul is hit by a major power failure. Due to a transformer explosion at a utility switching station, St. Paul is expected to be left without power for a number of days. The municipality is located at the end of the electrical grid, which means that the power supply cannot be repaired quickly. The failure occurs at a time when temperatures are close to freezing point during the day.

The country shows empathy with the people in St. Paul. The people in St. Paul try to make the best of it. Everything centers around 'neighborliness', looking after each other in difficult times. Tonight, for instance, the people from St. Paul organize festivities with candles, flashlights, games and music. It gives you a sense of pride when you hear that your citizens are arranging these festivities.

You plan to visit these initiatives tonight, when you receive a request from a talk show host to come to the studio in Amsterdam that evening. You will be asked to discuss the situation in St. Paul during a live interview. The journey from St. Paul to Amsterdam is about one and a half hours.

Dilemma 9:

Are you going to join the talk show tonight?

Advice:

· Crisis Management Advisor: Citizens are now organizing initiatives and your presence will be greatly appreciated. Choose for your own citizens, not for those of Amsterdam. (NO)
· Town Clerk: To strengthen the lobby that St. Paul's position in the national electrical grid is too vulnerable, it may be good to join the talk show. Otherwise, St. Paul will never end up on the political agenda in parliament. (YES)
· Communication Advisor: It is always good to join a national talk show. The people here will appreciate it when they hear that their mayor was on national TV. They will probably watch the interview later. (YES)
· Police: The people in St. Paul cannot see the interview anyway, so I wonder why you should go there. You will be in a warm studio while you leave our elderly people in the cold. (NO)

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It is the second day of the power failure. It has been a long day. It is late and you actually prefer to go home to rest. However, your advisor proposes to visit a number of farmers who also suffer from the power failure. According to her, they will appreciate your involvement and compassion. Your estimate is that the visit will take at least one and a half hours.

Dilemma 10:
Are you going to visit the farmers?

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: I wonder whether the farmers will appreciate your visit. It might distract them, while they are trying to keep their business running with much effort. Do not get in their way. (NO)
· Town Clerk: The commitment you can show here can have a big, positive and long-term impact. (YES)
· Communication Advisor: You are the mayor. Even though you are tired, it is your duty to visit them. (YES)
· Police: Are you not overreacting? It is a difficult situation, but no one is injured or killed. With your visit, the situation becomes bigger than it really is. The outage is highly inconvenient, but it is not a national disaster. (NO)

The power failure takes longer than expected. Earlier on, the power company indicated during a crisis team meeting that the power would be restored this afternoon. However, in the evening it becomes clear that the problems will not be solved overnight. St. Paul will face the third, dark night without power. You are more than fed up with the situation. The national TV news comes by for an interview and to ask you about the situation.

Dilemma 11:
Will you show your dissatisfaction with the broken promise of the power company in the Evening News?

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: The power company is doing its best. It is not wise to attack them publicly, while they are working very hard within their own crisis team. (NO)
· Town Clerk: You can clearly share your disappointment in the power company. They are the experts; they are supposed to supply St. Paul with power. If they do not, you have the right to be angry. Citizens will appreciate that. (YES)
· Communication Advisor: For the outside world, we must keep a united front. It does not help the case if we already start blaming each other during the crisis. (NO)

· Police: The people in St. Paul are completely fed up with this crisis. The first day, it was still fun to have a candlelit dinner, but now everyone is longing for power. It is okay for you to express those feelings in a harsh statement about the power company. (YES)

By now the power supply has been restored. The town council, which meets one week later, will review the crisis. You are preparing this meeting with the Municipal Executive. The strategy is being determined. The Safety and Emergency Region has been involved in the response to the power failure last week and proposes to evaluate the crisis. Your Aldermen believe such an evaluation is waste of time and money. They do not expect that there will be much to learn from this crisis. The Aldermen prefer to return to business as usual as soon as possible.

Dilemma 12:
Do you agree with the proposed evaluation of the Safety and Emergency Region?

Advice:
· Crisis Management Advisor: We can learn from every crisis, even a power failure. St. Paul is duty-bound to evaluate a crisis of this magnitude. (YES)
· Town Clerk: The municipal organization is working overtime. We need to catch up on the backlog. That evaluation only takes extra time, while we are also dealing with the aftermath of the power failure. (NO)
· Communication Advisor: It is unwise to ignore a request from the Safety and Emergency Region. We will need the Safety and Emergency Region again in the future. (YES)
· Police: We are going to evaluate while we already know the outcome. All reviews and investigation report share similar and well-known lessons. As we have electricity again, I prefer to focus on more useful matters. (NO)

Orchestrator (high collective emotion, high responsibility)
On a Wednesday afternoon in spring, a street fight in a residential area on the outskirts of St. Paul escalates. A resident is walking around with a gun. It is not the first time that tempers rise in this socially vulnerable neighborhood. A motorcycle police officer arrives at the scene and is forced to shoot the resident with the gun. The thirty-year-old man from St. Paul is killed by this police bullet. He was known to the police. Three months earlier, he was released after a prison sentence for a fatal robbery in the neighboring town.

That evening the situation in St. Paul is tense. A demonstration against police violence is organized. According to the protesters, policemen have a short fuse and shoot whenever there is the slightest criticism. Some protesters come from the neighborhood, others join them from other parts of the country.

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Dilemma 13

The victim's family lives elsewhere in St. Paul. Are you visiting the victim's family the same day?

Advice:

· Crisis Management Advisor: The family can play an important role in preventing the situation from escalating any further. They can become a bridge between us and the rioters. (YES)
· Town Clerk: You are being held responsible for what the police do. They won't support you. With a visit, there is nothing to gain, just to lose. (NO)
· Communication Advisor: If you are always talking about being the Mayor of everyone, you will also have to visit this family. They have lost their son and brother. (YES)
· Police: The family is more or less cut from the same cloth as the dead son. I do not believe it is wise to be seen with them. (NO)

Last night's demonstration went well, but the atmosphere in the neighborhood is becoming increasingly tense. After a troubled night, you receive signals that again people will come to St. Paul to make themselves heard.

Dilemma 14:

Do you announce a ban on gatherings in order to prevent any new riots from happening?

Advice:

· Crisis Management Advisor: A ban on gatherings is a very rigorous restriction of fundamental rights. I would try a less drastic way first. (NO)
· Town Clerk: I think the town council will support you if you put an end to this scum on our streets. Let it be clear that the government draws a hard line here. (YES)
· Communication Advisor: With a street ban, the local residents are punished for the behaviour of the external rioters. A ban works the wrong way. (NO)
· Police: A ban on gatherings works preventively. We support it. (YES)

For Friday evening, a friendly match is scheduled for the St. Paul football club. The club is high ranked in the amateur league and wants to prepare for their cup duel. The friendly match is between St. Paul's local club and a sister club from Dylanshire in England. The shot man was a prominent supporter of the St. Paul club and often visited the matches of the sister club. The English sister club will bring about four hundred supporters to the training match. For some months, your Safety officer has been working with the police to guide that match properly, taking into account all risks involved. It looks like supporters will light quite some fireworks in and around the stadium in order to commemorate the shot man appropriately.

Dilemma 15:

Do you prohibit the friendly match?

Advice:

·   Crisis Management Advisor: The football match can also work as a new start. If you allow it, then the neighborhood residents will probably get more sympathy for their mayor. (NO)
·   Town Clerk: You take a political risk if you do not prohibit the training match. If the rioting resumes, everyone will blame you for not intervening sufficiently. (YES)
·   Communication Advisor: St. Paul sends out a positive signal if this match goes well and safely, even under these difficult circumstances. (NO)
·   Police: We cannot guarantee safety if those four hundred fans come to St. Paul, while the situation is already somewhat explosive. (YES)

After several days of tension and vandalism in the neighborhood, a counter-movement is starting. The residents start a major cleanup of the neighborhood. In a newspaper interview, the initiator informs that there is still much anger regarding the police actions. However, they also want to send out a positive signal about their neighborhood which has recently been in the news in such a negative way.

Dilemma 16:

Do you offer to join this St. Paul Cleanup?

Advice:

·   Crisis Management Advisor: Their initiative is confusing. First, there are riots in the neighborhood in which some of the residents participate. Now, they are hypocritically going to clean up the mess. I am afraid they are playing a dirty trick on you. (NO)
·   Town Clerk: You can see this as a welcome initiative from the neighborhood residents. If you ignore their signal, it will not be good for the fragile relationship between the police and the neighborhood. (YES)
·   Communication Advisor: It sends out a positive signal. The neighborhood residents who want to do well can use a little support. It is something you can provide. (YES)
·   Police: There is still a negative sentiment regarding the police in a part of the neighborhood. You are our representative as well. You should not forget that some of the neighborhood residents have also demonstrated against police violence. Please, do not forget. (NO)

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Anticipating the unknown:
Crisis communication while
under investigation

ABSTRACT

The cause of a crisis may have to be reidentified when, during the aftermath of the crisis, new insights come to light in the accident reports. The possible reassignment of responsibility for a crisis complicates the suitable choice of an appropriate crisis response strategy that is ultimately intended to optimize reputational protection. This article describes how this phenomenon should be taken into account, and suggests an "acknowledge and await" response strategy for situations in which organizations prefer to respond with care and not jump to conclusions before the outcomes of an investigation are known.

1. INTRODUCTION

On September 29, 2016, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) started an investigation into the New Jersey Transit commuter rail crash at Hoboken station. A 34-year-old woman, who had been standing on the platform, died in the accident and another 100 people were injured. In his initial response, New Jersey Transit Executive Director Steven Santoro said that trains entering the station were reducing their approach speed from 10 mph to 5 mph for added safety. Reducing the speed was regarded to be necessary in order to prevent future incidents. One month later, a new possible cause came to light, as the board suspended eleven train workers under a fatigue rules program. According to the new reports, the driver suffered from undiagnosed sleep apnea, which was an additional factor contributing to the terrible events on September 29, 2016. In early February 2018, the NTSB issued a Special Investigation Report and confirmed sleep apnea to be a contributing cause, stating:

Contributing to the accident was New Jersey Transit's failure to follow its internal obstructive sleep apnea screening guidance and refer at-risk safety-sensitive personnel for definitive obstructive sleep apnea testing and treatment. Further contributing to the accident was the Federal Railroad Administration's failure to require railroads to medically screen employees in safety-sensitive positions for obstructive sleep apnea and other sleep disorders. Also contributing to the accident was the lack of either a device or safety system that could have intervened to stop the train before the collision. (NTSB, 2018, p. 2)

Aftermaths of incidents like the one at Hoboken are not unique. Organizations such as New Jersey Transit are often subject to incident investigations by independent committees or boards. Investigations like this come with a special kind of uncertainty, which is inherent in any crisis and challenges the capacity of public relations practitioners to know how to best proceed (Liu, Bartz, & Duke, 2016). As soon as investigation committees come aboard, uncertainty surrounds the future verdict on the organizational responsibility for the cause of the crisis.

In her study on media coverage of chemical incidents, Holladay (2010) finds 39 out of 91 cases where the accident is still under investigation. As responsibility for a crisis is regarded as the starting point for communication strategies, this brings difficulties in deciding on the most appropriate crisis response strategy, for as long as the verdict is unknown. While stakeholders most likely start to use their influence to alter dominant perceptions of what happened and who acted decisively and appropriately after the incident (Kuipers & 't Hart, 2014), the organization under investigation is sailing in unchartered waters. It is supposed to anticipate the future outcome of an accident report, which is unknown to the organization shortly after the crisis.

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In order to support organizations in anticipating an unknown outcome, the goals of this article are as follows: (1) to define and extend our understanding of the process of being under investigation in a crisis aftermath; (2) to discuss the impact of known crisis response strategies under such a situation, and (3) to make recommendations for when an organization should and should not anticipate the final report.

First, a review is given of the literature on the characteristics of investigations after crises. Then, the options in terms of crisis communication responses are described. The distinction is made between a regular crisis aftermath, and the impact of a final report of an investigation committee as a potential "game changer" in perceptions. Finally, an outline is given for a new approach of "acknowledge and await". Even though the proposed approach has elements of common sense, a theoretical light is shed on why crisis communication during an investigation differentiates itself from regular communication in the aftermath of crises. The approach supports communication practitioners who might otherwise underestimate the potential impact of investigation reports on existing and future perceptions.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF BEING UNDER INVESTIGATION

Questions about responsibility and accountability surface as soon as reports are presented. According to Boin et al. (2016), these are the times when revisionist interpretations of the causes, the quality of the response, and the management of the wider repercussions get airplay in the media. Due to the reporting, the crisis returns to political and institutional agendas, in what is sometimes referred to as the "crisis after the crisis" (Boin & Smith, 2006), which is full of "blame games" that potentially erode the reputation of the parties involved.

As Parker and Dekker (2008) note, investigation committees are interpretive authorities, which provide an accepted ritualized procedure for making sense of traumatic events. Through accountability, crises can make, break or transform political and public service careers, agency mandates and reputations (Kuipers & 't Hart, 2014). Sigurgeirsdóttir and Johnsen (2018) refer to the Icelandic Parliamentary Special Investigation Commission which conducted a ground-breaking crisis-induced investigation, delivering a report that was "*a milestone in Iceland's history of politics and public administration*". Such milestones with large public impact are not unique. Usually, reports by investigation committees are not "*just another opinion*" but are presented as an independent verdict on the role of the organization in a certain crisis. The committees assign responsibility, discuss policy matters and propose corrective solutions in a way that contributes to the development of meaning (Parker & Dekker, 2008). Committees are even expected to do so. In the case of the MS Estonia disaster (1994), the final report from the Finnish, Swedish

and Estonian investigation committee was criticized over the years, most likely because of the disappointing concluding remark that "*No one was found officially responsible*" (Radio Sweden, 2014). As such, the presentation of the final accident report is usually the moment the committee publicly and with authority approves or disapproves of the crisis management and the communication of the parties involved.

External investigation

Organizations under investigation usually acknowledge the expertise of these external investigative bodies, which implies that the opinion of an investigation committee is able to fundamentally change public perceptions of the cause of incidents and the associated responsibilities. In addition to their authority, investigative bodies tend to take their time for research and in-depth studies. Often, it takes months or even years of investigation before underlying causes come to light. The investigative report into Hurricane Katrina, for example, was presented on February 15, 2006, which was half a year after the hurricane had hit the coast of Louisiana (United States House of Congress, 2006). The Transportation Safety Board of Canada submitted its report about the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster 13 months after the accident (Currie-Mueller, 2017). The US NTSB often needs an even longer timeframe before it publicly discloses its findings and new insights that were initially unknown to the organization, the public and media. During all those months, the investigation looks for clues in the interaction between actors. The larger and more severe in magnitude and negative consequences a crisis is, the greater the number of actors (Palttala, Boano, Lund, & Vos, 2012)—and the interactions between these actors will all be under investigation.

Organizational learning

Moreover, investigation committees tend to approach crises from a specific angle and take organizational learning as a starting point. They look beyond the obvious and ask themselves whether or not multiple causes have added up to an inevitable accident. As most crises flow from unique configurations of individual error, organizational failure and environmental flux (Rosenthal, Boin & Comfort, 2001), the number of potential causes can be tremendous. The report on the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise (1987) owned by Townsend Thoresen explains how different factors add up to a fatal disaster (Ek, Runefors, & Borell, 2014; Jacobsson, Ek, & Akselsson, 2011; Price, 2015). The capsizing of the Herald of Free Enterprise occurred just outside the Belgian port of Zeebrugge and resulted in the loss of 193 lives. The ship was a roll-on/roll-off ferry, a design that enables rapid loading and unloading at the harbors along the English Channel. After arrival at Zeebrugge, the assistant bosun (a ship's officer) opened the bow door and went to his cabin, where he fell asleep. It was his duty to close the bow doors at the time of departure from Zeebrugge, a duty he failed to carry

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out. According to the formal investigation, the Herald of Free Enterprise capsized because she went to sea with her inner and outer bow doors open, whereas they should have been closed at departure (United Kingdom Department of Transport, 1987). The sea immediately flooded the deck, which led to the sinking of the ferry. While the open bow door was the primary cause of the ferry disaster, the official inquiry also pointed to underlying patterns as well, and put blame on the supervisors, on the fact that the officer did not wake on the harbor station's call for departure, and on the fact that there was no indicator on the bridge to show the current state of the bow doors. Moreover, with regard to the culture within Townsend Thoresen, time pressure was common practice. The lack of an overall safety culture contributed even further to the development of the situation and was an overall contributor to the terrible events of March 6, 1987. None of these factors came close to the initial statement by Townsend Thoresen, whose spokesperson conjectured that the ship hit the harbor wall (Clark, 2014). Even though this might be accurate according to his information about the situation shortly after the fatal incident, it shows that the underlying causes only came to light in the final report which was presented months later, but were not available at the time of the initial statement.

Impact of investigation committees

In summary, an investigation by an independent and external committee implies that (1) it potentially takes months before a report will be presented; (2) the final outcome will be presented with authority; (3) the final outcome can be regarded as a verdict on crisis responsibilities, and (4) the final outcome may contradict earlier perceptions on the responsibility for the crisis of the organization(s) involved.

3. CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF CRISES

The responsibility for a crisis is the cornerstone of crisis response strategies (Park & Len-Ríos, 2010). Benoit (1995) already claimed that crises become a threat to reputations when an individual or organization is accused of being responsible for the offensive act. In other words, if there is no offensive act or no accusation of responsibility for the act, there is no reputational threat (Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2010). In his Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), Coombs (2010, 2015) argues that the nature of a crisis situation shapes audience perceptions and attributions when it comes to crisis responsibility. He defines three types of crises: the victim cluster (low crisis responsibility/low reputational threat), accidental cluster (minimal crisis responsibility/minimal reputational threat), and preventable cluster (strong crisis responsibility/strong reputational threat) (Coombs 2010: 39).

In the end, stakeholders value the reputation of an organization on the basis of perceived crisis responsibility, together with crisis history, relationship history and prior reputation (Coombs, 1998, 2007). These perceptions define what needs to be done and whether to choose a frame of being a victim (Coombs, 2007). Depending on the threat level, current theory proposes different response strategies. In the case of reputational threat, the theory emphasizes apologizing and accepting responsibility for crises as the primary communicative recommendation (Benoit & Pang, 2008).

A drawback of current crisis response strategies is the presumption in the literature that crisis responsibilities are rather static. Even though environmental scanning is set up in order to look for changes and forecast changes in perceptions (Narayanan & Fahey, 1987), SCCT tends to be most useful as long as an organization does not change from one cluster to another. As crises can morph and change over time, the alternative for organizations under crisis is to switch between strategies. This, however, tends to undermine the credibility of the organization. Benoit (2018) gives the example of CEO Munoz of United Airlines, who felt forced to enact a make-over of his crisis response and thereby implicitly confirmed that the initial response was ineffectual. His new position was the right one, according to Benoit (2018), but it came too late to prevent further damage to the company.

Similar to the example of United Airlines, response strategies can easily go wrong when clusters and responsibilities for the crisis were judged inappropriately before a committee presented its findings, even in cases where erroneous statements were not made intentionally. As Coombs (2010) states, the reported cause could raise a new round of concerns for the organization that demand a response and an organization must deliver all the "promised" information. However, this bears a risk when incidents turn out to be in a different cluster than expected. For example, when it turns out that the cause of a fatal accident is different from what was initially communicated, one might find oneself not in the "victim cluster" but in the "preventable cluster". Initially blaming a contractor ("victim cluster") when the final report shows that it was the company's own fault ("preventable cluster") is just one example of the type of communication that can have a potential negative impact on reputation and erode its credibility.

Adkins (2010) adds an analysis of FEMA in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, whose response initially indicated it as a response to a natural disaster, falling within the victim cluster of crisis types. When eventually it became clear that FEMA was accused of misdeeds in responding to the disaster, the tenets of SCCT became impossible to apply; responses that would be recommended in the disaster phase prove to be contradictory to those of the resultant crisis phase (Adkins, 2010).

Oftentimes, crises cannot be regarded as the sole responsibility of just one organization. In its report on the Lac-Mégantic runaway train and derailment, the Canadian Transportation Safety Board (TSB, 2014) identified 18 distinct causes and contributing

factors to the incident. The incident was not caused by one single person, action or organization; it occurred due to a combination of factors influencing one another. This suggests that responsibilities can be re-arranged across network partners in the aftermath of crises as well. When the change in responsibilities results in changing perceptions among stakeholders, the crisis team and stakeholders may disagree on the type of crisis at hand. If this is the case, the stakeholder's frame should be adopted (Coombs, 2007). The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina shows, however, that organizations are not always aware of their biases and the gap between their own and stakeholders' perceptions (Martinko, 2009).

4. COMMUNICATION WHILE UNDER INVESTIGATION

A response strategy is needed that enables organizations to anticipate changing estimates of the initial responsibility in times of crisis. This change in perceptions is a potential "game-changer", compared to regular and incremental changes in the aftermath of crises, when stakeholders, customers or media come up with new and additional information. This happens for two reasons: 1) the reports by external committees are brought with authority; and 2) investigation committees look beyond the obvious and examine all the underlying factors in a chain of events that ended in an incident. This combination of factors makes it hard to anticipate the conclusions of a future investigation report that is full of what former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld famously called "known unknowns" and "unknown unknowns" (U.S. Department of Defense, 2002). Even in organizations that strive to detect known risks before they become manifest and cause trouble, it can be rather complicated to find the causes of incidents. Even in such risk-aware organizations, early signals may simply be put aside, as the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle (1986) and the Fukushima incident (2013) demonstrated (Boin, Stern, & Sundelius, 2016).

Bridge current and future perceptions
Shortly after crises, stakeholders expect an early response. Crisis communication theory suggests the need for a quick response and urges organizations to give guidance in answering that seemingly simple question: "*how could this have happened?*" This applies to both corporate and public organizations. Regarding corporations, it is imperative that the CEO steps up to deliver a public statement to calm the situation and portray the organization as in control (Lucero, Tan Teng Kwang, & Pang, 2009). Regarding public organizations, public leaders should explain the crisis, its consequences and what is being done to minimize these consequences (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013; Coombs, 2007; Jong, 2017). This challenge continues when the dominant frames of crisis situations

change with time. Whenever new information about possible causes becomes publicly available, the frames might shift and urge the organization to alter its crisis communication response. This is certainly true for crises with a political context, which cast long shadows that often have a long political aftermath ('t Hart & Boin, 2001).

Existing crisis response strategies show weaknesses in their ability to bridge potential gaps between the perception shortly after the crisis (the initial responsibility) and future perceptions, based on the final report of an investigation committee (final responsibility). The difficulty of response strategies while an incident is still under investigation lies in the "unknowns". One feels the need to respond, although one might not want to jump to conclusions. At the same time, organizations should not neglect evolving perceptions regarding their role in a crisis. One must realize that statements will backfire when these do not align, for example when a positive spin is followed by a harsh truth (Mullin, 2003).

On September 28, 2014, an accident occurred during a monster truck show in Haaksbergen, The Netherlands: three people were killed when a monster truck ploughed into a crowd of onlookers. The Dutch Safety Board investigated the incident. During the investigation, the mayor stated that he would once again have granted the permit for the monster truck show. When the final investigation was presented, the mayor attacked some of the main conclusions in the report, thereby attacking the independent verdict of the Board. During the meeting of the city council where the report was discussed, he had to step down as the council lost confidence. The council confirmed the general conclusions drawn by the Dutch Safety Board. The formal response of the mayor backfired and was not enough to regain public confidence (Meerenburgh & van Duin, 2015).

This subsequently begs the question as to how an organization can respond to and anticipate in accordance with the situation, when the outcome of in-depth investigations is still unknown. Ideally, the response bridges the current collective and emotional impact of the crisis in terms of perception, while also delaying accountability for the responsibility until the final investigation report is published.

