

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The framing contest unravelled: Mayors, framing strategies and political outcomes in the wake of three riot-related crises in the Netherlands

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This study seeks to unravel meaning making and framing contests of mayors in the aftermath of riot-related crises in the Netherlands. Approaching crisis exploitation as a process sensitive phenomena allowed us to analyse framing strategies and how they coincide with particular political outcomes, while taking into account the different stages of the aftermath during which framing strategies may shift. In contrast to theoretical assumptions, findings of our multiple case study suggest no pattern between the use of a specific framing strategy by the mayor and their success in terms of political outcomes. Instead, our findings suggest that contextual factors, including official inquiries, time spend in office and media pressure, could explain variation in framing dynamics and political outcomes.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Crises are often crucial moments in the careers of public leaders. How they communicate during the aftermath of a crisis has strong implications for their political position and reputation. It is argued that in the aftermath of a crisis, both the public leaders in charge as well as their critics seek to exploit the situation for their own political gain (e.g., Boin, 't Hart, & McConnell, 2009). This study aims to improve our understanding of postcrisis meaning making and the allocation of blame.

In doing so, we focus on the framing efforts of Dutch mayors in the aftermath of riot-related crises in the Netherlands. In recent years, Dutch mayors have become more vulnerable to critique on their performances as their crisis management responsibilities have increased (Nederlandse Overheid, 2016; NRC, 2015). Effective crisis communication in the light of blame avoidance therefore seems to have become all the more important. The central question guiding this study therefore is: "What framing strategies are used by Dutch mayors during riot-related crises and to what extent and how are the strategies of the mayors successful in terms of political outcomes?"

Several studies have attempted to unravel meaning making and framing by public leaders in the aftermath of crises (e.g., Boin et al., 2009; Brändström & Kuipers, 2003; De Vries, 2004; 't Hart, 1993; Tarrow, 1994). However, as Jong, Dückers, and Van der Velden

(2016) recently argued, this field of research is still young and fragmented. While most studies agree that meaning making matters in the process of allocating political responsibility and blame, much is left unclear when it comes to operationalizing effective meaning making strategies (Jong et al., 2016).

This research aims to shed light on these matters by theoretically and empirically assessing strategic crisis framing by mayors and subsequent political consequences. A combination of the "crisis exploitation theory" (Boin et al., 2009) with the "staged response theory" (Hood, Jennings, Hogwood, & Beeston, 2007) makes it possible to analyse framing strategies and how they coincide with particular political outcomes, while taking into account the different stages of the aftermath during which framing strategies may shift. The combined theories were applied to a qualitative and most similar case study of three Dutch crises: the riots in the Hoek van Holland of 2009, the Project X riots in Haren of 2012, and the riots in the Schilderswijk in The Hague of 2014.

In addition, this study has included contextual factors possibly influencing the framing contests and questions of blame, including media pressure, time in office, and official inquiries. In doing so, this study responds to recent studies that have shown the importance of contextual factors in explaining political consequences of crises for those in charge (e.g., Boin et al., 2009; Hinterleitner & Sager, 2015; Resodihardjo, Carroll, Van Eijk, & Maris, 2016; Resodihardjo, van Eijk, & Carroll, 2012).

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The next section of this article further elaborates on the theoretical model applied in this study. This section is followed by an explanation of important methodological choices and strategies surrounding the analysis of the three case studies. Thereafter, the cross-case findings are discussed. Finally, the most important conclusions are presented followed by a discussion of the theoretical implications and areas for future inquiry.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research aims to theoretically map crisis framing and subsequent political consequences from the perspective of office-holders during the aftermath of a crisis. We combine the crisis exploitation theory (Boin et al., 2009) with the process-sensitive staged response theory (Hood et al., 2007). The combination of these theories provides a theoretical approach to unravel various framing strategies used by office-holders and explores how they coincide with particular political outcomes. It allows us to take into account the different stages of the aftermath during which framing strategies may shift. Furthermore, this approach pays attention to contextual factors potentially affecting the interplay between framing strategies and political outcomes.

2.1 | Crisis exploitation: crisis frames and political outcomes

In their article about crisis exploitation Boin et al. (2009) introduce a framework to capture crisis framing in relation to both the reputation of office-holders, as well as the endurance of status quo policies and practices. They define crisis exploitation as: "The purposeful utilization of crisis-type rhetoric to significantly alter levels of political support for public office-holders and public policies (Boin et al., 2009:83)." With crisis exploitation, they describe efforts of office-holders and their critics to strategically frame occurred events in order to produce particular political and policy outcomes that coincide with their ambitions (Boin et al., 2009). They argue that based on these crisis exploitation efforts, contests between different types of frames emerge (Boin et al., 2009).