A more dynamic crisis response strategy is needed, which enables the organization under crisis to swiftly adapt to changing perceptions. In order to maintain reliability to stakeholders, even a drastic change in crisis response should be trustworthy. In this case there is a need for a crisis response strategy that keeps pace with changing perceptions, but does not undermine earlier statements made, nor erodes earlier reputations.

Acknowledge and await

In order to anticipate future "unknowns", a crisis response strategy of "acknowledge and await" is proposed. In this strategy, the organization anticipates a future outcome that is unknown to both the organization and its stakeholders. Ideally, the strategy anticipates the potential situation that the final outcome of a report might have a fundamentally different perception of the responsibility for the crisis.

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The strategy basically consists of acknowledging the crisis at hand, and taking responsibility for the initial cause, but also asking and thanking stakeholders for their patience in waiting for the future outcome of any investigation. The organization explains it will fully co-operate with the investigation committee in order to find answers to the existing, burning questions of the victims, media, stakeholders and the organization itself. As such, it acknowledges the questions that stakeholders have, but waits to answer them until the investigation report is published. In other words, the organization under crisis buys time.

Below, the two components of this strategy, *acknowledge* and *await,* are described in more detail.

Acknowledge

Acknowledgement is twofold. First, it enables the organization under crisis to address the emotional impact of the crisis among victims and stakeholders. Second, the strategy acknowledges the authority of the investigation committee, and shows respect for the committee's final judgment, while convincing stakeholders to trust the committee in its future final opinion. Overall, it acknowledges that a crisis occurred and that the organization is doing the best it can to prevent such crises from happening again. Meanwhile, this acknowledgement still shows that the organization gives priority to emotional and psychosocial support, and that political blame games get a lower priority at the moment of crisis. Compared to taking full responsibility (or the opposite, full denial), acknowledgement is also a scalable way of taking responsibility. *Feeling* responsible for a situation can be anything between a low and high level of responsibility, while *being* responsible is either full or none. As such, *acknowledgement* enables the organization to anticipate future reports, since it can show that it *feels* responsible, while the exact level of responsibility will be determined later on. Moreover, acknowledgement paves the way for the public display of empathy, compassion, solidarity and reassurance, which are all important response categories in the accountability process (Kuipers & 't Hart, 2014).

Await

The *await* component explicitly anticipates the final conclusions of the investigation committee. It does not mean that the organization under crisis is silenced, but that it communicates with restraint. The strategy gives direction towards when and how more clarity on the events that led to the crisis can be expected. Restraint is needed, because responding to an investigation in progress might leave the impression that the organization is already trying to spin and frame the crisis before the conclusion of the investigation. On the other hand, not responding while under investigation might give the impression of being non-communicative, while stakeholders will not wait until the report is presented. An insufficient response can easily lead to what Johansen and Frandsen

(Johansen & Frandsen, 2007) call a *double crisis*, where the handling of communication creates a new crisis in itself (Frandsen & Johansen, 2010, 2016). To prevent a double crisis from happening, the concerns of the stakeholders can be addressed by taking note of their questions and making the promise that all of their questions will be answered as soon as the independent report is published.

The Enschede fireworks disaster on May 13, 2000, involved a fire in a fireworks factory in the city of Enschede, The Netherlands. The fire led to a catastrophic explosion of fireworks that killed 23 people. The incumbent mayor, Jan Mans, used a strategy of "acknowledge and await". Even though he realized that the permits had allowed a fireworks factory to be built in a densely populated area, he managed to postpone discussions on his mayoral responsibilities. He made the priority his own citizens and the victims of the disaster. He supported them with care, and attended memorials and funerals. The mayor said that, regardless of the outcome of the final report, he felt responsible. "But", he explicitly said, "we will not put ourselves on the rack till we have the results of the investigation" (Mans, 2001). Locally and nationally the mayor was seen as a hero, and in the aftermath of the crisis, the Dutch Association of Municipalities awarded the mayor the Municipal Prize for his exemplary role (Noordegraaf & Newman, 2011). When the final investigation report was presented, the city discussed the issue of responsibility. The mayor politically survived and did not have to resign. His subsequent image evolved into that of a "crisis mayor" (Helsloot & Groenendaal, 2017).

While organizations might be tempted to respond to alleged crisis responsibilities right away, one should not underestimate the potential long-term and negative effects in terms of reputational damage. The proposed strategy of "acknowledge and await" asks crisis communication practitioners to weigh short-term benefits versus long-term gains (Coombs and Tachkova, 2019; Claeys and Coombs, 2019). Where a rapid response in the short run might enable the organization to shift perceptions in the preferred direction, it should not make things worse when the cause of the crisis turns out to be different from what was initially expected.

Using "acknowledge and await" does not mean that stakeholders will be silenced. As Cheng (2018) argued, stakeholders may also develop their own crisis responses ranging from emotional support, information seeking, remediation, rectification to diverting attention. It implies that stakeholders might increase their pressure on the organization under crisis during the time it "awaits". Also, new media are used to find information and to provide information to others as well (Stephens and Malone, 2009).

"Acknowledge and await", however, prepares the organization to respond to changing perceptions over time. In its effect, it can be expected that "acknowledge and await" shows similarities to the strategy of stealing thunder (Coombs, 2014). This crisis response strategy demonstrates that when it is the organization itself that first reports a crisis, it suffers less damage compared to situations where an outside source, such as the news

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media, is the first to report it. As the organization which applies "acknowledge and await" already "acknowledges" the existence of a crisis situation, it makes itself less vulnerable. In the short run, the organization does not hide. In the long run, it shows that it dares to wait for the final outcome of the investigation, and has patience to find and implement all the future lessons to be learnt.

In order to shorten the time span during which the organization is silenced and to prevent an additional crisis in the period of awaiting, an organization can start its own parallel, internal investigation. An internal investigation gives the communications department an indication of whether or not one's own procedures were effective and might give the conclusions of the final report a soft landing. The findings help the organization to anticipate the final outcomes of the official committee's investigation. In this way, the organization can share its preliminary findings with victims, media and stakeholders before the final report is presented. Using the internal investigation diminishes the impact of the final investigation, as long as the conclusions and recommendations are presented as preliminary and the internal investigation looks beyond the obvious. Only then does the organization show that it acknowledges its stakeholders and takes care of the interests of all parties involved. In terms of crisis response, this is the most credible approach to show that the organization commits itself to learning and is ready for the process of renewal (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013; Seeger & Sellnow 2016), anticipating the final verdict of the external investigation committee.

The question remains what an organization should do when the pressure builds up and when, during an investigation, the public asks for compensations and other proactive actions. Again, the answer lies in the "acknowledge"-part of the strategy. *Acknowledgement* enables the organization to show that it *feels* responsible, regardless of *being* responsible. Even though the organization under crisis supports compensations and other proactive actions because it feels a responsibility towards victims, their families and other stakeholders, it can stick to the policy that the exact level of responsibility will be determined later on.

5. FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research is suggested to explore the consequences of an "acknowledge and await" approach and to explore when the benefits of using this strategy are stretched to the limit. Are there any dangers to "acknowledge and await" in an endless cycle, as the presentation of some final investigation reports might take more than a year? How should one cope with in-depth reports by news media, which present an objective overview and reconstruction of the circumstances under which a crisis occurred, prior to a final investigation report? Does an internal investigation minimize the short-term impact of such

media reports? Such research builds upon the findings of Coombs and Tachkova (2019) and their distinction between short-term effects and long-term gains. This distinction and balance between short- and long-term effects in crisis communication theory would be a welcome topic for further research, in order to enrich our understanding of the potential diminishing effects of expected long-term reputational gains.

6. CONCLUSION

Responding to a crisis with an outspoken response strategy can harm an organization when investigation committees find underlying causes that, even when unknown to the organization, are part of its sphere of influence. While Boin et al. (2016) state that public authorities will have to engage with the media and external stakeholders to get their definition of the situation across in a framing context, this should not automatically apply to the communication frame about responsibility. Communication on crisis-related responsibility should be handled with care, as long as investigation committees have not finished their work. In responding to a crisis, the spokesperson at the scene should realize that the possible outcome of a future accident report could backfire when initial and future statements do not align.

Current crisis response strategies make the assumption that crisis responsibilities are rather static, while incident reports show that perceived crisis responsibilities can change dramatically during the aftermath of a crisis. Perceptions can morph in the aftermath of crises, requiring changing responses over time. Also, organizations can find themselves in situations of shared responsibility, while crisis communication theory still tends to adopt a single responsibility point of view.

Thus far, crisis communication literature has mainly focused on a corporate setting, where protecting reputation and brand value is key. In their study on crisis communication during natural disasters, Waymer and Heath (2007) already pointed to such a "managerial bias" in crisis communication research. In their meta-analysis on thirty years of crisis communication strategy, Arendt et al. (2017) discussed 110 peer-reviewed articles underscoring research on apologia, crisis communication, and image repair. Their meta-analysis confirms that current research in crisis communication seems to be highly skewed towards American, reputational case studies (Arendt et al., 2017), where organizations adopt response strategies and reframe their crisis responsibility in order to protect their brands.

Taking such crisis response strategies for granted, might give practitioners the false impression that a prompt response on perceived responsibility is always key. The current study claims that in certain cases, it would be preferred for an organization under crisis to not rush to make things worse. As discussed, the responsibility does not always fall on

only one organization and can often be shared among stakeholders where single interests compete with the interests of the entire industry. Moreover, one can think of situations where governmental agencies are held responsible for crises caused by others (Jong, 2017) as well as situations where there are other communication goals than image repair alone (Jong et al., 2016).

Contrary to Seeger's (2006) suggestion, this implies that there are circumstances under which acknowledging uncertainty should be used as a strategy. The proposed response of "acknowledge and await" explores the characteristics of changing perceptions on crisis responsibility in the aftermath of crises. It presents an initial response strategy to anticipate changing responsibilities. The proposed strategy explicitly bridges the gap between current and future perceptions. Such a strategy is needed to cope with cause-related uncertainty and to acknowledge the impact that a crisis has for society, while it is still unclear whether or not the organization can expect to receive the blame (or parts of blame) when the investigation report is finally presented. The response strategy prevents organizations from jumping to conclusions about future investigation outcomes, thereby safeguarding the credibility and reputation of the organization under crisis in both the short and the long run.

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Crisis leadership by mayors:

a qualitative content analysis of newspapers

and social media on the MH17 disaster

ABSTRACT

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 crashed in the Ukraine on 17 July 2014 with 193 Dutch passengers on board. The present study assessed which MH17-related activities (or absence of certain activities) of 54 mayors from the Netherlands were mentioned in (social) media and if and how they were evaluated. Analyses of newspaper articles and social media showed that public 'meaning making' and 'remembering' by mayors can be considered as a table stake or *conditio sine qua non*. Mayors are expected to speak at memorials and attend community activities. Strong appreciation was however retrieved from victims' families whenever mayors visited them with a listening ear in the privacy of their homes, demonstrating the role mayors can fulfil as mourners-in-chief in local communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

A Boeing 777-200 passenger plane, operating as Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, crashed in the Ukraine, east of Donetsk on 17 July 2014. All 283 passengers and 15 crew members died, including 193 people with a Dutch nationality. The tragedy came at a time of deepening tensions between Moscow, and the United States and European countries, as the plane was shot down from an area which was controlled by Russian-backed separatists (Dutch Safety Board 2015). It does not seem farfetched to argue that the downing of MH17 can be considered to be a disaster with consequences for international political relationships similar to the case of the Lockerbie bombing on December 21, 1988 (Stigers, 1998).

Besides the international political tensions, the MH17 disaster had two other distinctive characteristics when compared to 'regular' local crises. First, post-event activities such as the organization of the identification and (forensic) investigation into the actual cause of the disaster, were taken care of by either Ukraine authorities or the Dutch national government. Second, the bereaved or affected families were not concentrated in one city or area: they live in areas throughout the Netherlands. All in all, 54 mayors (or their deputies) were involved. They were all confronted with the impact of this disaster as soon as stories regarding the names of victims began to circulate in many municipalities. Dutch mayors are appointed in a somewhat hybrid public administrative system and not elected directly by citizens themselves. The King appoints the mayor after the candidate is being proposed by the city council. Unlike many other countries, Dutch mayors chair local and regional crisis teams and approve final decisions.

After crises, Dutch mayors are usually referred to as 'citizenfather'. Citizenfather is a literal translation of the Dutch word 'burgervader' (or citizenmother: 'burgermoeder' depending on the gender of the mayor). This label fits their symbolic role in the community, comparable to the public roles elected mayors like Giuliani and Nagin fulfilled in the aftermath of 9/11 and hurricane Katrina. At the time, they spoke directly to the citizens – and then to the nation – making sure that constituents understood that their leader was concerned about their emotional and physical well-being (Griffin-Padgett & Allison, 2010). According to 0t Hart, the importance of such public display of compassion with those suffering hardship can hardly be under-estimated (0t Hart, 1993). Thus far, the focus of disaster research on public leaders is mostly based on individual case studies, which happened within municipal boundaries. An important characteristic and possible limitation of single case studies is that the specific elements of the disaster can hardly be separated from the person of the mayor or how he fulfilled his role as public leader. Possible conclusions about leadership, i.e., whether results can be attributed to the mayor and/or specific elements of the disaster, are therefore to a certain extent tentative. To be able to make a distinction between both, a series of single case studies that follow more or less identical disasters are needed.

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In an earlier systematic review (Jong, Dückers & van der Velden, 2016b), the authors already called for more studies enabling comparisons of mayors in similar crisis situations, such as the studies on public leaders by Gallagher, Fontenot and Boyle, (2007), Fairhurst and Cooren, (2009) and Griffin-Padgett et al. (2010). It bridges a gap identified by Boin and Gralepois (2006a), who stated that in the absence of a systematic investigation, the search for best practices amounts to little more than a description of heroic leaders and happy crisis endings.

The MH17 disaster provided a unique opportunity to conduct a comparative study, because the mayors were confronted with exactly the same situation, i.e., the same 'distinct' disaster that caused the death of their own citizens. It provides an opportunity to assess and compare how the role of tens of mayors was perceived and evaluated. Insight in how citizens and media perceive crisis leadership may help or even improve these aspects of crisis leadership of mayors in the future. To the best of our knowledge, no existing study has examined a crisis situation in such a way.

In order to meet our goal, we set up a qualitative content analysis of both regular and social media. It was the news media, together with the regular media, the victims, the general public and other authorities that set the stage for the evaluation of the performance of the mayors (Boin & Smith, 2006b). Similarly, Littlefield and Quenette (2007) add that those in authority would be wise to use the media to identify how their words and actions are perceived by the public. Recent research on the Queensland floods in 2011 suggests that perceptions on social media influenced the news media (De Bussy & Paterson, 2012). In our analysis, we focus on reports in newspapers and on Twitter as exponents of the regular and social media respectively, regarding any MH17-related activities (or absence of activities) by mayors. The (social) media set the stage for the public's evaluation of the activities and performance of mayors. Together, these reports should give us an indication of the perceptions of the general public and media themselves. Even though social media users might not fully represent society, we are confident their expressions contribute to the stage Boin et al. (2006b) refer to. As such, collecting the tweets can be regarded as an appropriate manner to retrieve direct feedback on the way mayors behaved in the aftermath of MH17. In sum, our research question is 'Which MH17-related activities (or absence of certain activities) of Dutch mayors are mentioned in (social) media and if and how were they perceived in these media at different stages during the first year after this disaster?'

2. METHOD

We chose a timeframe between 17 July 2014 (day of the crash) and 31 July 2015. As such, we included the disaster's first anniversary on 17 July 2015, on which the victims were commemorated. For convenience, the period was split up in three, somewhat arbitrary, separate stages. Since in this specific case, Dutch mayors had no role in the immediate response at the scene of disaster itself, we decided to create sub-sections based on key events which can be regarded as ritual landmarks in the aftermath. These were the local memorials and gatherings (key event 1), the national memorial (key event 2) and the first anniversary of the disaster (key event 3). As such, the first period (stage I) covers the first month, from 17 July through 17 August 2014. The second period (stage II) runs from 18 August 2014 until 10 November 2014. On that day (November 10), a National Memorial Service was held. The Dutch King and Queen, ministers and other public officials from the Netherlands and other countries that lost citizens in the disaster, as well as mayors of the affected towns attended this memorial service. The third, final and longer stage (stage III) runs from 11 November 2014 until 31 July 2015.

As said, with respect to the (social) media, we focused on two information sources: newspapers and Twitter. We used the online academic news database (LexisNexis Academic) to obtain full text reprints of published Dutch newspaper articles from electronic archives. Articles were searched for similar keywords, i.e., MH17 (or mh-17) AND mayor (Dutch: burgemeester) OR elderman OR deputy (Dutch: wethouder or loco). We assumed that newspaper articles would use the full function and surname of the mayor at least once in their coverage, since it is unlikely that newspapers will mention the name of a mayor without using the title 'mayor'.

In the case of newspapers, the timeframes were extended with 1 day, since the news was published in most newspapers 1 day after the event. We included the main Dutch national newspapers in our selection (NRC Handelsblad, de Volkskrant, De Telegraaf, Trouw, Algemeen Dagblad) as well as the top 14 regional newspapers belonging to publishing houses of Wegener, TMG-regiokranten and NDC. Within the publishing houses, articles are usually republished in sister newspapers as well. For our qualitative analysis, we removed these duplicate articles from the original set of 547 published articles. This resulted in a total set of 299 unique newspaper articles, editorials, columns and opinion pieces.

Tweets were retrieved using the Coosto software (www.coosto.nl), a widely used tool suited for webcare and qualitative online data analysis. The software enabled us to export the tweets captured for using keywords in any given period. Tweets were searched and collected based on the following keywords, not necessarily hashtags: MH17 (or mh-17), references to (the name of) the mayor and/or his deputy and/or the name of the town where victims came from. These search terms were used to ensure that all tweets about

mayors were captured. For instance, and in contrast to newspaper articles, Twitter users, limited by a maximum of 140 characters per tweet, might only refer to the mayor by mentioning his or her surname and not using the word 'mayor' explicitly.

One should realize the total number of tweets is also influenced by retweets. A retweet is similar to a tweet, but consists of a message of a person (user I), which has been copied and resent by another Twitter user (user II). Tweets are usually retweeted when users think it is worth spreading. For our analysis, we captured 1.698 tweets, including 709 retweets. This set includes 12 tweets by mayors themselves.

2.1. Analyses and coding procedures

In order to assess the perceived performance and evaluations of mayors, we assigned three possible values to the content of newspaper articles or tweets: neutral, negative or positive. A label was given based on the content and overall tone-of-voice of the entire newspaper article or tweet. Articles and tweets that only reflected the mayors own opinion but without any indication of the appreciation or disapproval of journalists, citizens or others, were independent of the tone-of-voice, coded 'neutral'.

In general, an article or tweet was regarded as neutral when the appearance of a mayor is mentioned (by others than the mayor him or herself), without any interpretation or normative terminology. All tweets by mayors were coded as 'neutral' by default; retweets of these mayoral tweets however, could be coded negative, positive or neutral. An example of a neutral tweet is the sentence 'a gathering was held which was attended by the mayor', because it reflects a factual tone without judgment on the nature of the mayor's presence or appearance. In our coding, only an additional description of the situation in which a mayor fulfils his role, gives it either a 'positive' or 'negative' interpretation. Articles or tweets were coded as 'positive' when the role of the mayor was discussed as inspiring, moving and/or relevant, for example 'the mayor read out a wellchosen poem during the gathering'. It was labelled 'negative' whenever the performance of a mayor was disliked, disapproved or otherwise criticized. We included quotes of our samples in the results section.

Two researchers independently rated the set of news articles and tweets. The level of agreement between the two raters was satisfactory. Cohen's Kappa (.80 for the newspaper articles and .82 for the Twitter messages) was calculated using IBM SPSS version 20. Kappa values between .80 and .90 are generally considered to exhibit acceptable levels of interrater reliability (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). Given that a high level of inter-rater reliability had been established, the scores of the first author were used for our analysis. A complete list of all identified and processed newspapers articles and tweets (In Dutch), including the codings of the identified articles and tweets, can be obtained from the first author.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Findings from newspaper articles
We found a total of 138 articles for stage I, 62 articles for stage II and 99 articles for stage III.

3.1.1 Articles during stage I
Most articles published during the first stage, were labelled as 'neutral' (122; 88.4%). Newspapers covered similar gatherings as those that citizens tweeted about; i.e., where mayors attended memorial services, charity marches and the like. A newspaper article has more room to report about the mayor0s activities. For this reason, we add two examples of quotes from such neutral articles, without any interpretation by the journalist:

'I want to express my sincere and deep sympathy for the families and friends of the victims. It is difficult to understand how a disaster like this has destroyed so many lives. Behind the scenes, the municipality will provide all the support necessary.' (Mayor Spies, Stichtse Vecht; Algemeen Dagblad 2014a)

'The municipality has arranged 'a care-team' to assist the bereaved families with practical issues that have to be arranged, but also with grieving and coping with their loss. (Mayor van der Laan, Amsterdam; Het Parool 2014a)

Positive articles (10; 7.3%) quoted citizens who appear to have appreciated the way the mayor participated in local gatherings. These articles referred to speeches and how mayors were able to find words for the collective feelings of the town's hurt. 'The mayor of Bergen op Zoom articulated the feelings of the people who attended the memorial service', one newspaper wrote (BN/DeStem 2014b). Another positive labelled article reports on the attendance of the mayor of Rotterdam during a silent march (Algemeen Dagblad 2014c). It was referred to as 'impressive'. In another news article, his presence at a memorial gathering was referred to as 'comforting' (Algemeen Dagblad 2014b). It is similar to an article about another mayor, who was described as speaking short, powerful and impressive during the memorial service:

It was very silent at the central square of Breda. Mayor Peter van der Velden gives a speech. Short. Powerful. Impressive. (. . .) 'We are not going to wait until people approach us with their questions and problems. We will approach them ourselves. We have people to do that. You cannot imagine the practical challenges that the bereaved will find on their path. In this, we are going to support them as best as we can. We have to do this. They will not be left on their own. We are here for them' (Mayor Van der Velden, Breda; BN/DeStem, 2014a)

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The mayor of Kaag en Braasem discusses how she keeps in touch with families who lost their loved ones during an interview (Leidsch Dagblad 2014). The article covering this interview had a neutral tone-of-voice.

Two examples were given where mayors presented themselves as a spokesperson for the victims' family. First, the mayor of Simpelveld asked the residents of his town who collectively started an initiative for a memorial service, to cancel it, on behalf of the family (De Limburger 2014a). Second, the mayor of Dordrecht asked his citizens to show restraint towards the victims' family (Algemeen Dagblad 2014d).

Negative articles (6; 4.4%) in this period mainly focused on a remark from the mayor of Hilversum. During a show on national radio, he called for the 29-year-old daughter of Russian president Putin, who lives in the Netherlands, to be expelled. Another example of negative press was found in a regional newspaper, which commented on the absence of the mayor of Maastricht. The mayor did not return from holidays to join a commemoration. The organization cancelled the commemoration, for as long as the public discussion about the absent mayor would continue:

'The mayor noticed, again, that a mayor apparently cannot do it right. His innocent tweet, sent out with good intentions, was misinterpreted and in social media the story rapidly took shape: Mayor Hoes preferred the sun over the memorial ceremony.' (De Limburger 2014b)

3.1.2 Articles during stage II
Among the articles from stage II, we coded 43 articles as 'neutral' (69.4%), 6 as 'negative' (9.7%) and 13 articles as 'positive' (21.0%). In this stage, many articles were published in relation to the National Memorial in November 2014 and look back upon the first few weeks after the disaster. An example of a neutral description of the words of a mayor at the end of the summer recess:

'A total of 14 men, women and children, cheerfully went on board of the plane on that sunny day in July, to find their deaths a couple of hours later in a field of sunflowers. The 'citizen father' read the names of the victims aloud, and then the city council asked for one minute of silence. A gasp, a tear. The mayor: 'To us bystanders, modesty is appropriate, because this is firstly and above all, your grief.'' (Mayor Van Aartsen, The Hague, Algemeen Dagblad, 2014e)

In a positive article, relatives speak about the mayoral support they feel (De Gooi- en Eemlander 2014). Two articles (De Gelderlander 2014; Eindhovens Dagblad 2014) interview relatives, who are both positive in relation to the involvement of their own mayor when he visited them for his support towards. One of these articles discussed the fact that even the busy mayor from Amsterdam made time to visit bereaved families, which was regarded as remarkable:

'At first I wondered how we could obtain emotional benefit from such a man in a suit. But then you feel his involvement and practical issues become almost irrelevant. It was a precious moment', one relative says. Another relative: 'He stayed with us for one hour and a half.' (. . .) 'Sincerely interested. He assured me of his support. His literal words: 'what might take you one-and-ahalf week of kicking bureaucratic doors, often takes one phonecall by me. Use this.' He kept his word, right away.' (De Gelderlander 2014).

Negative articles referred to the earlier remarks about the daughter of president Putin by the mayor of Hilversum. However, the same mayor received positive criticism as well, especially about the way he supported his community in their struggle. News articles also refer positively to his presence at the military base in the city of Hilversum, where long lines of hearses, carrying the remains, arrived for forensic investigations.

3.1.3 Articles during stage III

The articles in stage III were mostly neutral (81; 81.8%). Two articles report on two mayors who fulfilled a task in the ceremonial transport of the remains of the victims of MH17.

'With the arrival of the last seven coffins with remains of passengers of flight MH17, the mission ended Saturday. (. . .) Mayor Van Gijzel, minister Ard van der Steur (Safety and Justice) and other dignitaries joined the ceremony at Eindhoven Airforce Base.' (Eindhovens Dagblad 2015b).

Hours later, another regional newspaper reports on the arrival of the hearses:

'For the ninth time, mayor Pieter Broertjes from Hilversum lays down a wreath at the entrance of the institute where the forensic investigations take place' (De Gooi- en Eemlander 2015a).

In an interview one year after the crash, the mayor explains how he felt under those circumstances. 'I always wondered what it meant. I thought: I am the father of my children, but I came so close to those families and was confronted with their grief. They needed an arm around their shoulder, compassion, and I could provide it. This is how I changed from a mayor [burgemeester] into a citizenfather [burgervader].' (mayor Broertjes, Hilversum, De Gooi- en Eemlander, 2015b).

Positive articles (14; 14.1%) underlined the solidarity in towns and the central role the mayors played in supporting this. Relatives spoke about the visit of a mayor in a positive manner (Het Parool 2014b). The MH17 disaster was mentioned several times in New Year speeches. Two examples of positive judgments in newspaper articles:

'For a short moment it becomes too much for mayor . . . at the start of his New Year speech. Talking about last year0s MH17 disaster that took the life of a resident touched him deeply. 'I am getting a bit emotional'. He said as he gazed shortly in the direction of victim's father. It characterizes the mayor, who sincerely supports and cares about his citizens' (about mayor Ederveen, Valkenswaard, Eindhovens Dagblad, 2015a)

'The mayor delivers an impressive speech. He inspires with words like 'together', connectedness, the sharing of success and drawbacks but does not leave his concerns unmentioned. I see that through the years he has grown into his role as a 'citizenfather'. This role fits him perfectly. He receives a well-earned and loud applause. Well done!' (about mayor Meijer, Zwolle, De Weekkrant 2015).

Again, negative articles (4; 4.0%) refer to the Putinremark and the absence of the mayor of Maastricht at the time people in the city expected him to join the memorials. One of the bereaved directed a negative reflection not so much at a mayor in particular, but at the inequality in the approach of MH-17 bereaved by mayors in general, in relation to other losses of close family members:

'A friend of mine lost her child in a car accident. In her situation, the mayor did not visit her. In her situation, not everyone was showing compassion. It would have done her good as well. You want to be heard.' (NRC Handelsblad, 2014a)

3.2. Findings from tweets
We identified a total of 1.698 tweets. The number of tweets fluctuates during stage I and II and showed several peaks in the number of tweets and times with relative little activity on Twitter (see Figure 1). We found 811 tweets for stage I (with peaks at the day of the National Memorial), 312 tweets for stage II (with a peak during the arrival of the wreckage of MH17 at the Gilze-Rijen Airforce Base on December 12th) and 575 tweets for stage III (with a peak on the first anniversary on 17 July 2015).
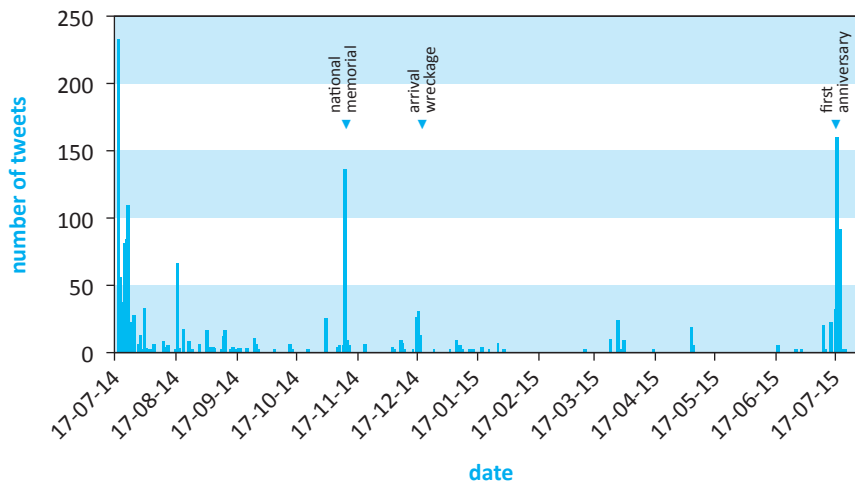

FIGURE 1. MH17-related tweets over time.

3.2.1. Tweets during stage I

During the first month, the largest amount of tweets was sent during the first week after the disaster. A second increase of tweets occurred around August 17th, 2014, when a local remembrance gathering was held in Hilversum, a town with 15 casualties among the passengers of MH17, the highest number in the Netherlands. During stage I, tweets were overwhelmingly neutral (695 tweets; 85.7%). Neutral tweets mainly referred to mayors who confirm that people from their municipalities were on board of the MH17 aircraft and expressed their feelings of shock and compassion. Later, these tweets were followed by announcements of mayors who interrupted their holidays to come back home, open or sign public condolence registries, the retrenchment of festivities and the contributions of mayors to local memorial services.

Two examples of neutral tweets, which give a factual description of the situation:

'Minute of silence by mayor Pieter Smit during the Night of Winschoten festivities #MH17' (@timothydeklerk, 18 July 2014)

'Mayor Van der Laan interrupts his holidays as well, due to MH17' (@annemijnvh, 19 July 2014)

Positive tweets (42 tweets; 5.2%) usually referred to the words the mayors chose during commemoration activities, their support to the next of kin and the way in which they fulfilled their crisis tasks in general.

'Impressive gathering at the #CentralSquare with compassionate and encouraging words from the mayor! #MH17 #Breda' (@GB_Breda, 23 July 2014)

Negative tweets (74 tweets; 9.1%) were dominated by remarks of the mayor who asked for the expulsion of Putin's daughter. Other negative tweets discussed the decision of the mayor of Nijmegen, who banned the traditional flower parade at the finish line (the Via Gladiola) of the International Four Days Marches.

'Ridiculous. Mayor Bruls bans flowers. There was supposed to be some kind of memorial at the finish line anyway #MH17 #ViaGladiola' (@Widtvoet, 18 July 2014)

3.2.2. Tweets during stage II

In this stage, the amount of tweets regarding the activities of mayors in the aftermath of the disaster is relatively low, until November 10th, 2014. The period up to November 10th (Stage II) consisted of 312 tweets. Again, most tweets (286 tweets; 91.7%) were neutral, while positive tweets (23 tweets; 7.4%) referred to similar circumstances as the tweets in stage I, such as references to mayors who appeared at tributes:

'Beautiful and moving tribute from Mayor Van Aartsen for victims from The Hague MH17' (@Esther-Habers, 18 September 2014)

and a message directly aimed at Mayor Delissen (Peel en Maas):

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'@BurgDelissen True. Emotion and delight. Finally they are together again. Thank you for your empathy! #supportsus #MH17' (@IngridSmets, 13 October 2014)

Three tweets had a negative tone-of-voice (1.0%). These tweets refer to the earlier mentioned remarks of the mayor of Hilversum who advocated the expulsion of the daughter of President Putin, and his attendance at the National Memorial Service:

'Did the retarded mayors forget about their colleague, who criticized Putin and his daughter because of the Russian BUK rocket which was aimed at the #MH17?' (@gRUTTEnsEU, 30 October 2014)

3.2.3. Tweets during stage III

This stage covered 575 tweets. It reached a peak in the week of July 10-17, 2015, when preparations were discussed for the first anniversary of the crisis. Most tweets were labelled as 'neutral' (486 tweets; 84.5%). Two negative tweets are aimed at the mayor of Naarden, who joins radio show 'Twee Dingen' in which she explains the mayoral duties during MH17:

'Why do I feel uncomfortable when I hear the mayor of Naarden talk about victims of MH17? PR show for herself? #tweedingen' (@ruitjesspinsels, 16 July 2015)

The largest set of 'positive' (8.5%) and 'negative' tweets (7.0%) are part of a discussion, coined by the mayor of Noordenveld. He commented that 'all the attention for MH17 is getting disproportional, especially when compared to other incidents where people perish.' Of all negative posts in this stage, 32 tweets refer to the mayor as 'incapable for the job':

'Mayor Hans v.d. Laan of #Noordenveld, believes the attention for #MH17 is getting disproportional. Time to resign.' (@willemwjoo, 18 July 2015)

In total, 29 Twitter users just agree with the mayor (positive posts).

'Actually, I agree. Injustice. Mayor from province of Drenthe takes attention to #MH17 'injustice'' (@judithinnoord, 18 July 2015)

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was 'to assess which MH17-related activities (or absence of certain activities) of Dutch mayors were mentioned in the (social) media and if and how they were evaluated at different stages during the first year after this disaster?' We focused on newspapers and Twitter as sources of information on (social) media.

As mentioned in the introduction, from a mayoral point of view, the MH17 disaster happened elsewhere but nevertheless had implications 'back home'. Whereas the public performance of a mayor and the process of political responsibility and accountability afterwards usually seem to be closely connected (Boin & 't Hart, 2003; Gasper & Reeves,

2011; Lay, 2009; Resodihardjo, van Eijk & Carroll, 2012), this was not the case with the MH17. In the aftermath of MH17, there were no blame games, and no political accountability concerning evacuation orders, permits or disaster management in general (an element mayors are all too familiar with in the aftermath of crises within the boundaries of their own municipality). The downing of MH17 was a situation that occurred outside their sphere of influence. Political partisanship was no issue in the aftermath of MH17 either. The King appoints Dutch mayors independent of their political preference, though 98% is member of a political party (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations 2015). Only in two instances, a mayor was asked to use her political contact. Furthermore, 13 negative tweets referred to the political party of the mayor who initiated the discussion about the daughter of Putin. In two instances, the political party was mentioned in positive tweets about a memorial gathering. In newspaper articles, the political parties were of no importance either.

Findings showed that the local society regarded the activities of mayors as neutral-to-slightly-positive contributions: they publically announced and confirmed the names of the passengers who died in the tragedy, they attended and publicly spoke at memorial services, they were supportive to the bereaved and mourned together with the local communities. We did not find striking differences in the description of mayors in news articles compared to tweets. Apparently, both newspaper articles and tweets valued mayors in a similar manner.

When the attendance of a mayor at a memorial, bringing his condolences or interrupting his holidays is described in a neutral manner, one should realize that it is apparently worth mentioning anyway. Even though a large proportion of the neutral tweets described these kinds of situations, we decided to code them other-than-'neutral'-only in those cases when it explicitly had such a tone-of-voice.

A possible explanation for the neutrality in more than 80% of news articles and tweets, is the absence of direct political responsibility. However, the absence of political responsibility for the occurrence of the disaster does not automatically indicate the absence of responsibility for the aftermath. A clear example is the Katrina disaster and its aftermath. Arceneaux and Stein (2006) found, that under crisis circumstances, citizens attributed blame out of a desire to maintain a sense of control. It suggests, at the very least, that mayors are evaluated even in situations where they have no direct political responsibility. Research on the crisis leadership styles on the Queensland floods (De Bussy et al., 2012) presented similar findings, where Queensland Premier Anna Bligh was perceived to be inspirational and charismatic and Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard 's communication style was characterized as 'robotic and rehearsed'. One is, therefore, not only evaluated on the basis of direct political responsibility and actions. The way in which a political leader presents his- or herself must be taken into account as well. As such, the fact that mayors had no responsibility in the downing

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of MH17 itself, does not explain why the majority of news articles and tweets can be considered as 'neutral'. Of course, the MH17 disaster did not affect local communities in the Netherlands the way natural disasters such as floodings would, in terms of the destruction of homes, infrastructures and facilities. Future research following similar disasters, such as the disaster with Germanwings flight 9525 in France (24 March 2015), may provide more data to elaborate on this particular explanation considering that the MH17 and Germanwings flight 9525 are similar 'distant crises' from the viewpoint of Dutch and German mayors.

As an alternative explanation, we should realize that a 'neutral' and factual article or tweet might not necessarily reflect the underlying emotions. Particularly in the case of people who attend memorial gatherings, one might feel social pressure to be either neutral or positive. When more is known about the motivation of the sender, such a tweet carrying could be considered 'positive' or 'negative'. This information is currently unavailable.

When we look at the 'negative tweets' during stage I to III, we do not find any negative tweets by people who join the ceremonies themselves. Negative tweets are all on other subjects, from the remarks about the daughter of Putin to the flower ban during the Four Day Marches. Are memorial gatherings, in other words, circumstances in which it might become rather inappropriate to be outspokenly negative about a mayor? In that line of thought, a negative experience does not necessarily translate into a negative tweet. A study by Gibbs, Meese, Arnold, Nansen and Carter (2015) explains the main purpose of social media at funerals, in particular Instagram, as a way to signal one's presence and emotional circumstances to a wider social network. A proof of 'being there' might be more relevant than the experience itself and/or the way one describes it. That being the case, however, should not refrain columnists in newspapers from accurately covering and commenting on it, unless they also feel similar social pressure. Hearsum (2012) analysed the detailed coverage of Amy Winehouse's death in British press. In that particular situation, the press did discuss the funeral and not only commented on the flowers, but also on the more negative experiences with empty vodka bottles, beer cans and attention-seeking visitors in front of her house (Hearsum, 2012). Since newspaper articles did hardly express a negative tone either, this might indicate that the underlying experiences that were reported through articles and tweets, were perhaps similar to the way they were written down. We have no reason to assume that negative experiences with mayors in the aftermath of MH17 were covered with the cloak of charity, though we cannot completely rule out this possibility. But, even if this were (sometimes) the case, it did not appear on the public stage on which the performance of mayors and crisis managers will be evaluated (Boin et al., 2006b). It was outside the scope of this study to assess to which extent journalists and Twitter users disclose their private and personal opinions.

As described in the results section, one mayor of a larger city did not attend a memorial service but preferred to continue his holidays when others decided to come back. He attracted negative press, an indication that journalist and Twitter users apparently expected the mayor to join local memorial services. This interesting finding, i.e., being criticized on not employing an activity instead of being criticized on a completed activity, clearly suggests that mayors face certain expectations concerning their 'duties' after an 'a-typical' disaster as explained above. Other mayors did attend memorial services and gatherings and this was noted without any specific comment. Similarly, the fact that several mayors discontinued their holidays and came back was taken for granted. Tweets noticed that mayors interrupted their holidays, but without further remarks like 'impressive he comes back from holidays' or something similar. Newspaper articles wrote about it as something which was taken for granted and not, as one might expect, as something extraordinary. This suggests that these mayors just did what they were supposed to do in this situation: attend and give a voice to the collective mourning.

Public speaking after crises is regarded as 'meaning making', the leadership task of communicating the broader impacts of a crisis to citizens, media and other stakeholders (Boin, 't Hart, Stern & Sundelius, 2005; Jong et al. 2016b). Often, 'meaning making' is a highly symbolic function, fulfilling the need for direction and guidance (Boin, Kuipers & Overdijk, 2013). Regarding the Dutch mayors in the aftermath of the MH17 disaster, the public perspective reflects the role of mayors in finding words to describe the collective impact, including their participation in social gatherings. What we identified is also what Kofman Bos, 't Hart and Ullberg (2005) refer to as 'remembering'. According to them, it consists of publicly acknowledging that many crises and disasters are traumatic experiences for the victims, responders and the organizations and communities involved, as well as responsively accommodating the desire that the community should 'never forget'. The local memorials, the national memorial on 10 November 2014 and the first anniversary are all examples of 'remembering' in which mayors took the lead locally, or joined a larger, public event.

However, we also noticed that mayors visited the bereaved families at home and supported them in their material needs. It is a less visible but presumably nevertheless a highly appreciated role. Thus far, public leaders are warned as they often fall prey to their own unrealistic promises to victims (Boin et al., 2003). According to identified articles and tweets, there were no public remarks indicating that mayoral promises were evaluated as unrealistic or their involvement was purely symbolic. They supported the families with practical issues whenever needed, and lent a highly appreciated 'listening ear', as the articles from stage II (Eindhovens Dagblad 2014; De Gelderlander 2014) and stage III (Het Parool 2014b) showed. We realize that this more private perspective comes from just three interviews with the next of kin. On the other hand, we did not find any interview where this specific role of mayors was disliked. It is at least an indication of an apparent valuable and

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valued role for mayors in the aftermath of crises. All in all, mayors appear to have functioned on both public and private stages as the facilitator whose task is not only to manage the crisis, but also to support the healing process from disaster to restoration (Griffin- Padgett et al., 2010). They were evaluated accordingly. Where 'meaning making' and 'remembering' depart from a public dimension, the 'listening ear' and support with practical issues are far more private, although interviews with family members elevate it to a public perspective again. Sometimes the public and private stages meet, as the example where two mayors presented themselves as a spokesperson on request of the victims' family showed.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND LIMITATIONS

The findings and conclusions of the present study are indicative for the role mayors can fulfil as mourners-in- chief in local communities (see also Fastenberg, 2011 on presidents as mourner-in-chief), but should be further validated by other studies on similar and dissimilar types of disaster to improve our understanding of the 'modus operandi' of mayors during and after crises.

In addition, some study limitations should be discussed. The collection of newspaper articles was limited to national and regional newspapers. We are aware we missed newspaper clippings from local newspapers (not captured by LexisNexis Academic), although we assume that a fierce local debate about the activities of a mayor in the aftermath of this (and other) disasters, would rapidly have reached the regional newspapers as well (and vice versa).

In theory, it is possible that we missed some tweets in the study period because they were posted and deleted by users afterwards. The present study focused on newspapers articles and Twitter. In the Netherlands, there currently are approximately 1 million daily Twitter users (Jong & Dückers, 2016a) on a population of 17 million people. As such, we believe it is a representative, mainstream social medium. We did not analyse other (social) media such as TV, radio, Facebook or Instagram. In principle, it is possible that they added information to the stage by which the performance of mayors will be evaluated, and that it would differ from the articles and tweets we identified. However, we believe that is highly unlikely that, for instance, negative evaluations of the performances of mayors are restricted or very skewed to one of the (social) media.

The MH17-disaster was an unusual kind of crisis from a mayoral point of view since the downing itself happened thousands of miles away from his/her municipality. While in ordinary crisis situations, mayors have to combine several tasks, from chairing the crisis team to using their legislative powers, this crisis primarily asked for 'meaning making', 'remembering' and, more privately, taking care of practical needs and lend a 'listening ear' to the bereaved.

From an academic perspective, the study suggests that the public role of mayors can be considered as a table stake or conditio sine qua non. One is expected to deliver on 'meaning making' and 'remembering', but it is hard to get this behaviour reflected as 'appreciation' in news articles or on social media. Only a few mayors received appreciation for the words they spoke during memorial services and silent marches. That said, if one fails to deliver, it easily punishes a mayor with a significant disadvantage. We discussed three of such examples. In the case of the mayor of Noordenveld, who publically suggested that the coverage of MH17 was disproportional compared to other smaller incidents (see Helsloot, 2007; which is correct from the viewpoint that high-quality support to people affected by disasters should, among others, be equal: Dückers & Thormar, 2015), the remark let to a debate on Twitter in which people either doubted his mayoral capabilities and others agreed.

Where it is hard to get appreciation for the public role, interviews report about the distinct appreciation the mayors received from victims' families, whenever mayors visited them in the privacy of their homes to lend a 'listening ear', and to discuss their material needs. Although they are public leaders, they also bring an essential element of private aftercare into practice (see Hobfoll, Watson, Bell, Bryant, Brymer & Friedman, 2007). Apparently, one does neglect the importance of direct contact between a mayor and the next of kin, when mayors are only evaluated through public lenses and the focus is exclusively put on the collective impact. We learnt that the mayor of Hilversum, even though he was generally criticized on his remarks on Putin's daughter, was highly appreciated for the relationship he maintained with the families.

Further study on the appreciation of victims' families themselves, other than through interviews in newspapers, might deepen our understanding of the interaction between the collective and more private aspects of mayors' involvement as a 'citizen father'. This also counts for the more indirect influence they might have on the recovery of the families, through public acknowledgements in terms of 'meaning making' and 'remembering'.
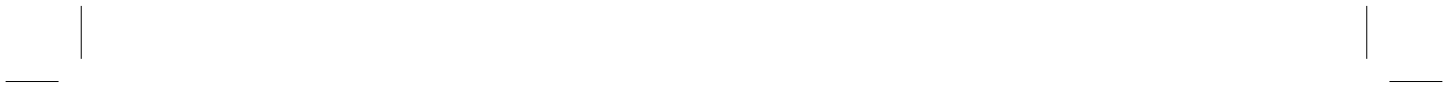
Of course, mayors might have their own goals as well. After all, crises can be opportunities for communities, organizations and individual actors to both strengthen resilience and increase their reputation and legitimacy (Olsson, 2014). Mayors may want to use their public or private role in order to reach those kinds of crisis communication goals. Further research on the perceived purpose of public 'meaning making', 'remembering', the more private aspects of the 'citizen father' and the interaction between both aspects is welcomed, not in the last place among mayors themselves. It might provide specific guidance for crisis situations where people expect the mayor to appear, whether it is a large disaster or a smaller, emotional incident.

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7

The perspective of the affected:

what people confronted with disasters expect

from government officials and public leaders

ABSTRACT

Despite available knowledge on appropriate psychosocial support for people confronted with death, loss and severe stress in the context of major crises and disasters, it is crucial to understand what people affected expect from government officials and public leaders in the aftermath of an extreme event. Eight interviews with affected adult residents were conducted to explore their expectations and experiences in relation to government. This was done against the background of Park's (2016) model on meaning making. Findings revealed that interviewees expected the government to help them in a fair, compassionate, equal and reliable manner. They also expected support in fulfilling event-related practical needs, and assumed that the government would use its capacity to align network partners and break down bureaucratic barriers. The affected individuals' global beliefs and situational meaning may differ from the perceptions of the public leader who provides support.

1. INTRODUCTION

In times of collective crisis, public leaders are supposed to give meaning to crises, often with the help of symbolism and public displays of compassion (Boin et al. 2005, 2016; Dückers, Yzermans et al. 2017). The leadership task of *meaning making*, or communicating the broader impacts of a crisis to citizens, media and other stakeholders, is regarded as one of the crucial tasks in crisis management (Boin et al. 2005, 2016). Their public acknowledgement might contribute to a collective sense of connectedness and hope (Griffin-Padget and Alisson 2010; Jong, Dückers et al. 2016a; Dückers, Yzermans et al. 2017).

This collective meaning making can also have a positive effect on the individual´s resilience and recovery from stressful events on a personal level (Park 2016). One might feel supported by a society that shows understanding for the unique and difficult position of the affected (Maercker and Müller 2004). Finding personal meaning in what happened may help to reduce people's feelings of vulnerability and fosters adjustment by restoring people's fundamental belief in a world that is benevolent, predictable, and meaningful (Updegraff, Silver et al. 2008).

Of course, everyone experiences a crisis situation differently. The particular setting of private, personal and public life influences the way in which people experience the impact of their crisis and the meaning they assign to the event. Hobfoll's "theory of the conservation of resources" suggests that people strive to retain, project, and build resources (e.g. a stable family life, a home, financial security, self-esteem) and people might be drawn into a downward spiral when they face the loss of such resources (Hobfoll 1998), while finding meaning helps to retain such resources. The meaning they assign to an event is not a stand-alone process, but is influenced by the meaning making of public leaders and others.

Even though the bereaved are important stakeholders for government, little is known about their expectations and the interactions with government when confronted with major crises or disasters. Research on psychosocial support tends to focus on the support that survivors and next of kin receive from family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers - in other words, those who are in existing and close relationships with the recipients (Nurullah 2012), or on the support provided by professional care providers like general practitioners, mental health professionals and social workers (Bisson, Tavakoly et al. 2010; Suzuki and Kim 2012). Others focus on the practicalities in relation to efforts to rebuild after crisis and the like (Chamlee-Wright and Storr 2010). In their study, Maercker and Müller (2004) consider the support given by public figures (e.g. mayor, priest) as a building block in a construct for social acknowledgement on an individual level, but they do not specify the necessary depth and appearances of such support.

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Studies on the aftermath of the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 give some insight into such public and social acknowledgement (Torenvlied, Giebels et al. 2015; Jong, Dückers et al. 2016b), showing that individual support by representatives of government was appreciated. In this particular case, public leaders visited bereaved families at home and supported them in their material needs (Jong, Dückers et al. 2016b). In this case, public leaders got into direct contact with people affected after the crises and can be regarded as the providers of psychosocial support. Still, little is known about the preferred nature of this support and what type of behavior by government officials the people confronted with loss and the stressful impact of major crises and disasters, would consider optimal.

The importance of getting more insight into the role of representatives of government's specific role as providers of psychosocial support is grounded in the positive or negative influence they might have on the potential distress among affected people in a given crisis situation (Park 2013, 2016). People confronted interpret the event within a larger global context that is part of their personal belief system. A mismatch between global meaning (people's global beliefs of the world, fundamental beliefs about themselves and their place in the world) and assigned situational meaning of a major crisis or disaster by the individual leads to distress (Park 2016). For example, when someone expressed that the government should be supportive to people in need (global belief), but experienced a lack of support when she was hit by a disaster herself (situational meaning), this might create a source of stress.

The influence of meaning making by government on the situational meaning has a public and a more private route. First, when a crisis hits a community, public leaders attend public gatherings and give a public voice to the collective mourning, usually reflected in media coverage. They give meaning to a situation by providing hope and helping victims to make sense of what happened (Griffin-Padget and Alisson 2010). Second, public leaders tend to visit bereaved families at home and support them in their material and practical needs directly (Torenvlied, Giebels et al. 2015; Jong, Dückers et al. 2016b). This is the more private route.

When Park's framework (2016) is applied to this specific role of government in the meaning making of people in a disaster setting, we come to three categories that play a crucial role in the process of individual meaning making: 1) global meaning, 2) situational meaning based on governmental support on collective level, 3) situational meaning based on governmental support on individual level.

An analysis of expectations is a relevant route to explore in order to assess how meaning making by representatives of government contributes to the assigned meaning by the people confronted with crises. In this line of thought, living up to the expectations might prevent a potential and additional source of stress. Vice versa, when the expectations of the support by government in the case of the affected differ from the support offered,

this might potentially lead to an increased level of stress and disappointment. Also, the insights into the expectations of people who were confronted with crises might help us to bring psychosocial support by government officials and public leaders forward. According to Hobfoll, Watson et al. (2007), there are five empirically supported intervention principles that should be used to guide and inform intervention. These are reflected in the extent to which one promotes a sense of safety, calmness, self- and community efficacy, connectedness to others, and hope. Benedek and Fullerton (2007) pledge to incorporate these principles into policy and practice, which requires acknowledgement, acceptance, and incorporation into the efforts of community leaders and others (Benedek and Fullerton 2007). Implementation of the principles enables government officials and public leaders to serve as a necessary "vehicle" for the provision of social acknowledgment towards affected people, and contribute to bringing the principles into practice (Benedek and Fullerton 2007; Dückers, Yzermans et al. 2017).
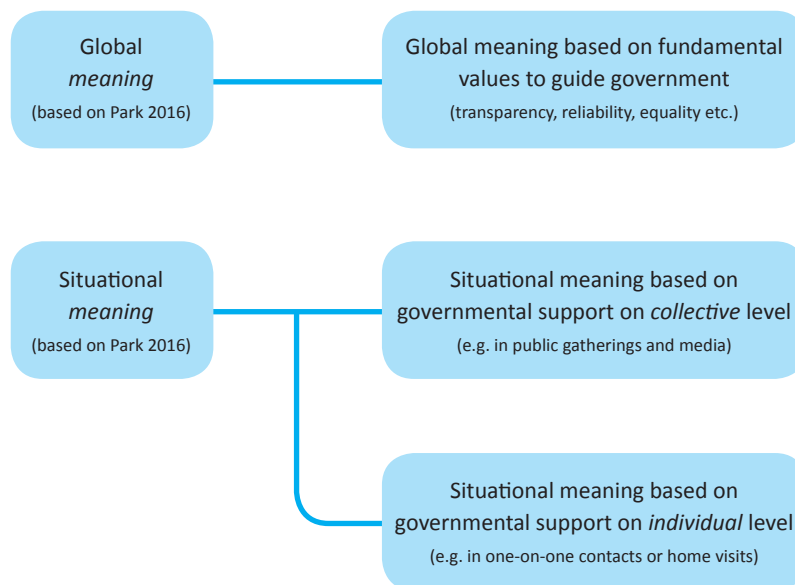

FIGURE. 1. Park's Meaning Making Model (2016) applied to context of governmental support

Objective

The objective of this study is of an explorative nature. What do people confronted with major crises or disasters, expect from their government in general and public leaders in particular? Answering this research question might tell us how government representatives (civil servants) and public leaders can use their position and influence in

order to live up to expectations, align their *meaning making* and lower distress, frustration and disappointment among the bereaved. It is an indispensable first step in order to optimize the potential functioning of public leaders as a psychosocial support "vehicle" to remove such sources of distress.

2. METHOD

Design

For this study we used an exploratory qualitative method with semi-structured interviews. It consists of an analysis of eight interviews with people who experienced a major crisis or disaster, or its aftermath.

Since we focus on the meaning making aspects of the interaction between citizens who experienced a major crisis or disaster and civil servants or public leaders, this interaction is the main topic on which the sample of interviews is based. It is clear that every individual has his or her personal experiences during and in the aftermath of crises. Even within groups of affected individuals such experiences might differ. But to be able to analyze a broad scope of interactions between government and individuals, we chose to also vary in the role of government (local government vs. national government). As a result, only those interviewees were selected who had had a personal experience with one of the top ten crisis or disasters which hit The Netherlands over the last 25 years and had, in some way or another, been in contact with officials from different levels within government (e.g. mayors, civil servants, ministers, members of Royal Family).

Interviews were carried out according to QOREQ guidelines of qualitative studies (Tong, Sainsbury et al. 2007).

Research team

The 2008-interviews [1-7] were all conducted by the first author (male) and a fellow-researcher (female). Both were experienced in conducting depth interviews. Prior to the interviews, subjects were unknown to the interviewers. Interviewees were approached by a letter on behalf of Impact - the Dutch national knowledge center for post-disaster psychosocial support - in which the goal of the study and the background of the researchers were explained. After two weeks, the researchers contacted the subjects and arranged for the interviews. All subjects approached were motivated to participate. Interview [8] was solely conducted by the first author. The interviewee was approached after she had given a presentation on her experiences with Dutch government officials in the aftermath of an air crash.

Setting and Participants

To obtain a heterogeneous sample, Dutch affected residents of different crises were selected (see table I). The sole criterion for inclusion was the personal experience of Dutch nationals with civil servants or public leaders during one of the top ten major crises or disasters, which hit The Netherlands over the last 25 years. As such, we were able to analyze a wide variety in crisis experiences. Participants were selected on the basis of a desk research, as parts of their stories had been covered in the media. All interviews were conducted at the home of the participants, except for interview [7] which was conducted at work.

One participant [3] was a farmer whose farm suffered from foot-and-mouth disease. This participant was included, based on his personal experiences with governmental regulation on preventing the spread of the disease. He lost his farm and went bankrupt as a result of the outbreak. He had strong opinions on the impact of the outbreak management procedures on his own cattle, which he perceived to be a "governmental case of animal abuse".

Interviewees [1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7] were directly involved in a major crisis or disaster themselves, or lost family members. Interviewee [8] lost her brother, sister-in-law and nephew, and became guardian of another nephew, who was the sole survivor of an airplane crash. In some cases, other family members joined the interview as well. All participants were aware that the aim of the interviews was their publication. In one case, parents told the researchers that they were hesitant in sharing their experiences, but that the aim of the study convinced them to cooperate, as it might help government to further improve its support in similar cases. All participants had the Dutch nationality.

Table I gives an overview of the interviews together with a short event description.

The single interviews were conducted in 2008 and 2017 and lasted on average two hours. Participants were specifically asked to describe their experiences in the aftermath of the major crisis or disaster. The interview protocol included a series of broad interview questions based on prior desk research about the crisis or disaster at hand. For convenience, the interviewees were asked to describe their situation in a chronological order.

Also, they were asked to share their observations on the role of government in general as well as their personal expectations and experiences in relation to governmental actors. The interviews were analyzed using a grounded theory method (Charmaz and Belgrave 2012).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts of the interviews were supplemented with field notes and then edited. After a factual check by the interviewees, the interviews were published online and used for publication (Jong and van der Post 2008). The interview about the Tripoli air crash [8] was published by the Dutch Association of Mayors (Jong 2017a).

TABLE I. Interviews conducted

Number of interview*	Description of event
1.	Tsunami Phuket, Thailand 2004 (Interview with parents who lost their 9-months old daughter. In total, approximately 230,000–280,000 people died.)
2.	Bombing in Bali, Indonesia in 2002 (Interview with parents who lost their son in de Paddy's Pub bombing. In total, 202 people died.)
3.	Foot and mouth disease outbreak in Barneveld, The Netherlands, 2001 (Interview with farmer whose animals were killed in an attempt to stop the outbreak of foot and mouth disease)
4.	Pub fire in Volendam, The Netherlands, 2001 (Interview with parents who lost their daughter in a pub fire. In total, 14 youngsters died.)
5.	Explosion of fireworks factory in Enschede, The Netherlands, 2000 (Interview with parents who lost their son in the explosion. In total, 22 people died.)
6.	Outbreak of legionellosis (veterans' disease) at flower exhibition in Bovenkarspel, The Netherlands, 1999 (Interview with son who lost his father. In total, 32 people died).
7.	Crash of El Al Boeing in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1992 (Interview with mother who lost her son and his girlfriend. In total, 43 people died).
8.	Crash of air plane in Tripoli, Libya, 2010 (Interview with guardian of the only survivor of airplane crash in Tripoli, who lost his parents and his brother. Most of the passengers were Dutch citizens returning from holiday in South Africa. In total, 103 people died, among 70 with the Dutch nationality).

* For a complete transcript of interviews 1-7 see Jong & Van der Post (2008). Interview 8 is published elsewhere (Jong 2017a)

Data Analysis

Both authors coded the narratives and compared their findings based on the model shown in figure 1.

The data were analyzed using the following three questions, based on the main research question of the study: (1) what were global beliefs of people affected concerning the values that should guide government as an institute (e.g. individuals' global beliefs can refer to a fair world, where the government is always neutral, supportive and transparent)?; (2) what were their experiences with government as

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a representative body in the collective domain (e.g. how did individuals experience public remembrances and memorials)?; and (3) what were their personal experiences with civil servants or public leaders (e.g. how did individuals experience the one-on-one interactions with representatives)?

Whether or not the expectations of individuals were influenced by other affected people was not part of the study. In our explorative analysis, we use the part shown in figure 1 (instead of Park's complete model) as a conceptual framework to categorize our findings on the relationship between the affected and the government. Information from the interviews was structured along these themes and can be found in the next paragraph. Numbers refer to the label of the interview. A summary of findings is provided at the end of the next paragraph. Detailed information from each interview is included in the Appendix.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Global Meaning: Expectation of Government on an Institutional Level

Protect and Offer Help
The respondents reflected on their experiences on an overarching level. They expressed strong expectations of government in general, where government has an obligation to protect people [1,8] and should help people under difficult circumstances [2,3,8] in an equal, reliable and fair manner [3,4,6]. Assisting citizens in times of crisis is regarded as government's first obligation and also as something completely normal [1,2,5,8]. Government is perceived as an actor that should always offer solutions in times of crises, also when problem-solving by other actors fails [3].

Be Heard and Understand the Suffering
The bereaved expressed the desirability of being heard. It was important to them to share their side of the story with politicians, investigation committees and media. "*The Investigation Committee did their work properly, but (…) the victims and their families had no voice in the report. You cannot find anything about how we were treated by the government.*" [1,2,3,4]. Generally speaking, they expected governments - including members of the Royal Family [3] - to understand their suffering [4,5].

Stick to Promises
In their relationship with people who experienced crises, government is supposed to show commitment. Whenever government made a promise, people affected expected government to stick to promises made [1,2]. They also expected clear and

transparent communications in order to align their expectations and perceptions and enable themselves to anticipate upon future steps [3]. Trust declined rapidly whenever government failed to offer what people affected expected [1,2,3,4,5,6].

Act Non-Politically
Political games, based on the crisis at hand, were not appreciated, particularly in those cases where people were blamed for exaggeration. "*Minister of Agriculture Brinkhorst blamed the farmers of crying crocodile tears. He had no idea of the impact in our sector*" (…) *According to the Minister of Agriculture, we were only interested in money and compensation. On TV, he said that farmers got compensated. According to him, there was no reason to moan.* [3]. In another instance, people felt they were used as pawns in a blame game when a Member of Parliament tweeted negatively about an embassy involved. According to the respondent, the tweet was used to fuel political blame games without knowing the details. *"It wasn't fair"* [8].

3.2. Situational Meaning: Expectations of Government on a Collective Level

Collective Acknowledgement in Mourning and Remembrance
Often, the local community was involved in setting up remembrances [6,7,8] and sometimes in funding a memorial [6]. "*The press was allowed in during the first few moments of the remembrance gathering and recorded the speech by our mayor. Afterwards, the more intimate ceremony began. It was all very balanced*" [8]. The mayor is regarded as a representative towards the media and the community and sometimes asked media not to chase survivors or next of kin. It helped people to stay in relative anonymity [8]. Sometimes, mayors or aldermen even spoke at funerals but always on behalf of the municipality [5,8]. In cases where they attend public remembrances, an important reason for joining was the expectation that they would meet other survivors [1].

Inform and Involve in a Representative Role
Family members expected to be informed when ministers attended wreath-laying ceremonies that were related to their own crisis [2]. When attending remembrances abroad, they also expect to be informed since they believed the minister attended the ceremony on their behalf as well [2]. When governmental representatives attended other memorials, people affected compared the attention for a certain crisis with their own tragedy [2].

Find Causes of the Incident
Respondents differed in their appreciation of governmental investigation reports. On the one hand, they expected to get answers to burning questions on the cause of a crisis [4], but on the other hand, the bereaved knew or realized that it would never bring back the loved ones [7].

Responsibility and Accountability

In three cases [4,5,6], the government carried a responsibility for the cause of the crisis. In one case [4], the government was fully responsible for the outbreak management after the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. Only in this latter case, the interviewee was fully disappointed with the way in which the government handled the crisis [4]. In the other cases, there was a certain understanding for the situation. "*The municipality was overwhelmed by this crisis. They did what they could*" [6]. In one case, where the local municipality was held responsible, an alderman even spoke at the funeral [5]. In the situation of the pub fire, which was caused by a negligence of fire regulations and a lack of control by the local municipality, the disappointment of the parents focused on the role of the national government in the aftermath, not on the role of the local government in the cause of the fire [4].

3.3. Situational Meaning: Expectations of Government on an Individual Level

First Things First

Right after crises happened, respondents are not very much interested in visits from government representatives [1, 5], unless they offer practical support [5,7,8]. In other words, their first priority lies with solving the problems at hand. Afterwards, (personal) meetings with consuls, ambassadors, ministers and members of the Royal Family were generally appreciated and regarded as social, warm and kind [1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8]: "*Queen Beatrix and princess Máxima were at the remembrance. They talked emotionally. They truly understood what had happened to us. That was a beautiful moment.*" [1]

Breakdown Bureaucratic Barriers

Respondents provided examples of the harsh truth encountered when bureaucracy turns government into an impersonal organization, which sticks to existing regulations. They expected government to manage the exceptional situation they are in. After losing his child in the Thailand tsunami, a father was fined by the municipality because he lost his driving license [1]. Other parents were fined, because they forgot to apply for an exemption [2]. According to Dutch law, they should have buried the body of their son within six working days. That was practically impossible because the body was unidentified and still in Indonesia [2]. In another interview, parents discussed the regulation with regard to a fundraising campaign. "*After a fund-raising campaign, taxes had to be paid. In another fire, the tax authorities made an exception. I cannot explain why.*" [4]. Similar regulatory burdens are met when parents want to enter a disaster zone. "*We were not allowed to lay flowers at the spot where Nick died. We were not allowed to get back into the disaster zone, while the Queen visited the same zone*" [5]. As crises usually overwhelm and impress the respondents, they found it hard to act against governmental decisions [2,4]. "*We were too kind. If we would have had a bigger mouth, our daughter might possibly have survived*", two parents concluded [4].

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Psychosocial support: Acknowledgement and Listening Ear

Respondents confronted with major crises or disasters hardly ever looked for financial support; only the farmer whose farm suffered from foot-and-mouth disease asked for financial compensation, which he did not receive [3]. Saddened, he came to the conclusion that he can *"only trust animals, not government"* [3]. More than anything else, interviewees confronted with personal loss expect a listening ear, an understanding for their situation and support [1,2,3,4,5] partly because they usually did not know what the aftermath of crises would bring [8]. When government did not provide adequate social acknowledgement, they felt like they easily became the "*victims of a forgotten disaster*" [4, 6]. In crises where acknowledgement was provided, government became a "tower of strength" [8]. "*In a symbolic sense, the support by the mayor gave us an enormous sense of safety*", one respondent said [8].

Sometimes, when people affected were disappointed in the relationship with government, they looked for alternatives. "*We received more support from our priest, pastor Berkhout, who set up sessions for the parents who lost their child in the fire. That relation still exists.*" [4]

Practical Support: Media Management and Practical Issues

Respondents trusted the government officials who supported them practically [1, 2, 8]. "*As a relative, you do not know what you need and what the future will bring. Support by someone who is professionally involved gives you the support you need. It helps you to even rise above yourself. Even though the mayor does not know everything himself, he has the network and knowledge to help you*" [8]. Practically speaking, support by communications professionals to help them manage the media, was appreciated as well [8]. As such, they did not have clear expectations, but feel supported whenever the government anticipated on the pressure from media and helped them with practical issues.

The main findings are summarized in table II.

TABLE II. Main findings based on interviews with people affected by crises and disasters

Category	Main findings based on the interviews
Global meaning: Government as an institute	· Government is obligated to protect people [1, 8] · Government should help under difficult circumstances [2,3,8] · Government should enable people to be heard [1,2,3,4] · Government should understand the suffering of affected people [4,5] · The Royal Family is supposed to show commitment to those who suffer [3] · Government should be reliable and stick to promises [1,2,3,4,5,6] · Government should not use the crisis situation for politically [3,8]
Situational meaning: Governmental support on collective level	· The central role of public leaders (mayors) during crises is important as a representative towards the media and community and helps the affected to stay in relative anonymity [8]. · When governmental representatives act on behalf of affected people, they want to be taken into account and notified [2] · When governmental representatives attend other memorials, affected people might compare this with their own tragedy [2] · Representatives are sometimes invited to speak at funerals [5] · Enabling to meet others is an important purpose of attending public remembrances [1] · Investigation reports may be useful when it helps to understand what happened [1,7] · Responsibility and accountability of government in the cause of a crisis do not necessarily lead to disappointment [3,4,5,6]
Situational meaning: Governmental support on individual level	· When survivors and bereaved are still in the heat of a crisis, their priority does not lie with meeting government representatives [1,5] · Personal meetings with representatives of the Royal Family are usually highly appreciated [1,4] · Governmental help with organizing remembrance gatherings is appreciated [1, 5,6,7,8] · Whenever representatives start to talk about bureaucratic procedures, affected people do not regard it as "their" problem [1,2,4] · Personal meetings with mayors are appreciated and regarded as social, warm and kind [1,2,5,8] · The affected appreciate practical support [8] · Governmental spokespersons can support the family in media management [8]

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4. DISCUSSION

In the previous section, we explored the experiences and expectations of people confronted with major crises or disasters. Based on this study we conclude that a convincing "caring government" approach depends on expectations raised before a crisis hits a community - these expectations are embedded in long-term global beliefs of citizens about what governments should do when disaster strikes. The interviews shed a light on many expectations in terms of global and situational meaning. Ideally, taking care of such expectations should be the driver in a governmental philosophy of the "caring government".

One could argue that the themes that were mentioned by the interviewees are universal themes and cover more generally governmental support. In particular, the findings on the level of global meaning, such as 'provide support' and 'be transparent', do not seem to be exclusively related to the domain of crisis management. That said, the interviewees shared moments of disappointment and stress. Apparently, government is not always capable to live up to the expectations of the bereaved.

Those who felt support got the confidence to cope with the situation. A next of kin of the Tripoli air crash [8] said that the support gave her the feeling that she was capable of rising above herself. Others were disappointed for various reasons, from bureaucratic burdens [1, 2, 4], to their neglected role in public remembrances [1,2].

A possible explanation why not all expectations were met, might lie in the focus of government and its institutions in the aftermath of crises. Public leaders have, of course, more and other interests than the sole interests of the people who are directly confronted with the impact of major crises and disasters. While individuals are not always interested in the political and collective dimensions, media and politics are examples of stages on which public leaders and government are evaluated (Boin & Smith 2006). Those are stages with a focus on the collective dimensions of public leadership. Moreover, leaders are evaluated on how they solved the crisis at hand, while the role that followers play, is generally overlooked (Oc 2017). As such, actors in government might focus on their contribution on (situational) *meaning making* on a collective level. Unless the bereaved are in direct contact with their leaders or raise their voices in the media, their expectations won't be heard in the collective domain.

Another explanation can be found in existing bureaucracy within government. The bereaved possibly underestimate its bureaucratic burdens. Their expectations of the discretion public leaders possess for shaping their situational behavior (Lipsky 1980) might be too high. The bereaved might underestimate the importance of procedures and regulations. Even though the outcome of bureaucracy might be unintended, such procedures also facilitate democratic control of far-reaching crisis management policies (Rosenthal, 't Hart et al. 1991).

Sometimes, the bereaved have unrealistic expectations that cannot be met by government. Such mechanisms are known from risk management, where people seem to be able to distinguish between their own risk perception and what risks should be accepted once they are asked to reason from an administrator's point of view (Helsloot & Schmidt, 2012).

Individual dimension

In line with Hobfoll et al.'s (2007) five elements of interventions following crises and disasters, expectations and needs of the interviewees were broader than immediate safety. As soon as the crisis hits, the affected expect their government to be reliable at all times and take care of them in a compassionate manner. The analysis of the interviews shows that people clearly expect support in a reliable, transparent and equal manner. Affected people expect government not to differentiate between people and events. They expect to be treated on the basis of clear and fundamental values that are in line with their own personal, global beliefs. They expect a listening ear and experience great disappointment whenever government does not offer sufficient help or is contradictory in its support.

The interviews show that people also expect a government to use its available network and to lower bureaucratic barriers and lift regulations when appropriate. Where the general public expects intense collaboration and coordination of the necessary institutes during and after catastrophic crises (Kapucu and Van Wart 2006), people affected have similar expectations. They want to actually use whatever elements are available in the network. In order to rely on self- and community efficacy, government has to use all resources.

People affected by major crises and disasters expect help and acknowledgement, and want to be heard. Potential stressors arise, when public leaders ignore the people affected, do not adhere to their promises, are unable to take away bureaucratic burdens and get involved in political blame games.

Public leaders are expected to reach out to these people, address their practical and non-practical needs and explicitly discuss expectations.

Collective dimension

The interviews indicate that people affected by major crises and disasters tend to understand the collective dimension of crises. They are aware of the larger, societal impact of a crisis. As one of the interviews showed [8], the municipality sometimes helps families to organize a remembrance gathering where the press is allowed, before a more intimate ceremony begins from which the press is then excluded. Affected people also want to be informed whenever the leaders take up a representative role. Relatives usually feel offended whenever they find out that government officials acted publicly without their knowledge.

Regarding the aftermath of crises, the role of investigative reports on the cause of crises, depends largely on the situation. In terms of acknowledgement and listening ear, some might want to get the opportunity to discuss the overall findings of an investigative report in a more private setting. Findings also show that other bereaved are not interested in such reports at all. Aftercare requires personalized tailoring where public leaders and government representatives should balance the needs on a societal level on the one hand, and the expectations of the next of kin on the other.

Political dimension

After a crisis politicians, media and the affected want to determine how this crisis could have happened (Boin and Smith 2006). The interviews indicate that respondents differ in their need for investigation committees; yet, they do share an antipathy towards blame games and political spin, especially when people affected are used as an argument in the political debates. A heated political debate in the aftermath of crises is one example, which possibly undermines a sense of calmness and slowly but steadily erodes psychosocial support. Being (partly) responsible for the cause of a crisis does not seem an obstacle to connect with the bereaved as such, even though we know that it does change the role in the collective domain (Jong, 2017b). Ultimately, the way in which the government manages the aftermath is crucial for the stability of the relationship that develops between government and the affected.

In the aftermath of crises, public leaders and government representatives should also update and explain the political mechanisms to the next of kin, in order to help them cope with all types of processes in the aftermath of the crisis (e.g. legal and forensic enquiries, issues of entitlement and liability, evaluation of causes and quality of disaster response).

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The interviews provide a deeper understanding of "caring government". As a first step in this process, we align the expectations from the interviews with psychosocial principles to the five so-called "essential elements" which are beneficial for the well-being of the affected: the promotion of a sense of safety, calmness, self- and community efficacy, connectedness to others, and hope (Hobfoll, Watson et al. 2007).

Table III summarizes a couple of recommendations for government officials and public leaders, following from this explorative study. The lessons are clustered according to the five principles in order to guide governments in becoming a "vehicle" in the provision of psychosocial support.

TABLE III. Recommendations for the provision of psychosocial support by government under crises

Category	Recommendations for the provision of psychosocial support: what people affected by disaster expect
Sense of safety	· Acknowledge global beliefs · Provide equal treatment based on clear and fundamental values · Be supportive, transparent, fair and reliable · Do not differentiate between individuals and events
Calmness	· Respect priorities per time phase shortly after the crisis and during the aftermath · Stick to promises · Inform and involve · Offer media management support to provide affected people with a sense of control
Self- and community efficacy	· Offer solutions that promote self- and community efficacy · Utilize available (governmental) networks and (institutional) connections · Act pragmatic and remove bureaucratic barriers
Connectedness to others	· Facilitate and attend remembrances to (i) acknowledge what happened, and (ii) to enable affected people to meet other survivors and bereaved and support mutual contact and exchange · When acting on behalf of those affected, notify and involve them in the proceedings · Align collective gatherings and the more personal ceremonies of bereaved families
Hope	· People affected expect a listening ear when they meet government officials · High-ranking acknowledgment (e.g. by members of the Royal Family) emphasizes the feeling among the affected that their experience matters · Personal meetings are appreciated, especially when mayors or other governmental representatives assist people in a pragmatic way

6. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings in this exploratory study indicate that government officials and public leaders are an important influencer of individual levels of distress that exist in the aftermath of crises and disasters. Little is known about their personal role in psychosocial support in situational meaning making on an individual level. Do public leaders deliberately set different priorities and focus on collective stages, or are they just unaware of individual psychosocial needs? Is it, said differently, a matter of lack of knowledge of psychosocial principles, or do public leaders just not feel solely responsible for preventing stressors and facilitating survivors and bereaved families in their psychosocial needs?

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The existence of possible tension between collective and individual interests definitely deserves more attention from researchers as well. After all, government officials, and public leaders in particular, can end up in situations where they are challenged to unify two different interests. Based on the interviews it seems unlikely that the collective and individual interests are always unified adequately. Even though the responsibility for a crisis appears not to be an issue from the point of view of the affected, it might raise additional dilemmas, as it complicates the political aftermath when topics of accountability arise. Finally, a topic worthwhile for further examination is the degree of discretion public leaders possess for shaping their situational behavior (Lipsky 1980). It might give us more insights in the possible options to pragmatically serve people in need. The interviewees seem to imply that when they assign a negative collective and individual meaning to the behavior of a government official or institution, there actually was an alternative.

7. LIMITATIONS

This explorative qualitative study is based on interviews with eight people. Although the amount of interviews is limited, we notice that many expectations were mentioned by more than one interviewee. As the majority of the interviews lasted up to two hours, the interviews gave exhaustive details on three different themes (in one case no information was provided on global meaning beyond the notion that the respondent did not have particular expectations). Moreover, the interviews covered a broad range of crises with large impact from the Netherlands and abroad. As such, the interviews address calls to conduct comparative crisis-related studies (Jong et al., 2016a). It is not guaranteed that additional interviews would have given contrasting insights into the expectations of affected people and the themes inspired by Park´s meaning-making model.

Since all cases relate to a Dutch setting, this might provide a biased view on the importance of individual values over collective value. A study among affected multi-ethnic groups after the 9/11 events showed that participants in Mandarin-speaking focus groups placed more value on the welfare of the collective over that of the individual, which is consistent with the Asian collectivistic worldview (Johnson, North et al. 2017). When compared with situations elsewhere, the relative weight of collective meaning making might have been less prominent in our study, given the Dutch cultural profile which is relatively individualistic.

8. CONCLUSION

The exploratory study´s findings indicate that people who experienced a major crisis or disaster have clear expectations of their government. When government does not live up to the expectations, potential sources of stress are created. The people affected expect global values to be incorporated in public leaders' behavior. Regarding the aftermath of crises, they are likely to look for their public leaders for support during stressful periods and for help in anticipating on what will come, at least when it comes to bureaucratic processes and public appearances. The people interviewed seem to trust the intentions, knowledge, and network of their public leaders, as long as these leaders approach them with empathy. They do not only expect practical and emotional support, but also guidance to balance the public interests and the interests of the next of kin.
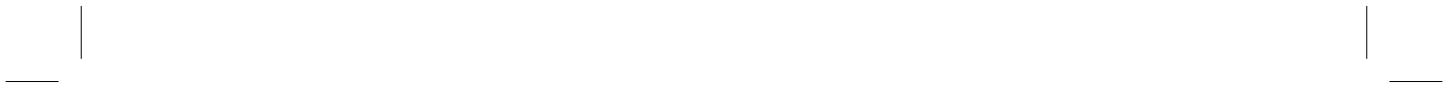
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Provision of social support by mayors in times of crisis: a cross-sectional study among Dutch mayors

ABSTRACT

To date, the emphasis of social support research has been on victims and their families, as well as how they perceive the reception of such support. This study examines the provision of support, based on a survey among 231 Dutch mayors. As expected, mayors viewed the provision of social support as being part of their public leadership role in times of crises. Mayors are willing to get in contact with the affected and acknowledge them in their suffering on behalf of the government. An analysis of 150 mayors who had been involved in crises in recent years demonstrates that home visits are more likely in situations where one or more citizens had died. Contrary to hypotheses, a higher level of political responsibility for a given crisis situation does not render mayors less likely to approach the affected. Mayors' age, sex, size of municipality and years of experience are not related to their self-perceived provision of social support or willingness to reach out to citizens confronted with a crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after Prince Friso was caught in an avalanche in 2012, the Dutch royal family issued a statement saying "*The Royal Family is very grateful and deeply touched by all expressions of support and sympathy after the ski accident of His Royal Highness Prince Friso. It was a great support for them during this difficult time*" (Koninklijk Huis, 2012). The prince eventually died in 2013, after being in a coma for more than a year. Four years later, Dutch King Willem-Alexander talked about his life, the death of his brother Friso and the impact of the MH17 disaster (2014) on Dutch society in a televised interview at public news broadcasting station NOS (NOS, 2017). Among the victims were 196 Dutch nationals. According to the King, the sorrow of losing Prince Friso helped him to understand the anguish of the relatives of those killed in the MH17 disaster. "*Of course, you understand*", the King said. "*Their world collapses. And it happened to us as well. People told me: you also lost your brother in an accident. You know what it means.*"

While most media reports and empirical studies focus on how people affected by collective crises perceive the social support they receive and these events' relationships with their mental health (cf. Birkeland, Nielsen, Hansen, Knardahl, & Heir, 2017; Kaniasty, 2012, 2019; Platt, Lowe, Galea, Norris, & Koenen, 2015; Shahar, 2009), the revelations of the King introduce another important aspect: attention toward the providers of social support. To date, empirical studies among providers of such support – including family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues – as opposed to the receivers of social support, are almost absent. To the best of our knowledge, there are no peer-reviewed studies following a collective crisis that assess how the providers of social support listed above perceive the support they offered.

However, although family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues are all important providers of support for the affected, representing their informal network, support can also be provided by actors outside this network. Given the needs of the affected, the support provided by mayors during and in the aftermath of collective crises is of special interest. A study following the MH17 disaster found that mayors, as a sub-category of public leaders, fulfilled a similar supporting role for victims and their families, visiting bereaved families at home and assisting them in their emotional and material needs (Jong, Dückers, & Van der Velden, 2016). A qualitative study among the victims of several crises has shown that they expect governmental support to help them in a fair, compassionate, equitable, and reliable manner, including fulfilling event-related practical needs (Jong & Dückers, 2019). Likewise, potential stressors arise when the affected feel ignored, when the government does not adhere to its promises, or when officials become embroiled in political spin and blame games in the public aftermath of crises (Jong & Dückers, 2019). Yet, to the best of our knowledge, to date no empirical study has been conducted among

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mayors focusing on the social support they provide to people affected by a collective crisis. Such an insight is important, as it might enable providers to optimize their support and thus promote the well-being of the affected. To fill this research gap, the present empirical study examines the role of mayors during and following a collective crisis, that is, a crisis with a public impact, as opposed to a crisis with a more private impact such as a death due to fatal disease or other natural cause (Hayes, Waddell, & Smudde, 2017). Collective crises are deemed disruptive and catastrophic events that cause physical or psychosociological trauma for individuals, communities, organizations, and social support networks, regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly impacted by the circumstances (adapted from Doka, 2003; Gamino, 2003). They tend to be large in scope and enable many to identify with the victims or their circumstances (Hawdon & Ryan, 2011; Hayes et al., 2017; Kropf & Jones, 2014).

Based on the existing literature (Jong & Dückers, 2019; Jong et al., 2016), the following hypotheses were formulated and tested. The first two hypotheses were aimed at the social support mayors provide to affected residents. As part of the public leadership role they fulfill, mayors are supposed to hold a clear perspective as to their contributions toward the affected, even though the latter are not always capable of formulating what they want and need (Jong & Dückers, 2019). In addition, the intended provision of social support toward the affected "comes with the job," and we therefore expected that it would not be related to the mayor's biographical traits. Consequently, we tested the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Mayors provide support to the affected, such as by offering a listening ear as well as practical help, support in media management and mitigation of bureaucratic barriers when necessary. Mayors also keep an eye on the balance between the interests of the general public, who might ask for public ceremonies and remembrances, and the directly affected.

Hypothesis 2: The support provided to the affected in general is not related to the age, sex, size of municipality or years in office of the public leader.

The following series of hypotheses focused on the actual social support mayors demonstrated in a recent crisis that they had to negotiate, such as paying home visits to the affected. Several factors may determine mayors' likelihood to pay home visits after a crisis, besides age, sex, days in office and number of inhabitants. It is plausible that mayors who provide generally higher levels of social support more often pay home visits than do colleagues who provide less social support toward the affected. In addition, the more the social system (such as a neighborhood or community) is emotionally affected by an event, the higher the collective impact of that event (Barton, 1969; Jong, 2017). We therefore expected that mayors more often paid home visits when they evaluated the crisis situation as being a relatively high collective impact event, considering the social support mayors provide in general.

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Similarly, political tensions after a crisis may increase when public leaders perceive themselves (politically) responsible for the cause of a crisis. The concept of "crisis responsibility" is a representation of the amount of responsibility for a crisis that stakeholders attribute to the organization (Coombs, 1995, 2007, 2015; Jong, 2017). Higher perceived political responsibilities may therefore negatively influence home visits, over and above the extent to which mayors provide social support in general and the perceived collective impact of a crisis.

In addition, included within collective crises are events in which residents died because of a particular event. We assumed that these circumstances contributed to a higher frequency of home visits, over and above the previous factors.

Finally, the collective impact of the crisis and the political responsibility of the mayor are important characteristics of a crisis. Another feature of a crisis that may have influenced mayors' home visits is the scale of the event. An event's scale (such as number of deaths) and collective impact are not the same, as relatively small events, such as child abuse, can have a large impact. The MH17 disaster, causing the death of 195 people of Dutch origin, provided a unique opportunity to assess this aspect, as no other crisis in the Netherlands in the past five years was as large, given the national and international circumstances.

This brought us to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3: Home visits are not associated with age, sex, days in office, and number of residents.

Hypothesis 4: Home visits after a collective crisis are positively associated with the social support mayors provide in general after a crisis, when the factors of Hypothesis 3 are taken into account.

Hypothesis 5: The lower a mayor's perceived collective impact and the higher a mayor's perceived political responsibility for a crisis, the lower their likelihood of paying home visits to the affected residents, when the factors of Hypothesis 4 are taken into account.

Hypothesis 6: Mayors more often pay home visits to the affected in a crisis situation where residents died because of the event, when the factors of Hypothesis 5 are taken into account.

Hypothesis 7: After the MH17 disaster, mayors more often paid home visits than following another crisis, when the factors of Hypothesis 6 are taken into account.

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2. METHODS

Participants and procedures

A cross-sectional study was conducted among Dutch mayors in 2018. All 400 current and recent former mayors are members of the Dutch Association of Mayors. They were invited to participate in the present study between June 19 and July 20, 2018, and the invitation was accompanied by a letter in which the study was explained. A web-based electronic questionnaire was administered and 266 mayors participated and gave their written informed consent.

Instruments

The administered questionnaire was developed for our study among mayors. The items used in the present study are described below in detail.

Experiences with crisis. Questions regarding one's experiences with crisis, relevant to the Dutch situation, were introduced as follows: "*The following questions focus on a crisis you were involved in. With respect to the type of crisis, you can consider (deadly) shooting incidents, the closing of an illegal drug lab, car accidents killing one or more residents, sex offenses, nuisance youngsters, earthquakes, outbreaks of animal diseases, and disasters such as MH17.*" The instruction was followed by the question "*How many of these crises in which residents were involved have you experienced in the past five years as mayor?*" *(*1=none, 2=1, 3=2-5, 4=6-10, 5=11-20, 6= more than 20).

Provision of support. To assess the provision of social support by mayors, we used and modified the *Social Support Survey* (SSS) by Sherbourne and Stewart (1991). The additions made can be found in the appendix. This instrument asks respondents about received support, but for the present study the items were "mirrored" into items concerning provided support. We did not mirror the items of the subscale *affectionate support* of the SSS because this type of support does not necessarily fit in the mayor-affected relationship. We asked mayors who had been confronted with at least one crisis the following: "*The next questions are about your role with respect to the people (victims, bereaved) affected by a crisis. Can you rate how often you provide the following toward these victims?*" The mirrored SSS consisted of items such as "*I provide a listening ear*" and "*I am available for their personal problems.*" Similarly to the SSS, all items presented five-point answer categories (1=never, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes, 4=mostly, 5=always). We also added four additional questions aimed at the interaction between the governmental background of a public leader and his/her role in public display, such as commemorations and gatherings in the aftermath of crises. For an overview of the full SSS and mirrored SSSI, including the additional items, refer to Appendix 1.

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An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 20 items of the questionnaire to verify the underlying structure of the data. The factor analysis, based on the complete data of 231 mayors, enabled the 20 items to be divided into two constructs with an eigenvalue higher than 1. All but two items – "*I distinguish among the support I provide toward the affected*" and "*I need to conquer bureaucratic challenges in order to provide support*" – loaded higher than .4 on the first construct. One item loaded .45 on the second construct, and the rest lower than .4. For this reason, we decided to undertake the subsequent analyses with one construct based on 18 items with an internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .84 (Cronbach's alpha for the 20-item scale was .82).

Specific crisis. Several subsequent questions (questions below) were aimed at a specific crisis that the mayors experienced. This was introduced as follows: "*For the next questions we would like to ask you to take <u>one</u> recent crisis that took place in your current or previous city in the period 2014–2018) in mind. Can you describe this event briefly?*" The description of the crisis enabled us to reconstruct, based on public data, whether people were killed due to it. Where mayors were involved in the aftermath of the MH17 disaster, they were asked to answer the following questions with this event in mind. This question was also added for future research aimed at MH17.

Perception impact and responsibility. Implicated mayors were asked to consider this crisis in order to rate their answer to the question "*How large was the collective impact of this crisis on the village, neighborhood or city during the first day and weeks after the crisis*" on a 10-point scale (0=no impact, 10=very much impact). In addition, they were asked to rate their answer to the question "*How large was your political/administrative responsibility for this crisis in the village, neighborhood or city during the first day and weeks after the crisis*" in a similar manner.

Home visits. Respondents were asked "*Did you meet the affected or their families at their homes?*" with four answer categories (1=not one affected or family visited, 2= all directly affected or affected families visited, 3=part of the directly affected or affected families visited, 4=other). For the present study we made a distinction between home visits yes (2,3) or no (1,4).

Biographical details. Finally, information was collected about the age and sex of the mayors, as well as their number of days in office and the size of their current municipality. Regarding days in office, one's entire career as a mayor was taken into account, including service in previous municipalities.

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Data analysis

The first hypothesis was assessed using the scores on the separate items of the mirrored SSS. To test the second hypothesis, linear regression analyses were conducted with the Social Support Provision sum score as the dependent variable and mayors' age, sex, days in office, and size of municipality as predictors.

Multivariate logistic regression analyses were conducted to test Hypotheses 3 to 7, with home visits after the selected crisis as the dependent variable. As described in the hypotheses, in model 1 age, sex, days in office, and number of residents were entered as predictors. In model 2, social support was added. In model 3,

collective impact and political responsibility were added to the list of predictors. In model 4, the variable "*residents died because of the event*" was added. Finally, in model 5 the variable MH17 (yes/no) was added.

A deviance test was used to compare each model with its predecessor; deviance can be regarded as a measure of lack of fit between the model and the data, with the greater the deviance (-2 loglikelihood; IGLS), the poorer the fit to the data. It is a tool that can be used to assess whether each subsequent model leads to a substantial reduction in deviance.

All analyses were performed using Stata version 13 (StataCorp LP).

3. RESULTS

Participants

In total, 231 of the participating mayors completed the social support questions (response=57.8%). The average age of participants was 57.1 years (SD = 7.69, n = 229), compared to 57 years for Dutch mayors in general, while 22% of participants (n = 208) were female, compared to 27% in general. The average time respondents had served as mayor was 9.1 years (SD = 6.09, n=198). The average number of inhabitants in the mayors' municipalities was 39,349 (SD = 37,594.94, n=229).

Social support provided by mayors

On average, the mayors rated the separate social support items between 3 ("some of the time") and 5 ("all of the time"; Mean = 3.79, Range = 2.61-4.78, SD 0.42). The three items with the highest scores were "*I provide a listening ear,*" "*I make time for personal contact,*" and "*I discuss the impact on themselves.*" The lowest average scores were "*I connect the affected with other people who were involved in the incident,*" "*I need to conquer bureaucratic challenges in order to provide support,*" and "*I mobilize people (friends, neighbors) around the affected in order to support them.*" These findings confirm Hypothesis 1.

Table 1. Public acknowledgement scores per item (n = 231)

Items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
I provide a listening ear	4.56	0.54	3	5
I clarify the circumstances in which they find themselves	3.89	0.73	2	5
I support them to understand the crisis situation	4.03	0.69	2	5
I discuss the impact on themselves	4.49	0.60	3	5
I offer them support and advice	3.67	0.81	1	5
I present myself as an anchor for care and support	3.68	0.83	1	5
I am always ready and prepared to support them	3.87	1.00	1	5
I am available for their personal problems	3.96	0.83	1	5
I do understand their personal problems	4.09	0.58	2	5
I am always clear as to what people can expect from me (as a mayor)	4.45	0.63	2	5
I offer the assistance of public servants to help them with financial matters	3.20	1.01	1	5
I offer the assistance of public servants to help them with media pressure	3.49	1.01	1	5
I make time for personal contact	4.56	0.60	2	5
After a year, I contact the affected again	3.03	0.89	1	5
I mobilize people (friends, neighbors) around the affected in order to support them	2.88	0.91	1	5
I connect the affected with other people who were involved in the incident	2.76	0.84	1	5
I distinguish among the support I provide toward the affected	3.13	0.97	1	5
I make my professional network available to the affected	3.66	0.80	1	5
I need to conquer bureaucratic challenges in order to provide support	2.84	0.88	1	5
I discuss public ceremonies and remembrances with the affected and their families.	4.02	1.18	1	5

Predictors of the provision of social support

The results of the linear regression analysis (Hypothesis 2, n = 196) showed that age, sex, days in office and number of inhabitants were not significantly associated with the social support mayors provided (data not shown). These findings confirm Hypothesis 2.

Prediction of home visits
Mayors were asked to describe a recent crisis (which did not happen before 2012) in which they had been involved. Of all 164 mayors who provided information on home visits in their crises, the great majority reported that they paid home visits to the affected (N = 139, 84.7%).

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Table 2. Summary of logistic regression analyses for variables predicting home visits (n = 150)

Variable	Model 1 Adj. OR (CI 95)	Model 2 Adj. OR (CI 95)
Average (intercept)	2.79 (0.06-127.53)	5.15 (0.03-1049.33)
Age	0.99 (0.93-1.06)	0.99 (0.93-1.06)
Sex (women vs. men)	2.13 (0.57-7.99)	2.17 (0.58-8.20)
Days in office	1.04 (0.93-1.15)	1.04 (0.93-1.15)
Residents	1.02 (0.68-1.52)	1.01 (0.67-1.52)
Social support	-	0.84 (0.28-2.46)
High (vs. low) impact	-	
High (vs. low) responsibility	-	-
People killed (yes vs. no)	-	-
MH17 (yes vs. no)	-	-
Log likelihood	-59.9171	-59.8643
Deviance test	Reference	p = 0.745

ADJ. OR = Odds ratio adjusted for other variables in model. CI 95 = 95% confidence interval of OR.

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

The results of the logistic regression analyses are presented in Table 2. Due to missing values, the analyses were conducted among 150 mayors (the results of the factor analysis were the same as in the sample with 231 cases: one construct based on 18 items with a Cronbach's alpha of .84; the results of the linear regression on the social support provided by mayors were not different from the sample with 196 cases: no predictor variable yielded a significant effect). These participants were not strikingly different from the broader sample of 231 mayors. The average age of participants was 56.6 years (SD = 7.95, n = 150), compared to 57.1 years for the earlier sample, while 22.67% of participants were female. The average time respondents had served as mayor was 8.1 years (SD = 5.69, n=150). The average number of inhabitants in the mayors' municipalities was 38,771 (SD = 38,405, n=150).

Model 1 again demonstrates that age, sex, days in office and number of inhabitants were not associated with home visits. The same pattern was found for all other variables except the variable *"high collective impact"* in model 3 and *"residents died because of the event"* in models 4 and 5. According to models 4 and 5 (Hypothesis 6), mayors more often paid home visits when residents had died because of the event. The likeliness of a home visit was slightly lower in model 5, which excluced the MH17 cases due to a lack of variation:I in all MH17 cases a home visit was made. In other words, after the MH17 disaster mayors were more tempted to make home visits compared to other crises where citizens died (Hypothesis 7); with the MH17 cases included in the analysis the odds ratio of

Model 3	Model 4	Model 4
Adj. OR (CI 95)	Adj. OR (CI 95)	Adj. OR (CI 95)
1.12 (0.00-290.20)	1.35 (0.00-529.22)	1.69 (0.00-710.83)
1.01 (0.94-1.08)	1.00 (0.93-1.07)	1.00 (0.93-1.08)
1.59 (0.40-6.24)	1.83 (0.44-7.67)	1.57 (0.36-6.90)
1.01 (0.91-1.13)	1.01 (0.90-1.13)	0.99 (0.88-1.12)
0.95 (0.63-1.45)	0.99 (0.64-1.52)	0.97 (0.63-1.50)
0.91 (0.30-2.79)	0.78 (0.24-2.54)	0.77 (0.24-2.50)
1.24 (1.00-1.53)*	1.15 (0.92-1.45)	1.18 (0.93-1.49)
0.95 (0.77-1.17)	1.04 (0.84-1.29)	1.02 (0.82-1.27)
-	4.50 (1.44-14.06)**	3.31 (1.03-10.63)*
-	-	(omitted)
-57.9389	-54.1647	-52.8297
$p = 0.146$	$p = 0.006$	NA (n = 131)

a home visit in case of deceased citizens was 4.5, without MH17 cases it dropped to 3.3). Model 4 exhibited a significantly better fit than the previous models ($p = 0.006$). In sum, we found no evidence to confirm Hypothesis 4 and the political responsibility element in Hypothesis 5. The (small) collective impact effect in model 3 was sustained when the MH17 cases are removed from the sample (OR = 1.25; $p < 0.05$; N = 131).

4. DISCUSSION

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first empirical study focused on mayors regarding the social support they claim to provide to residents affected by various crises in the past five years. Almost 60% of the Dutch mayors invited participated in our study. Of the 231 mayors who completed the social support questions, 219 were involved in one or more crisis. For several questions in our study, mayors were asked to take a recent crisis in mind when answering about household visits. All cases described happened in the past five years. In addition, we assessed the factors that are most closely associated with home visits to the affected residents. Of the seven hypotheses in our study, five hypotheses were entirely (H1, H2, H3, H6 and H7) and one was partially (H5) confirmed, while we found no evidence to confirm hypothesis H4.

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The findings confirmed the first hypothesis, indicating that in general mayors provide social support to affected residents. Indeed, the mean of the mirrored Social Support Survey sum-score was 3.79, which is on the far end of the brackets between *some of the time* and *most of the time.* The scores on the separate items showed that there were no items of the mirrored SSS that were *not* endorsed by all mayors. Overall and in general, they provided support such as a listening ear and practical help and support in media management. The items with the absolute lowest mean scores (scores < 3, never or seldom) were "*I need to conquer bureaucratic challenges in order to provide support*" and "*I mobilize people (friends, neighbors) around the affected in order to support them.*" Apparently, then, the mayors did not perceive themselves as being faced with bureaucratic challenges in the aftermath of crises. Moreover, they manifested a professional distinction, hesitating from interfering with existing relationships between the affected and their family, friends, and neighbors. Two questions that were added to the mirrored SSS sought to ascertain the interaction between the mayors' more public role and the direct support they provided to the affected in the aftermath of crises. The findings showed that the mayors did make their professional networks available to the affected (M=3.66) and discussed public ceremonies and remembrances with the affected and their families (M=4.02).

The second hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that mayors' age, sex, days in office and size of municipality were not significantly associated with the social support they provided in general.

Of the other hypotheses, three were confirmed, and one partially. As expected home visits were not associated with mayors' age, sex, days in office, and number of residents (Hypothesis 3). Mayors more often paid home visits when residents died because of the event (Hypothesis 6), which were events with a larger collective impact (Hypothesis 5 partially; political responsibility had no effect), and were especially likely to pay a home visit in the case of the MH17 disaster (Hypothesis 7). Thus, even in cases of low collective impact, the mayors were not less inclined to pay home visits than in crises with high collective impact where no people died. These findings suggest that mayors distinguished the outside world from the world where they meet the affected in the privacy of their own homes. In addition, the mayors clearly did not need to be triggered by collective impact in order to contact the affected. This can be deemed akin to the role of a mayor as a "buddy" (Jong, 2017), where he or she contacts the affected and discusses preferences and an appropriate level of governmental support. This may explain why home visits were not associated with the social support mayors provided in general to affected residents.

Regarding the MH17 disaster, all mayors in our sample had been in direct contact with the next of kin and paid home visits. We can conclude that in terms of the social support provided, the mayors paid home visits in the aftermath of MH17 (Hypothesis 5), slightly more often compared to other crisis situations in which citizens died. Most likely, they

supported them in tangible and intangible matters, as indicated in their social support scores, although this was not further specified in the survey. Nevertheless, an earlier study (Jong et al., 2016) has already confirmed that mayors provided both tangible and intangible support in the aftermath of MH17.

Implications

These findings are consistent with earlier findings following the MH17 disaster (Jong et al., 2016), where mayors were criticized for not undertaking a specific action rather than for a completed activity, clearly suggesting that mayors face certain expectations concerning their professional duties.

Although we found no associations between impact and responsibility on the one hand and home visit on the other, public expectations might result in a degree of pressure to contact the affected, as mayors realize that they may find themselves in troubled waters should they fail to demonstrate their commitment and social support. However, it is possible in principle that home visits are primarily conducted for political reasons, as part of the typical rituals undertaken in the aftermath of crises ('t Hart, 1993; Helsloot & Groenendaal, 2017), and exercised in order to avoid negative attention from the media and the public ('t Hart, 1993), i.e., mayors paid home visits despite a lack of intrinsic motivation to support the affected. We have no data to reject or confirm this possibility, but we assume that given that political responsibility and impact were not related to home visits, their willingness to support the affected was more strongly associated with a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) among mayors. Such a sense of community can be defined as a feeling that citizens matter to one another and people have a sense of belonging to the local community.

Future research is necessary to confirm (or reject) the notion that the provision of social support and home visits is positively associated with a sense of community among mayors. Interestingly, an earlier study by Broekema, Porth, Steen, and Torenvlied (2019) showed that Dutch mayors scored highly in terms of public service motivation, suggesting that they may also score highly on sense of community.

5. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

In contrast to the majority of studies on social support, which focus on received support, this is one of very few studies assessing the providers of social support and the assistance they offer to people affected by a collective crisis. Moreover, this is the first empirical study to examine the provision of support by mayors. In this study, we focused on the support mayors provide in general, and home visits in particular as a special form of social acknowledgement. We have no further information about the frequency of these

home visits or the affected family members who were visited. We were therefore unable to examine the extent to which factors such as collective impact and responsibility were associated with home visits. Moreover, we did not ask participants about how they dealt with situations of broken families, with affected people living in other cities (e.g., where the deceased were residents of their city, whereas their relatives lived in another city), and how this influenced home visits. Given the sample size, we were not able to statistically examine possible changes in the role of mayors during the past five years. We cannot rule out the possibility that about five years ago, mayors acted differently because the public held other expectations as to their role in supporting the affected and their families, which may have affected our results. Finally, given that all of the cases pertained to a Dutch setting, a biased view on the role of government officials might have resulted. Therefore, generalizations to crises in countries where mayors have alternative roles in local government must be made with care. In other words, there is a need to replicate our study in other countries using the same study design.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has discussed how mayors provided rather than received social support in the aftermath of crises and public tragedies. To this end, we set up a survey among Dutch mayors to assess their self-perceived role toward victims and their families, as well as their actual behavior in the aftermath of real crises. The findings have revealed that the level of support provided to people affected by crises as perceived by mayors is independent of age, sex, experience as a mayor, and/or the size of the municipality.

The findings have also demonstrated that mayors are most likely to visit the affected at home in situations where one or more citizens died. Such home visits when citizens died cannot be seen entirely separate from the collective impact of a situation, but are unrelated to the perceived (political) responsibility of the mayor involved.

More empirical follow-up studies would help us build on our currently scant academic knowledge of the provision of social support, as well as assist in the provision of psychosocial support for the affected, who are faced with a crisis that continues to affect their daily lives.

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APPENDIX.
Original questions by Sherbourne & Stewart (1991) versus mirrored questions from this study

Items original RAND questionnaire	Items mirrored questionnaire (used in current study)
Emotional/informational support	**Emotional/informational support**
Someone you can count on to listen to you when you need to talk	I provide a listening ear
Someone to give you information to help you understand a situation	I clarify the circumstances in which they find themselves
Someone to give you good advice about a crisis	I support them to understand the crisis situation
Someone to confide in or talk to about yourself or your problems	I discuss the impact on themselves
Someone whose advice you really want	I offer them support and advice
Someone to share your most private worries and fears with	I present myself as an anchor for care and support
Someone to turn to for suggestions about how to deal with a personal problem	I am always ready and prepared to support them
Someone who understands your problems	I am available for their personal problems
	I do understand their personal problems
Tangible support	**Tangible support**
Questions about the support in getting to bed, getting meals ready, support in doing some shopping.	I am always clear in what people can expect from me (as a mayor)
	I offer the help of public servants to help them with financial matters
	I offer the help of public servants to help them with media pressure
Affectionate support	**Affectionate support**
Questions about hugging, love and affection	None
Positive social interaction	**Positive social interaction**
Questions about hanging out with someone and how enjoyable this support is	I make time for personal contact
	After a year, I contact the affected again
	I mobilize people (friends, neighbors) around the affected in order to support them
	I connect the affected with other people who were involved in the incident

APPENDIX. Continued

Items original RAND questionnaire	Items mirrored questionnaire (used in current study)
Additional item	**Additional items**
Someone to do things with to help you get your mind off things	I distinguish among the support I provide towards the affected
	I make my professional network available to the affected
	I need to conquer bureaucratic challenges in order to provide support
	I discuss public ceremonies and remembrances with the affected and their families.

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Retrospect and final discussion

1. INTRODUCTION

Crises can be unexpected events, with public and individual consequences. In addition, crises come with complexity for public leaders in charge. As the study from Chapter 4 showed, complexity in crisis management is not bound to large scale crises, but can be found in small, local incidents as well. While crisis management tends to focus on mega-crises such as airplane crashes, hurricanes, terrorist attacks, or floods, this study zooms into crises of a smaller scale. Despite the scale of the incident, mayors can be regarded as a local focal point to manage crisis-related emotions, sometimes referred to as collective stress (Barton, 1969; Boin et al., 2005; Boin and 't Hart, 2003; Gillespie et al., 1974). Even though collective stress cannot be regarded as stress in the sense of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), it is a phrase that is commonly used in public administrative literature. Collective stress occurs when a social system is confronted with a (perceived) unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of citizens and generates emotions such as anger, anxiety, or grief. Under such circumstances, citizens have specific expectations of their public leaders. Among other things, they expect their public leader to communicate about the crisis at hand and to provide well-chosen words in order to enable them to make sense of the situation and move on. Boin et al. (2005) refer to this task as *meaning making.* In fulfilling this task, public leaders must realize that they do not have a monopoly on framing the crisis ('t Hart, 1993). As was highlighted in Chapter 7, the way in which this meaning making is interpreted by citizens can be different from one person to another. In the end, individuals build their own interpretation, based on their own global beliefs (e.g. the fairness, benevolence and predictability of the world) and the situation as it is (Park, 2016).

The studies presented in the previous chapters all contribute to our understanding of the role of mayors and their meaning-making behavior in times of crisis. The rationale for these studies came from an urge to deepen our understanding how Dutch mayors can effectively adopt the concept of meaning making in the aftermath of crises in a local setting. The aim was to assess how their role aligns with their citizens´ expectations, how their behavior could support the affected in their psychosocial recovery, and how this interferes with a simultaneous process of political accountability in the aftermath of crises.

In order to approach the topic from different perspectives, a mixed method and interdisciplinary approach was used. Methods in previous chapters included a literature review, interviews with almost a hundred mayors, a simulation study with 135 mayors, media content analysis of mayoral behavior in the aftermath of a national disaster, and a survey with more than 200 participants. In our literature study (Chapter 2) we called for more studies that enable a comparison of mayors in similar crisis situations, as demonstrated by Gallagher et al. (2007), Fairhurst and Cooren (2009) and Griffin-

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Padgett and Allison (2010). Chapter 3 presented such a comparative study, based on 94 case studies from The Netherlands. Even though the crises themselves differed, the comparison inspired us to develop a meaning making model to analyze the behavior of mayors. The comparative study on the MH17 disaster (Chapter 6) was based on another type of comparative methodology. As 54 Dutch mayors were involved in exactly the same crisis situation, it provided a unique opportunity to assess and compare how the role of tens of mayors was perceived and evaluated. All in all, the dissertation was broken down in seven sub-studies. In each sub-study, sub-research questions were answered and discussed. The present chapter provides a summary of the main findings, and answers the research questions as outlined in the introductory chapter. This chapter concludes with an overview of methodological considerations, strengths, and weaknesses, a reflection on the findings, practical implications, and recommendations for further research.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND ANSWER TO SUB-QUESTIONS

Seven research questions were presented in the introduction. This section answers these questions, based on the findings in the previous chapters.

What is regarded as effective leadership when mayors from across the world act as public leaders in times of crisis?

Chapter 2 started with a review of academic literature on public leadership in times of crisis. The aim of the article was to assess international peer-reviewed articles on leadership tasks and effectiveness. The material turned out to be dominated by Western studies, mostly situated in the United States. The review enriches our thinking on public leadership, but it remains rather unclear why certain kinds of leadership appear to be effective where others fail. Moreover, the articles do not use a consistent definition of what is considered to be "effective leadership." The effectiveness of the behavior of mayors and governors during crises and disasters are mostly based on interpretations of (social) media, voting results, and accountability processes in the aftermath of crises. This, however, does not tell us much about the effectiveness of leadership, as long as it remains unclear whether or not the apparent success was intended or in fact coincidental, and effectivity of public leadership in times of crises is not defined. As such, current literature offers little by way of guidance, general or otherwise, on how to effectively operationalize public leadership tasks.

Even though a clear and general definition of effectiveness of crisis leadership is missing, this study does help to identify certain gaps. Some of these gaps are due to a lack of comparative studies within the field of crisis management. Also, the study shows that the field of crisis management has little interaction with other academic fields. Among

others, the study showed that public administrative studies lack insights into psychosocial processes among their citizens, including the role of public leaders in the prevention of psychosocial stress factors among the affected in the aftermath of crises.

From a more positive angle, the study shows that the concepts of sense making, decision making, meaning making, terminating, and learning are apparently important enough to generate continuous academic interest from crisis management researchers for more than 25 years. Half of the articles from the review, for example, discuss meaning making as a leadership task. The task is defined as communicating the broader impacts of a crisis to citizens, media and other stakeholders (Boin et al., 2005). The purpose of meaning making tends to be explained in two ways. On the one hand, its purpose is to show that government is 'fully in charge' (Boin, 2009; Pinkert et al., 2007) and to show leadership in difficult times (Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009). In this case, meaning making is often part of the political game where public leaders anticipate the stage to where they are held accountable (Harris, 2011; Koven, 2010) and try to minimize political turmoil in the aftermath. To others, on the other hand, the task of meaning making has a more public-oriented goal, which is to strengthen society, provide hope (Noordegraaf et al., 2011; Pennebaker and Lay, 2002), and call upon resilience and pride (De Bussy and Paterson, 2012).

Overall, the findings from Chapter 2 show that much remains to be clarified in terms of how actual crisis leadership tasks are managed and balanced.

What is the visible "modus operandi" of Dutch mayors in times of crisis, and do they act in the same way in all crisis situations?

In Chapter 3, the meaning-making behavior of mayors was further specified, as it does not seem a far-fetched assumption that meaning making in times of crisis is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Depending on circumstances, one might expect that mayors differentiate in their meaning making. In order to distinguish between circumstances, the level of responsibility and collective impact of a situation were used. The review already highlighted that the political responsibility and accountability for crises are an important driver for behavior. The choice to use the level of collective impact of a situation as a second driver was based on the presumption that the societal impact of a crisis is not necessarily bound to the number of fatalities or the damage done, but that it depends on circumstances as well.

Based on interviews with Dutch mayors in 94 case studies, a Public Meaning Making Model was presented in Chapter 3. The findings show that the *modus operandi* in terms of meaning making changes, depending on the collective impact of a crisis and the related (political) responsibility of the mayor. Depending on the characteristics of a crisis situation, four different roles were presented: *mourner-in-chief, buddy, advocate,* and *orchestrator*.

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What are the potential bottlenecks and difficult issues for Dutch mayors when dealing with different types of crises?

Chapter 4 shows the outcome of a computerized serious game simulation. Scenarios were based on the four roles which were defined in Chapter 3: mourner-in-chief, buddy, advocate, and orchestrator. The hypotheses in this study supposed that complexity increases in situations where mayors are faced with higher collective impact and/or higher political responsibility. The hypotheses were rejected, as the data led to the insight that one role is not necessarily more complex than another. Another important insight of this simulation study was the finding that the complexity of crisis-related decisions was independent of age, gender, size of the municipality, or time in office of the mayor involved. Together, the findings show that complexity tends to be bound to the particular circumstances of a crisis. The overall results suggest that mayoral decisions become increasingly complicated when a mayor can no longer be seen as "everyone's mayor," and is required to make decisions that are not favorable to all citizens and network partners.

This finding can be illustrated by interview 12 of the framework-study from Chapter 3 (see: appendix study 3), where the Mayor of Barneveld explained his role in the aftermath of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. He was regarded as the national government's long arm by the farmers in his own municipality: "*Since the national government urged to kill the animals and the mayor was regarded as part of the same governmental structure, the role of the citizen father was a complex one. The focus of the national government was on the containment of the disease, not on the social impact and consequences*." In interview 87 from the same study (see: appendix study 3), the Mayor of Midden-Drenthe discusses his role in the aftermath of an outbreak of q-fever. Even though circumstances are more or less comparable, the perceived level of complexity appears to be different: "*I was a farmer myself. As a mayor, however, I also had to comply with the guidelines from the national government. The farmers accepted my difficult position*."

The simulation study from Chapter 4 shows that the complexity of decisions depends on the context and is not necessarily bound to themes with high collective impact. Even in cases of low collective impact and/or low political responsibility, mayors can still feel the heat of complex decision making. In general, it stresses the importance of explaining mayoral behavior under all circumstances, whether it is collective or in one-on-one meetings with citizens, as the mayor from Midden-Drenthe conducted. The findings suggest that mayors should be aware of potential differences in perceptions among their stakeholders. Regarding their meaning-making behavior, mayors should take notice of such differences in order to retain public confidence among all stakeholders.

What are the implications, in terms of trustworthiness and reliability, when accountability becomes more prominent on the mayoral radar?

Chapter 5 discusses the specific situation in which the cause of a crisis is subject to an investigation. In this chapter, the attributed responsibility for a crisis was discussed, resembling the horizontal axis of the *Public Meaning Making Framework* from Chapter 3. This conceptual paper argues that the attributed responsibility can change over time, especially when investigation bodies present new insights on the cause of a crisis. In order to anticipate upon such changes in responsibility, the strategy of "acknowledge and await" is proposed: in order to maintain reliability to stakeholders, this crisis response strategy keeps pace with changing perceptions but does not undermine earlier statements made; neither does it erode earlier reputations. The relevance of this conceptual study lies in the insight that the level of political responsibility might not be fixed under all circumstances. Anticipating changing levels of political responsibility, the proposed strategy of "acknowledge and await" might decrease public turmoil. By means of consistent communication throughout the aftermath, the strategy supports the trustworthiness and reliability of government and bridges the interests of the public with the interests of political fora. Jumping to conclusions before the outcomes of an investigation are known, on the other hand, increases the risk of political blame games.

What is the visible "modus operandi" of Dutch mayors when there is an apparent and simultaneous need for action on the societal impact of a crisis and requests for support to those directly affected?

The literature review in Chapter 2 concluded with the observation that current crisis management research lacks comparative studies. Without comparative studies, the true effectiveness of crisis management performance remains vague, as it remains unclear whether the apparent effective behavior of Mayor Giuliani, Governor Schwarzenegger, and others was intended, or coincidentally perceived as successful due to specific crisis-related circumstances. This chapter, therefore, presents such a badly needed comparative study. For this study, we used a unique study design, which enabled us to compare the leadership performance of several mayors and compare their effectiveness as it was perceived by media. The study was based on a Dutch (social) media analysis of 299 newspaper clippings and 1,698 tweets in the year after the MH17 disaster. With regard to the role of Dutch mayors, the disaster can be described as a situation where high collective impact was combined with a low level of political responsibility. As such, the findings in this chapter are indicative of the role mayors can fulfill as *mourners-in-chief* in local communities.

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Scientifically speaking, the circumstances of the MH17 disaster provided a unique opportunity. Passengers were residents from multiple Dutch municipalities. As such, the meaning-making behavior of 54 mayors could be compared. All these mayors were confronted with the impact of the same disaster. To the best of our knowledge, no existing study has examined a crisis situation in such a way before. Mayors were faced with clear expectations from their communities. A mayor who decided not to interrupt his holidays was criticized, clearly suggesting that society has clear expectations concerning mayoral "duties" after a disaster with a large public and social impact like MH17. Mayors who attended memorial services and gatherings were taken for granted.

Findings suggests that successful Dutch mayors just did what they were supposed to do in this situation: attend and give a voice to the collective mourning. An analysis of interviews with family members of the passengers who died in the MH17 disaster also revealed a distinct appreciation from victims' families for mayors who visited them in the privacy of their homes to lend a "listening ear," and to discuss their material needs. This part of public leadership was not yet found in the review mentioned in Chapter 2. All in all, the (social) media analysis from this study suggests that mayors have a role on both public and private stages. Sometimes the public and private stages meet, as in the example from the chapter where two mayors presented themselves as a spokesperson on request of the victims' family. Being close to the affected seems to have been an essential part of the role of Dutch mayors in the aftermath of MH17. This is a new insight, which did not come to surface in the earlier, international literature study (Chapter 2). Moreover, this adds a new angle from which mayoral behavior can be judged as more or less effective.

What do those affected by a crisis, generally speaking, expect from their public leaders?
Where Chapter 6 came up with insights based on media clippings and tweets, the study from Chapter 7 takes our findings one step further. Eight people who personally experienced a crisis or disaster were interviewed. The interviewees discussed their expectations and experiences in relation to government. This was done against the background of Park's (2016) model on meaning making. People affected by other major crises and disasters expect help and acknowledgment and want to be heard. They assume that the government uses its capacity to align network partners and break down bureaucratic barriers. Potential stressors arise when public leaders ignore the people affected, do not adhere to their promises, are unable to take away bureaucratic burdens, and get involved in political spin and blame games. In contrast, public leaders are expected to reach out to the affected, address their practical and non-practical needs, and explicitly discuss expectations. In its combination, the studies from Chapter 6 (Media coverage of mayoral performance after the MH17 disaster) and Chapter 7 (Expectations of the affected) provide us more insights into the behavior that mayors

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show and are expected to show in their contacts with the affected in the aftermath of crises. Additionally, Chapter 7 broadened the crisis circumstances to situations where mayors and/or other government officials were held accountable, while the MH17 study (Chapter 6) did not involve mayoral accountability for the downing of the MH17 as such. Chapter 7 generated the new insight that the affected are still willing to get into contact with government officials, even in cases where government has a full or partial responsibility for the cause of the crisis.

How do Dutch mayors relate their own perceptions to the expectations of those affected by a crisis and what is the resulting behavior they show in times of crisis?

Thus far, social support research has focused on the receiving end of the channel. The emphasis has been on the way in which the affected received social support from their family, neighbors, colleagues, and their loved ones. This chapter discusses how mayors provided, and did not receive, social support. For that purpose, we set up a survey among 231 Dutch public leaders to assess their role toward victims and their families. In line with the hypotheses, the findings suggest that the level of provision of support is independent of age, gender, experience as a mayor, and/or the size of the (current) municipality. As the interviewees from Chapter 7 requested, mayors are willing to lend a listening ear to their citizens in need. Home visits tend to be related to a specific aspect of the crisis at hand; whenever people die in an incident, mayors are more likely to contact the family and pay a home visit. All mayors who were faced with the local impact of the MH17 disaster (n=27) had been in direct contact with the affected. As such, findings from the media study from Chapter 6, where just three mentions of such home visits were retrieved from the (social) media analysis, can be generalized through this survey.

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3. DISCUSSION: TOWARD AN INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS

In a young and fragmented field of research, as mentioned in Chapter 2, the strength of the crisis-related studies presented in this book lies in their interdisciplinary nature. All studies here have tried to bridge existing gaps in current crisis management research and combine insights from public administration, crisis communication, and psychosocial research. Nevertheless, the previous chapters raised several new topics that are worth exploring. Among others, Chapter 3 asked for further study on the consequences of a public apology on the well-being of victims and their families, while Chapter 5 proposed more research on the distinction between short-term and long-term communication strategies. Despite the importance of such and other crisis-related topics, this discussion goes forward with the overall theme of meaning making toward their citizens, when mayors are confronted with local crises in their communities.

In our literature review (Chapter 2), rather instrumental approaches of meaning making were presented, with a strong focus on the reputation of leadership. According to Boin and 't Hart (2003), people look to their "true leaders" in stressful situations, where successful performance in times of collective stress turns leaders into statesmen and restores confidence. Other authors discussed meaning making in a broader context, concluding that not reputational image restoration, but regaining public confidence should be the main goal of public leaders (Griffin-Padgett and Allison, 2010). The research findings discussed in the previous chapters follow this path. Meaning making by public leaders is not solely reputational-driven, but is meant to explain and live up to the expectations of citizens in times of local crises.

This section discusses the implications of the research findings for effective meaning making by mayors toward their main audiences, within a political, psychosocial, and crisis communicative context. First, the interdependency between the mayor and his or her society in crisis is discussed in detail. Second, the interdependency between the mayor and the directly affected as a specific group of stakeholders is discussed. Afterwards, the implications for meaning-making efforts are discussed, in order to balance potential conflicting interests among citizens and prevent political and societal turmoil in the aftermath of crises.

In other words, in the previous chapters the findings of the conducted studies were discussed in detail. This last section consists of a more general discussion of the study findings, and specifically focuses on meaning making toward a society that is faced with a crisis on one hand, and meaning-making efforts toward the affected on the other. Before elaborating on these issues, a number of methodological considerations, strengths, and weaknesses are discussed.

4. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS, STRENGTHS, AND WEAKNESSES

Even though limitations of the individual studies in this dissertation were discussed in the previous chapters, a number of overall limitations need to be addressed. Generally speaking, the studies were primarily based on a Dutch setting when assessing the role Dutch mayors fulfill in times of crises. This was done through the lenses of the media, the affected, or the mayors themselves. As such, one should be careful to claim a generalization of these findings to mayors in general. The Dutch setting might result in a biased view of the role of public leaders, although the literature review (Chapter 2) gave no indication to assume that other Western-oriented societies have strikingly different expectations toward their public leaders in the aftermath of crises. For instance, interview 82 (see: appendix Chapter 3) highlighted the experiences of Mayor Eenhoorn after a fatal shooting

in a shopping center in Alphen aan den Rijn. He referred to his communication strategy of "*we care, we act and we provide perspective,*" which resembles earlier-mentioned themes of *hope, pride, resilience,* and *trust,* which were retrieved from the studies in the literature review of Chapter 2 (e.g. De Bussy and Paterson, 2012; Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; Gasper et al., 2011; Noordegraaf and Newman, 2011; Pennebaker and Lay, 2002). As all articles from the literature review (Chapter 2) discussed crises in the Western world, no conclusions can be drawn about mayors in societies in other parts of the world.

Another potential limitation is related to the nature of disciplines when it comes to researching public leadership of mayors in times of crises. Crisis management tends to be rather fragmented, where studies are published in journals from the fields of public administration, crisis communication, and psychosocial support. Each of these academic areas tends to approach the role of public leaders through their own frame. The framework that was presented in Chapter 3 and which was published in *Public Relations Review*, for instance, takes the communicative approach. The focus of that chapter is on the public role of mayors in times of crises, but it pays less attention to the specific role of the affected. Likewise, Chapter 8 highlights the provision of social support, but pays less attention to the political aftermath of crises. One has to realize that separate publications within either the public administration, crisis communication, or psychosocial support fields all have a specific perspective, as they approach the topic of crisis leadership from their own, monodisciplinary point of view. Only by integrating the findings in an interdisciplinary way can a more comprehensive picture on the role of mayors in times of crises be generated.

Another potential vulnerability of the studies presented concerns the difficulty in replicating crisis research. Crises are unique events that cannot be repeated in a laboratory setting. Interviews among mayors and affected or surveys about their perceptions and experiences might have resulted in a self-presentation bias that involves a hindsight effect. One should be aware that divergent perceptions, interpretations, and interests may cause serious trouble in crisis management (Rosenthal and Kouzmin, 1997). Nonetheless, by conducting a multimethod study that includes areas outside public administration, the findings from the individual studies were cross-checked in a sufficient manner. As an example, the interviews with the affected (Chapter 7) showed that the responsibility for the cause of a crisis does not seem to be an obstacle for them to get into contact with public leaders. Following this study, this finding was checked and confirmed as part of the social support survey among mayors (Chapter 8). The importance of accountability and (political) responsibility, which came to surface in the literature study of Chapter 2, was further explored in a crisis communication setting in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. In a similar way, Chapters 6 (the MH17 study), 7 (interviews with the affected), and 8 (provision of social support by mayors) assessed the importance of public administrative meaning making in a psychosocial setting.

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Overall, the strength of the conducted studies lies in the fact that several aspects of public leadership in times of crisis were analyzed that had not been assessed using empirical study-designs. First, the framework that was set up in Chapter 3 provided more substance to the task of meaning making. While the literature review from Chapter 2 suggested that meaning making was regarded as a general task (Boin et al., 2005), the framework from Chapter 3 enabled us to further specify this task. Mayoral meaning-making behavior turned out to depend on the collective impact of a crisis situation and the political responsibility that was assigned to the public leader in charge. Second, the simulation study (Chapter 4) provided more depth to the concept of decision making in times of crises and potential deliberations of public leaders in terms of meaning making. In the limitations section of Chapter 4, it was already noted that that the level of complexity was rated on a single three-point Likert-scale. Despite this limitation in measurement, the study made clear that not all crisis-related decisions are regarded as equally complex. Moreover, the study showed that public leaders who are older and/or spent more time in office, did not perceive their decisions as less complex compared to their counterparts, as was proposed in one of the hypotheses. The study gave more depth to the underlying decisions that need to be taken in the light of meaning making. Third, the MH17 case study (Chapter 6) explored the behavior of 54 Dutch mayors in the aftermath of the crisis. To the best of our knowledge, this was the first study to examine the behavior of tens of public leaders who were faced with exactly the same disaster. The study showed that mayors do not only have tasks in the public domain, but that they are expected to visit the affected with a listening ear in the privacy of their homes. Fourth, the survey on social support (Chapter 8) enriched our understanding of the provision of social support, as it was the first time mayors were surveyed about their interaction with the affected in the aftermath of crises. As discussed in Chapter 8, most research focuses on the receiving end of social support, while this was the first study to examine the perspective of mayors who provided support. Last but not least, the conceptual study from Chapter 5 provided a plausible explanation for why current crisis response strategies make an inadequate assumption that crisis responsibilities are rather static. The study came up with a new approach of "acknowledge and await," in order to respond with care and to not jump to conclusions, as long as the cause of a crisis is still unknown.

Meaning making toward a society during a crisis with a local impact

Over the past 25 years, the relevance of public appearances to a society in crisis received most attention in the areas of crisis management and public administration. Or, as Ansell et al. (2014) described, the challenge to "*communicate an unprecedented and threatening event politically while taking into account the politically charged issue of causation, responsibility, and accountability*." In other words, the dominant focus of public administration was on society as a whole and not so much on the individual citizen who

suffered psychosocially from the crisis at hand. When it comes to the communication efforts of public leaders, most attention is spent on restoring public confidence as a purpose of meaning making (Boin et al., 2005). Overall, the behavior of public leaders like Giuliani (9/11), Schwarzenegger (forest fires California), and Bligh (Queensland flooding) is regarded as successful (De Bussy and Paterson, 2012; Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; Pennebaker and Lay, 2002). Moreover, such communication in times of crisis is potentially powerful. As Back et al. (2010) describe, Mayor Giuliani's words had a direct impact on the feelings of his fellow New Yorkers shortly after the events of 9/11. At 2:49 pm, he refused to speculate about body count; he communicated that the number of casualties would be "more than any of us can bear." According to Back et al. (2010), sadness and anger rose and anxiety declined immediately afterwards. Apparently, the words a mayor chooses have a direct influence on the feelings of the people in a society.

The literature review from Chapter 2 showed that research on effective leadership behavior in times of crisis was mostly based on interpretations of (social) media, voting results, and accountability processes in the aftermath of crises. Public leaders were regarded as effective leaders as long as they were re-elected or received positive press (De Bussy and Paterson, 2012; Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; McBride and Parker, 2008; Mullin, 2010). This, however, suggests a biased observation from hindsight; because public leaders were re-elected or received positive press, they must have been effective leaders. At the same time, the studies did not teach us much about how actual leadership tasks should be undertaken and balanced in the heat of the moment or the aftermath of crises. Helsloot and Groenendaal (2017) suggested that a public leader can be successful by "just being visible" and personally stating to the public that their shattered world will be healed. This suggests that the art of meaning making is a straightforward process and merely being visible creates a perception of effectiveness. In the literature review (Chapter 2), an earlier case study of Fairhurst and Cooren (2009) was described, comparing public leadership after Hurricane Katrina and California wildfires. They noted that effective leadership is not only defined by the person of the leader, but also on the context in which he or she operates. In Chapter 3, the Public Meaning Making Model was presented, which indeed showed the importance of context to the leadership roles in terms of meaning making.

In addition, the simulation study in Chapter 4 showed that crisis communication efforts often require more than "just being there." Crises can sometimes be regarded as rather complex situations, where pros and cons must be weighed and successful leaders need to make more effort. (S)he must be able to convince stakeholders of the logic and reasoning behind a complex decision, even where it conflicts with the leader's interests and beliefs. Even within the general public, there might be conflicting interests which need to be addressed with words that count. The simulation study in Chapter 4 led to the insight that pressure on the public leader is built up in terms of complexity, when he or she feels that a side must be chosen, and he or she can no longer present him- or herself as

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"*everyone's mayor*." This particular study used the example of a football match. Canceling an important match needs to be explained and communicated to citizens who support the team. If the mayor decides against canceling the match, (s)he risks facing riots, which also demands a public explanation when things go wrong. Altogether, being a public leader in times of crisis requires bridging potentially conflicting interests of the political arena and the general public. To some extent, this is in line with findings by Karsten (2013), who analyzed authority-related issues after controversial decisions with large public visibility. However, the simulation study from Chapter 4 deepens our understanding of the need to explain controversial decisions, even in situations with less public visibility. Moreover, the simulation study showed that even decisions made in a context of low collective impact can still be regarded as rather complex. The study showed that the communication efforts of mayors sometimes require more of them than merely being visible. Complex situations require explanations (a particular type of meaning making), in order to overcome differences in perceptions among stakeholders.

Based on the studies presented in the previous chapters, an effective adaptation of the "meaning making" role of mayors was regarded as their ability to bridge communicative interests of stakeholder groups among their citizens, while not neglecting the political interests and accountability phase in the aftermath of crises. The bumpy road of a political aftermath was the main topic of Chapter 5. In that chapter, the response strategy of "acknowledge and await" was proposed as a potential solution in order to align upcoming political interests with objectives in non-political arenas. While political accountability is postponed until further notice, the crisis response strategy proposes to acknowledge the crisis at hand to all stakeholders.

Meaning making toward the directly affected

The more private interests of the directly affected were discussed in detail in the (social) media study on the MH17 disaster (Chapter 6). This study suggested that the directly affected have their own, distinctive expectations of mayoral behavior. This was confirmed in the interviews with affected from other crises (Chapter 7), where it was found that the *modus operandi* of public leaders is likely to create sources of stress, and it becomes less effective when they solely focus on their public role and neglect the more personal interests of the affected.

While the level of collective impact might be relevant to society as a whole, interestingly enough, the affected are most likely looking for acknowledgment from society. Based on Maercker and Müller (2004), such acknowledgment relates to how the affected experience the positive reactions from a society that shows understanding of his or her unique position, and which acknowledges the victim's current difficult situation. Social acknowledgment appears to be supportive to mental well-being (Maercker and Müller, 2004; Park, 2016), resilience, and recovery after stressful and disastrous events

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(Park, 2016), although the longitudinal interplay between PTSD symptoms and social recognition of the affected is complex (Van der Velden et al., 2019). The combination of studies in this dissertation generates the insight that collective impact and social acknowledgment are not interchangeable concepts. It is not unthinkable that people feel left out, even though a community tries to do its utmost, as the example in the introduction to this dissertation showed. There, a widow told us how impressed she was by the number of people who joined a commemoration, but also left with a feeling that there was no place for the personal mourning of her family. This implies that, even when a crisis is perceived as a shock to society and the collective impact is regarded as "high," it does not necessarily result in feelings of social acknowledgment and support by the directly affected. In other words, the concepts of collective impact and public acknowledgment should not be confused.

The issue of (political) responsibility, which turned out to be another relevant factor in meaning making toward the public as a whole, is valued differently by the directly affected as well. Even in crisis situations where perceived political responsibility is "high," the affected show a certain understanding of the situation in which government finds itself. In other words, responsibility should not discourage a mayor from getting in contact with the affected. "*The municipality was overwhelmed by this crisis. They did what they could,*" as one of the interviewees in Chapter 7 said. In another case study from that chapter, an alderman spoke at the funeral, despite the fact that the local government was held responsible. It suggests that even in cases where the government is held responsible, the affected are still willing to receive support from government. As such, despite the political responsibility, a mayor can still fulfill his or her task of providing a listening ear for the affected. The results from the questionnaire in Chapter 8 showed that perceived political responsibility seems of no influence on the willingness of mayors to provide support toward the affected. Even in cases where mayors put themselves in the higher segments of political responsibility, they decided to contact the affected and pay a home visit. This willingness coincides with recent findings by Van der Velden et al. (2019), who stress the need to promptly recognize and acknowledge victims' traumatic experiences and difficulties. Of course, the personal recovery after crisis situations does not solely depend on the interaction between mayors and the affected. But, regardless of the circumstances, early acknowledgment and recognition seem beneficial to all affected in the aftermath of crises.

While responsibility is of less relevance to the affected, the study in Chapter 7 presented us a new insight on another relevant factor. The interview study of Chapter 7 suggested that living up to expectations prevents a potential and additional source of stress. Vice versa, when the expectations of the support by government differ from the actual support offered, this potentially results in an increased level of stress and

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disappointment. In summary, mayors are expected to live up to expectations (Chapter 7), such as lending a listening ear (Chapters 6 and 7), fulfilling event-related practical needs, or breaking down bureaucratic barriers (Chapter 7) when needed. In Chapter 7, a modified framework, inspired by the Meaning Making Model by Park (2016), was presented (Ch 7, Figure 1). It explained how the meaning making process of people in a disaster setting is based on three different categories that play a crucial role in the process of individual meaning making. First, people have their own global beliefs, which are based on their fundamental values and expectations toward government. Second, they have their own situational meaning based on governmental support on the collective level (e.g. in public gatherings and media). Third, they develop their situational meaning based on governmental support on an individual level (e.g. in one-on-one contacts or home visits). Altogether, the affected have certain expectations of their public leader, whose meaning-making behavior might support or weaken perceived support.

5. TOWARD A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT BY MAYORS

The combination of findings brings us to the overall conclusion that meaning making toward a society that is faced with a crisis in a local setting is characterized by:
· Collective impact
· Political responsibility

Findings show, however, that collective impact and political responsibility do not define potential roles for mayors toward the directly affected. To the affected, meaning making is characterized by:
· Perceived social support and acknowledgment
· Personal expectations one has about his/her public leader

This implies that the Public Meaning Making Model does not yet give enough guidance to mayors for their duties toward the directly affected as a specific group of citizens. The findings urge for a new, complementary heuristic framework for meaning making toward the directly affected. An example of such a framework, inspired by the Meaning Making Model by Park (2016), is presented in Figure 1. This framework consists of the two dimensions introduced above. On the vertical axis, the (perceived) level of social support and acknowledgment (high or low) is presented. This is based on the perceived support that is provided by actors from within the local community. In case a community is fully supportive and provides social support and acknowledgment to the directly affected, the level can be regarded as "high." In case the affected are left on their own, or the collective impact does not result in feelings of support, this is regarded as "low."

The horizontal axis presents the expectations the affected have about their public leaders (high or low). The expectations are "low" when the affected are rather self-supportive and do not expect a deep involvement of their mayor. Likewise, expectations are "high" when the affected expect a large involvement of their mayor. Examples of questions which help to indicate the required level of support are: "Are the affected self-supporting, supported by their own social network, or do they expect their mayor to step in as a personal buddy on behalf of government?"

The combination of the two dimensions enables us to conceptually distinguish and assess the different roles mayors can use to live up to the expectations and, as a result, lower (potential) stress levels among the affected.
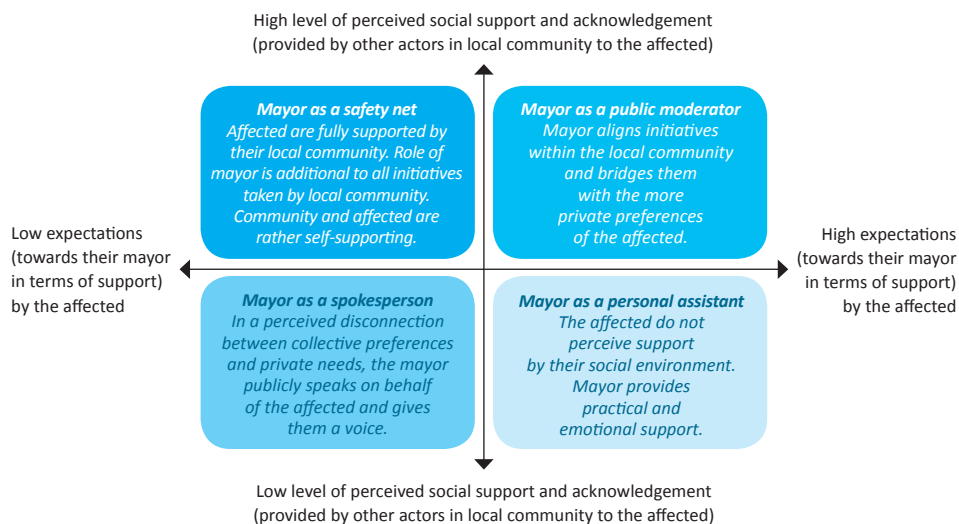

High level of perceived social support and acknowledgement
(provided by other actors in local community to the affected)

Mayor as a safety net
Affected are fully supported by their local community. Role of mayor is additional to all initiatives taken by local community. Community and affected are rather self-supporting.

Mayor as a public moderator
Mayor aligns initiatives within the local community and bridges them with the more private preferences of the affected.

Low expectations
(towards their mayor in terms of support) by the affected

High expectations
(towards their mayor in terms of support) by the affected

Mayor as a spokesperson
In a perceived disconnection between collective preferences and private needs, the mayor publicly speaks on behalf of the affected and gives them a voice.

Mayor as a personal assistant
The affected do not perceive support by their social environment. Mayor provides practical and emotional support.

Low level of perceived social support and acknowledgement
(provided by other actors in local community to the affected)

FIGURE 1. Roles in meaning making towards the affected in times of crisis

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MEANING-MAKING BEHAVIOR OF MAYORS

The overall effectiveness of the meaning-making behavior of mayors implies that it should be effective to the general public in addition to the people personally affected by a crisis. As such, effectiveness must be found in taking care of the expectations of the general public, which is based on the Public Meaning Making Model from Chapter 3, and living up to the expectations of the directly affected, the role for which was presented in Figure 1. When the effectiveness of public leadership and meaning making is solely based on positive media

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clippings and re-elections, which is commonplace in current crisis management studies (Chapter 2), one neglects the interests of those directly affected, who are not always able to raise their voice in media, or who are too low in number to have direct political impact.

Of course, one can argue whether or not it is up to mayors to guard this balance between the general public and the directly affected. First, and rather instrumental and reputational-driven, a disbalance between the two potentially leads to a political turmoil and (social) media storm. This will certainly be the case when the affected are able to share their negative feelings on (social) media. Second, and more fundamental, mayors have an ethical duty to prevent their behavior from becoming an additional source of stress for the affected. As such, it can be regarded as their duty to guard and prevent potential disturbances between collective interests and keep an eye on the interests of the directly affected. The studies in the previous chapters showed that mayors are among the few representatives of government who are actually in the position to influence *public meaning*. As they are one of few governmental representatives who are in direct contact and who visit the affected at home as well, they are in a unique position to guard such a balance.

When mayors are supposed to guard the interests of the directly affected, the prevention of additional sources of stress should be incorporated in their meaning-making behavior as well. This implies that the meaning-making behavior toward the general public needs to be aligned with the situational meaning of the directly affected. A mismatch in this balance potentially leads to distress, as the interviews of Chapter 7 showed. Some of the affected who were interviewed in that Chapter felt they were neglected by government. One of the striking examples was given by the farmer whose cattle suffered from foot-and-mouth-disease. In his disappointment, he concluded: "*I can only trust animals, not government.*" Similarly, the affected of the pub-fire and the outbreak of legionellosis felt as if they were "*victims of a forgotten disaster.*" Their private perspective did not align with the collective perspective. In their view, the personal impact of the crisis was neglected by society, while the public meaning making was dominated by a heated political debate in the aftermath of the fire. In those cases, government did not live up to the personal expectations of the directly affected. These interviewees were left with distress, due to a mismatch between the public and individual meaning making. To them, their personal mourning was overshadowed by political games.

As long as the affected feel supported by the general public, the two perspectives are already aligned. However, when the two perspectives differ, the mayor is required to bridge the expectations on public meaning making with the expectations and preferences of the directly affected. The MH17-study (Chapter 6) already gave the example of two mayors who each presented themselves as a spokesperson for the victims' families, in order to bridge such differences. While the community of Simpelveld was willing to organize a memorial service, Mayor De Boer of Simpelveld

asked the residents of his town to cancel it, on behalf of the family. Similarly, Mayor Brok of Dordrecht asked his citizens to show restraint toward the family of residents who died in MH17.

Aligning *meaning making* between the general public and the affected goes both ways. Toward the affected, they will need to explain the situation they are in and the meaning they give to the specific crisis situation. In their meaning making toward the general public, mayors will need to check whether or not there is a need to incorporate the position of the directly affected in the words they choose. In times of collective stress, they should not only focus on broad themes like hope, resilience, and pride, which are the themes that resulted from the literature review in Chapter 2. Instead, there is a need for a more humanistic communication that includes the special position of the affected within the broader storyline, which is congruent with the findings of Griffin-Padgett and Allison (2010) in their comparison of Nagin's and Giuliani's speeches in the aftermaths of Hurricane Katrina and 9/11. In language and deeds, mayors can publicly show that they care about the well-being of all of their citizens and explain to society how they can support the affected in their psychosocial recovery.

7. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Mayors are expected to get in contact the directly affected, as Mayor Hoekema shared in his interview about a fatal car accident in Wassenaar (see: interview 75, appendix Chapter 3): "*I visited the parents at home. They were in shock. There is no manual for these circumstances. You show sympathy and share the bewilderment. It is an essential part of our job. You just have to be there as a citizen father. … You should not make mourning too collective, and bypass the individuals.*" In that setting, mayors can discuss the expectations one has about the role of the mayor as a representative of government. This should enable mayors to fine-tune their behavior to the global and situational meaning of the affected.

The findings from Chapter 4 (simulation study) imply that mayors believe that it is easier to be a neutral, "everyone's" mayor, than to choose sides. In order to be able to act like "everyone's mayor," they need to understand all different perspectives on the matter. It requires that mayors take care of all the different perspectives and interests, be a listening ear, and ask for unexpressed expectations among their stakeholders in order to be able to bridge the interests of all of his or her citizens, including the victims, bereaved, and next of kin. As all stakeholders have explicit and implicit expectations of their public

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leader, one can only live up to the expectations when these are known. This is a necessary step in order to signal potential mismatches in the interests of the affected, citizens and politics, including different perceptions among the affected themselves. Oftentimes, these expectations might be unexpressed. However, only when global beliefs and expectations become known to the mayor can he or she bridge potential differences in the perceptions among the affected and the general public. That said, it is not an easy task, as earlier findings showed that the public sometimes has a different perception of their action than governors and mayors (Martinko et al., 2009). It goes without saying that when mayors are involved, it is a potential pitfall in their crisis communication as well.

The studies from the previous chapters also stress the importance of explaining mayoral behavior under all circumstances and to all audiences, whether it is collective, in one-on-one meetings with citizens, or in the political arena. As discussed in Chapter 5, explaining dilemmas makes use of the methodology of procedural justice, and makes it more likely that mayors will be able to get an understanding for and bridge potential differences in perceptions among their stakeholders, including the affected.

In Chapter 8, an important finding resulted from a rejected hypothesis. Unlike the initial hypothesis, political responsibility for a crisis situation does not obstruct meaning-making efforts by mayors. As Chapter 8 taught us, mayors are willing to visit the affected at home, even in situations where they are held responsible for a crisis situation. The conceptual study presented in Chapter 5 showed that the political aftermath can be intense and enduring, and it might take up to a year before a final verdict is given on the crisis responsibility. Under such circumstances, an early adoption of the strategy of "acknowledgment and await" seems key in order to regain trust among stakeholders and do not wait until the final verdict on crisis responsibility is issued. Moreover, it appears supportive for the well-being of the affected as well, in their quest for early acknowledgment. Chapter 7 stressed the importance of such acknowledgment. Without acknowledgment, some of the interviewees felt forgotten, while in crises where acknowledgment was provided, government became a "tower of strength."

Lastly, from a psychosocial support perspective, meaning making requires more than "just being there," as Helsloot and Groenendaal (2017) proposed. In its essence, it is true that mayors should be visible when the public requires them to do so. But how they should adopt their meaning-making behavior in order to be effective in a given crisis can be a rather difficult task. First, it requires getting to know the expectations among all stakeholders. Second, it requires balancing between the expectations of the general public and the directly affected, while, thirdly, it also requires anticipating new complexities—as already argued in Chapter 5, perceptions among stakeholders can be rather dynamic over time.

8. DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

All in all, the studies in this dissertation show that the field of crisis management is not only fragmented (Chapter 2), but it also lacks empirical data. Several hypotheses were, in contrast to our expectations, rejected in the simulation study (Chapter 4) and survey (Chapter 8). Age, sex, size of municipality, or time in office appeared to be not associated with the complexity of decisions (Chapter 4) or the social support mayors provide (Chapter 8). Also, in situations where participants considered a dilemma to be fairly simple, they were divided on the most appropriate decision (Chapter 4). This suggests that mayors show more of a personal touch in the public domain, while they are rather homogenous as a group while practicing home visits. More research on the potential room for personal preferences in a world of distinct expectations on public leadership should be welcomed.

Four other promising avenues are proposed, building upon the findings from the studies presented in this dissertation. First, in line with the discussion in Chapter 2, more comparative research is welcomed, as it enables crisis management communities to explore frameworks such as the ones as presented in this book, e.g. the leadership framework by Boin et al. (2005), the Public Meaning Making Model and the complementary social support framework presented in Figure 1. Altogether, comparative research will further enrich our insights in the effectiveness of public leadership in times of crises, both in the public domain as in contact with the affected. This includes case studies on a smaller scale than Hurricane Katrina or the events of 9/11, as Chapter 3 showed that small crises can enrich our academic insights as well.

Second, any communicative intervention that strengthens victims and the affected and supports them in their coping behavior, sense making, and recovery, should be welcomed and encouraged. This study shows that there is still room for improvement on the intersections of meaning making, crisis communication, and psychosocial support. More insights in how to include psychosocial principles in their meaning-making efforts are likely to enable crisis communication practitioners to offer strength to the affected. In their commentary, Fisher Liu and Fraustino (2014) raised the fundamental question, "*what is the goal of our (crisis communication) scholarship?*" Psychosocial support toward victims and the affected is one of such fundamental, ethical tasks within the domain of crisis communication. As previously argued in Chapter 5, the existing crisis communication theory is still dominated by American and corporate case studies, with a focus on image repair. To make a shift from image repair to a type of communication that is truly beneficial to the mental well-being of victims and the affected, insights from psychosocial literature should be incorporated in crisis communication strategies. While image restoration strategies might be helpful to other audiences (e.g. network partners, shareholders, customers), such reputational strategies might be counterproductive when

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targeted to the affected as a specific group of stakeholders. Additional research should focus on the specific psychosocial needs of the affected, their role within the broader discourse of crisis communication and how to further align them with the interests of (governmental) stakeholders under crisis. The research area of crisis communication would benefit from systematic analyses of crisis response strategies and how these are perceived by the directly affected. Hopefully, it identifies patterns and enables crisis communication practitioners to make crisis communication more inclusive and sincerely compassionate toward the affected.

Third, empirical research on the interaction between public leaders and the affected is warranted: to date there is no empirical study that follows a crisis in which both mayors and affected residents, along with their interactions are assessed longitudinally. In this study, the focus of Chapter 8 was on the direct support that was provided by mayors in their interaction with the affected, in the privacy of their home. In their evaluation of the national coordination of the MH17 crisis, Torenvlied et al. (2015, 243) concluded that, broadly speaking, the affected felt supported by their mayors. More insights into the potential of mayors to align collective impact with feelings of acknowledgment by the local society are welcomed. International replication research following similar "distant" crises as MH17, such as the disaster with Germanwings flight 9525 in France (24 March 2015), the disappearance of MH370 (8 March 2014), the Bad Aibling rail accident in Germany (9 February 2016) or the terrorist attack on Brussels Airport (22 March 2016) may provide more data to elaborate and broaden findings to an international context. Such replication studies enrich our insights on possible cultural differences in crisis leadership issues around the world. Also, more studies that replicate the behavior of mayors on the provision of social support over time, are welcomed, as Chapter 8 showed that this area is largely neglected in current social support research.

Finally, the formal MH17 evaluation (Torenvlied et al., 2017) discusses the political aftermath, where Members of Parliament pretended to speak on behalf of the affected, leaving them with a feeling of being abused for political purposes. More empirical studies are welcomed, in order to deepen our understanding of the impact of such political aftermaths on the well-being of victims and their families. The public administrative and crisis communication insights on accountability and responsibility in the field of social acknowledgment and social support, might offer a novel and promising avenue to further encourage the well-being of victims, the affected, and their families.

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Summary

SUMMARY

In recent years, numerous studies have been published on public leadership in times of crises. The focus of these studies tends to be on the national and international level. This dissertation focuses on the role of mayors, as a special category of public leaders, within the context of crises in a local setting. A crisis in a local setting can be described as the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectations of citizens, generates negative outcomes for a social system, and calls for local public leadership.

The dissertation draws upon prior academic research on public leadership in times of crises and adds new empirical studies among Dutch mayors in their role as local communicators and vehicles for psychosocial intervention. The aim of the study was to further increase our scientific knowledge regarding several aspects of this role, varying from effective leadership to the expectations of affected residents regarding the role of their mayor. Findings were obtained through a literature review, a series of interviews with mayors and those affected by crises, a questionnaire, a simulation study, and a media review.

The literature review revealed that current literature offers little in terms of guidance, general or otherwise, on how to operationalize public leadership tasks in effective ways. The literature review also revealed that the field of crisis management has little interaction with other academic fields. Among others, the study showed that public administrative studies lack insight in the psychosocial processes among citizens, including the role of public leaders in the prevention of psychosocial stress factors among the affected in the aftermath of crises.

Empirical insights were used in order to create a new framework on meaning making, the leadership task of communicating the broader impacts of a crisis to citizens, media, and other stakeholders. Based on interviews with Dutch mayors in 94 case studies, a Public Meaning Making Model was presented. This model explains, in detail, the modus operandi of mayors when they connect to their citizens in times of crises. The public leadership role of meaning making appeared to be influenced by the collective impact of a crisis and the related (political) responsibility of the mayor. Depending on the characteristics of a crisis situation, four different roles were presented: mourner-in-chief, buddy, advocate, and orchestrator.

A simulation study was set up to research the complexity of decisions in the context of these four roles. The data demonstrated that even in cases of low collective impact and/or low political responsibility, mayors can still feel the heat of complex decision making. In general, it stresses the importance of explaining mayoral behavior under all circumstances, whether it is collective or in one-on-one meetings with citizens. Overall, the findings suggest that mayors should be aware of potential differences in perceptions among their stakeholders. Regarding their meaning making behavior, mayors should take notice of such differences to retain public confidence among all stakeholders.

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In a more conceptual contribution, the attributed responsibility for a crisis was discussed, representing the horizontal axis of the Public Meaning Making Model. The proposition was made that attributed responsibility can change over time, especially when investigative bodies present new insights on the cause of a crisis. The relevance of this study lies in the insight that the level of political responsibility might not be fixed under all circumstances. Anticipating on changing levels of political responsibility, the proposed strategy of "acknowledge and await" might decrease public turmoil. By means of consistent communication throughout the aftermath, the strategy supports the trustworthiness and reliability of government and bridges the interests of the public with the interests of the political fora.

As current crisis management studies lack comparable data, a study on the aftermath of the MH17 disaster was set up. The study was based on a Dutch (social) media analysis of 299 newspaper clippings and 1,698 tweets in the year after the MH17 disaster. Scientifically speaking, the circumstances of the MH17 disaster provided a unique opportunity. Passengers were residents from multiple Dutch municipalities. As such, the meaning making behavior of 54 mayors could be compared. The study showed that mayors were faced with clear expectations from their communities. A mayor who decided not to interrupt his holidays was criticized, clearly suggesting that society has clear expectations concerning mayoral 'duties' after a disaster with a large public and social impact like MH17.

Findings suggests that successful Dutch mayors just did what they were supposed to do in this situation: attend and give a voice to the collective mourning. An analysis of interviews with family members of the passengers who died in the MH17 disaster also revealed a distinct appreciation from victims' families for mayors who visited them in the privacy of their homes to lend a "listening ear" and to discuss their material needs.

The findings on MH17 were broadened by insights from interviews with eight people who personally experienced a crisis or disaster. People affected by major crises and disasters expect help and acknowledgement and want to be heard. They assume that the government uses its capacity to align network partners and break down bureaucratic barriers. Potential stressors arise when public leaders ignore the people affected, do not adhere to their promises, are unable to take away bureaucratic burdens, and get involved in political spin and blame games. In contrast, public leaders are expected to reach out to the affected, address their practical and non-practical needs, and explicitly discuss expectations. The affected also show that they are still willing to get in contact with government officials, even in cases where the government has a full or partial responsibility for the cause of the crisis.

The final study was based on a survey among Dutch mayors who shared their perceptions and experiences with the affected. The uniqueness lies in the approach, as it looked at the provision of social support. Usually, social support research tends to focus on the receiving end of the channel, with a focus on the social support the affected receives from their family, neighbors, colleagues, and loved ones. Contradicting the hypotheses, the

findings suggested that the level of provision of social support by mayors is independent of their age, gender, the experience as a mayor, and/or the size of their (current) municipality. Mayors are also rather willing to lend a listening ear to their citizens in need. Home visits tend to be related to a specific aspect of the crisis at hand; whenever people die in an incident, mayors are more likely to contact the family and pay a home visit.

The combination of studies show that in times of crisis, citizens expect their public leader to give meaning to a situation, make sense of the crisis, address feelings of hope and resilience on a community level. While previous studies had a focus on the national and international level, this dissertation argues that similar patterns can be found when faced with crises with a local impact. Based on the studies in this dissertation, an important and additional aspect is revealed. The conclusion is drawn that needs and expectations of the victims, bereaved, and next of kin should be incorporated in meaning making efforts of mayors.

The main findings of this dissertation are as follows:
a. While academic research focuses on the interaction of public leaders and the general public, mayors also have a meaning making role towards the affected in times of crises, by being a "listening ear" and providing practical and emotional support.
b. Meaning making by mayors in times of crises appears not to be a one-size-fits-all concept. Meaning making towards the general public depends on the (perceived) responsibility of public leaders on the one hand, and their perceptions of the collective impact on society on the other. The context describes the appropriate role, whether it is "mourner in chief", "buddy", "advocate", or "orchestrator".
c. Meaning making towards the general public must be distinguished from meaning making towards the directly affected. The appropriate level of meaning making towards the affected is most likely defined by their personal expectations and the level of social acknowledgement they receive from their local community.
d. Mayors are supposed to guard the interests of the directly affected and incorporate the (psychosocial) interests of the affected in their meaning making behavior towards the general public as well.
e. Decisions in the context of meaning making are regarded as complex, particularly whenever mayors have the impression that they can no longer pretend to be "everyone's mayor". Under such circumstances, they are required to explain their position to people or to stakeholders who disagree and adopt the concept of procedural justice.
f. The complexity of crisis related decisions that need to be taken in the context of meaning making is independent of the collective impact and/or the (perceived) responsibility. Moreover, the complexity is not defined by age, gender, experience as a mayor, and/or the size of their municipality.

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The findings indicate that, in their meaning making towards the general public, mayors will need to check whether there is a need to incorporate the position of the directly affected in the words they choose. In times of crises with a local impact, they should not only focus on broad themes like hope, resilience, and pride which are regular themes in meaning making by public leaders. In language and deeds, mayors can publicly show that they care about the well-being of all their citizens and explain to society how they can support the affected in their psychosocial recovery.

The findings stress the importance of being able to explain mayoral behavior under all circumstances and to all audiences, whether it is collective, in one-on-one meetings with citizens, or in the political arena. Their communicative efforts require more than "just being there". In its essence, it is true that mayors should be visible when the public requires them to be so; however, in a given crisis mayors probably will be challenged to synchronize the interests of both public and the directly affected whilst shaping their meaning making behavior.
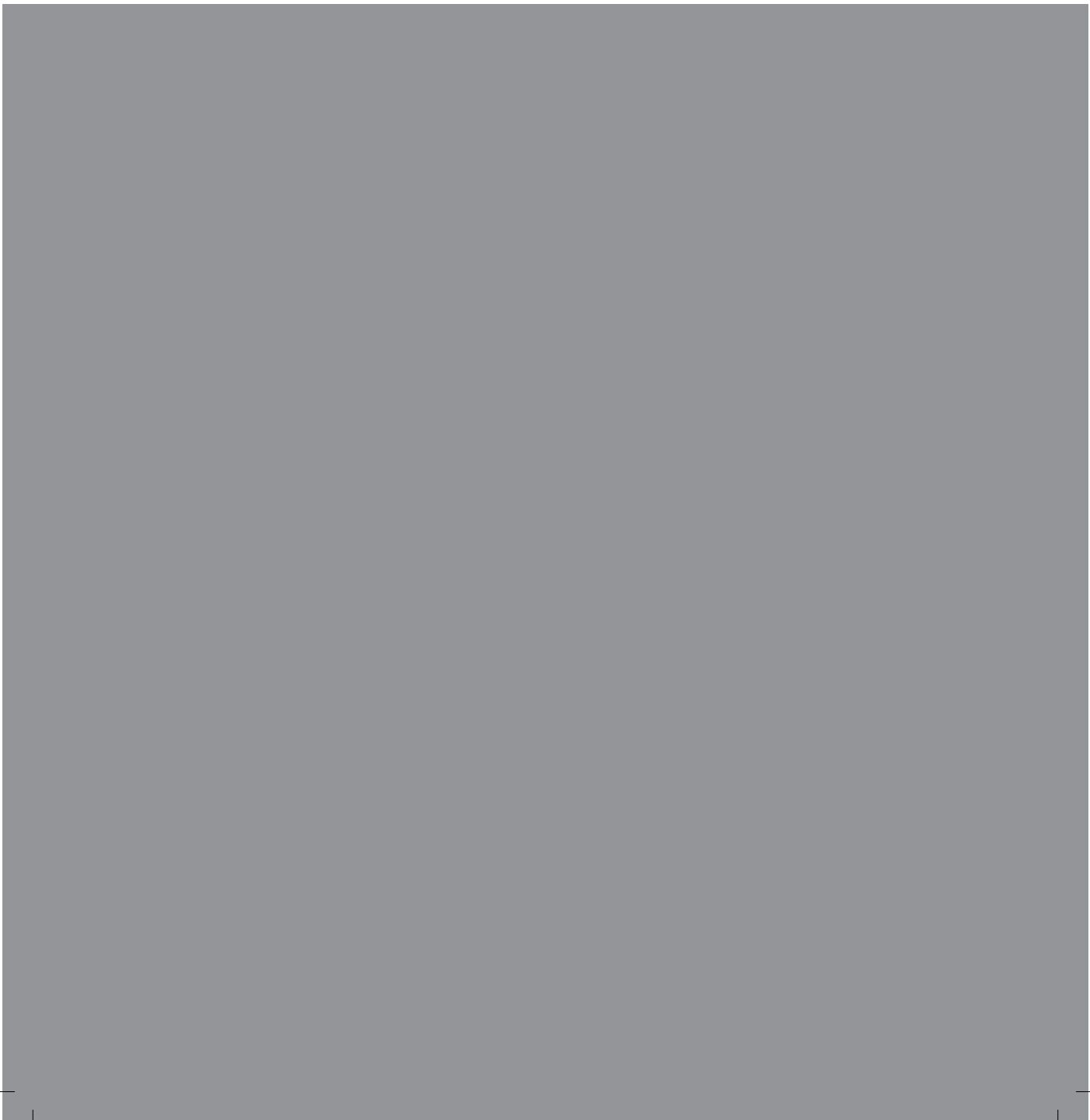
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List of publications

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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Jong, W. (2019). Anticipating the unknown: Crisis communication while under investigation. *Public Relations Inquiry*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X19862343

Jong, W. (2019). Wijzen op de schuld van een ander; Analyse van 'blame games' in de onderzoeksfase na crises. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 47 (2).

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Curriculum vitae

CURRICULUM VITAE

Wouter Jong (1972) is a full time crisis consultant for the Dutch Association of Mayors. He advises mayors during and in the aftermath of crises in The Netherlands. From small incidents up to larger crises, such as a Project X-birthday party invitation, which went viral on Facebook and ended in riots (2012). His daily work focuses on crisis communication strategies, taking into account the legislative powers of mayors and the public perceptions and impact of incidents, crises and disasters.

He began his career in 1997 as a public affairs associate for international PR-agency Burson-Marsteller. Ever since, his professional life has had a focus on issue management, crisis and disaster management, and crisis communication. After working as a researcher at NIBRA (Netherlands Institute of Fire Service Disasters Management; now IFV), he worked for COT Institute for Safety and Security Management in The Hague (2003-2007). He is a lecturer in Crisis Communication at the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs at Leiden University since 2018.

He studied Business Economics at the University of Groningen and studied Law at the Open University in Heerlen. His final thesis on liability issues in a governmental context received an award (2007) from Leiden University´s Albeda Leerstoel. Later on, Wouter was recognized with the Top Student Paper Award of the International Crisis & Risk Communication Conference at the University of Central Florida for his paper "Self-correcting mechanisms and Echo-effects in Social Media: An analysis of the 'Gunman in the Newswroom' Crisis" (with Michel Dückers as co-author), in 2016. In 2017 his article "Meaning making by public leaders in times of crisis: An assessment" was also awarded with the International Top Student Paper Award at the Florida conference.

His work has been published in international academic journals, professional magazines, publications from the Dutch Association of Mayors and online weblogs. He has been training mayors and public leaders in crisis management and crisis communication through projects at VNG International in Jordan, Lebanon and Sint Maarten, where he contributes to disaster management related projects in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma (2017). He has presented his work at national and international conferences.

Wouter worked on his PhD dissertation as an external PhD-student.

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This dissertation focuses on the role of mayors, as a special category of public leaders, within the context of crises in a local setting. The dissertation draws upon prior academic research on public leadership in times of crises and adds new empirical studies among Dutch mayors in their role as local communicators and vehicles for psycho-social intervention. The aim of the study was to further increase our scientific knowledge regarding several aspects of this role, varying from effective leadership to the expectations of affected residents regarding the role of their mayor. Findings were obtained through a literature review, a series of interviews with mayors and those affected by crises, a questionnaire, a simulation study, and a media review.

The combination of studies show that in times of crisis, citizens expect their public leader to give meaning to a situation, make sense of the crisis, address feelings of hope and resilience on a community level. While previous studies had a focus on the national and international level, this dissertation argues that similar patterns can be found when faced with crises with a local impact. Based on the studies in this dissertation, an important and additional aspect is revealed. The conclusion is drawn that needs and expectations of the victims, bereaved, and next of kin should be incorporated in meaning making efforts of mayors.

Wouter Jong is a crisis consultant for the Dutch Association of Mayors and a lecturer in Crisis Communication at the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs at Leiden University.

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