In this light, framing should be seen as a method of socially constructing the nature of a crisis as well as how it should be dealt with by strategic communication. As Entman argues:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.
(Entman, 1993:52)

When it comes to framing a crisis, Boin et al. (2009) describe three types of framing strategies that represent such selective aspects of a perceived reality: denial, critical threat, and critical opportunity.

First, the "denial frame" refers to a framing strategy that seeks to minimize event significance by denying the occurrence of a crisis

(Boin et al., 2009). This frame downplays the idea of political or policy consequences based on the notion that the crisis occurred independently from the influence of the office-holders and policies in place (Boin et al., 2009).

The second, "critical threat frame," presents the events as a threat towards the collective good embodied in the status quo of which current policies and practices are part (Boin et al., 2009:84). This framing strategy tends to recognize the event significance but defends the office-holders and status quo policies against critics (Boin et al., 2009). It seeks to "exogenize" the causality of the events and therewith accountability and blame (Boin et al., 2009).

The third "critical opportunity frame" describes the events as a critical opportunity to expose shortcomings of existing policies and practices (Boin et al., 2009:84–85). This framing strategy attacks the office-holders in place and seeks to mobilize support for the removal or substantive alteration of dysfunctional policies and organizations (Boin et al., 2009). This frame type seeks to maximize event significance and "endogenizes" accountability and blame (Boin et al., 2009).

These different crisis frames all represent different perspectives on the significance of the events as well as its causality (Boin et al., 2009). According to the crisis exploitation theory, office-holders and opponents deploy crisis frames to achieve a particular political outcome. Boin et al. (2009:89–91) indicated three categories of political outcomes: elite damage, elite escape, and elite rejuvenation. By categorizing political outcomes, they are able to make general claims about crisis exploitation consequences. We build on this approach by adding levels of political success from the standpoint of the office-holders (Table 1).

"Elite damage" can be seen as the most unsuccessful outcome and occurs when the careers, aspirations, and reputations of office-holders are damaged as a result of crisis-induced political blame (Boin et al., 2009). "Elite escape" in turn is a reasonable successful outcome in the sense that office-holders were able to avoid blame and damage (Boin et al., 2009). Finally, "elite rejuvenation" occurs when office-holders not only escape damage but also benefit from their crisis performance (Boin et al., 2009). Elite rejuvenation is therefore the most successful political outcome.

2.2 | Staged response: shifting frames

This study is based on the assumption that framing strategies and political outcomes might change during the aftermath of a crisis. Therefore, we adopt the "staged response theory" of Hood et al. (2007). This theory offers a "process-sensitive" approach for analysing the development of used frames over time during a crisis. The authors presume that an office holder's initial stance is likely one of responsibility denial and only when they perceive this as unfeasible

TABLE 1 Political outcomes and degree of success

Political outcome category	Degree of success for the mayor
Elite rejuvenation	Most successful outcome
Elite escape	Reasonable successful outcome
Elite damage	Unsuccessful outcome

they will accept certain amounts of responsibility (Hood et al., 2007). The core idea of the staged response theory is that when office-holders respond to a continuing firestorm of public critique they will likely follow a “staged retreat under fire,” moving from problem denial through problem admission and from responsibility denial to responsibility admission, see Figure 1 (Hood et al., 2007:4-5).

In terms of the different frames described by Boin et al., this idea of a staged response implies that office-holders are likely to use different frames during different points in time. This notion is important as it provides a structure to examine the development of specific frames used over time during the aftermath of a crisis. Figure 1 shows the integration of the three crisis frames of Boin et al. with the staged response model. The model assumes that only if the problem denial stance becomes unfeasible, office-holders will choose the less defensive problem admission but responsibility denial stance (Hood et al., 2007). In addition, it is expected that only when responsibility denial becomes impossible office-holders will move to the third and less politically comfortable stage of both problem and responsibility admission (Hood et al., 2007).

The model links the amount of responsibility for the crisis to the extent of political and/or reputational damage (Hood et al., 2007). Coombs and Holladay (2002) empirically confirmed the idea that the more office-holders can be held responsible for a crisis the more likely they are to suffer reputational damage from it. Based on the assumption that office-holders aim at political survival during the aftermath of a crisis, a successful political outcome can be defined as an outcome in which the office holder remains in office and suffers limited to no reputational damage.

The staged response model thus expects that blame-avoiding office-holders stage their response to a “blame firestorm,” (Hood et al., 2007:3) however, it does not assume that every aftermath will follow the same pattern (Hood et al., 2007). During some kinds of crises, a stance of problem denial can be untenable or indefensible from the start, making office-holders to move directly to the “problem

admission, responsibility denial” stage (Hood et al., 2007:4). In addition, in some kinds of crises the office-holders’ stances would never go beyond the stage of problem denial or the stage of problem admission but rather remain at the denial of responsibility (Hood et al., 2007). Hood et al. (2007) argue that only if pressure continues over a longer period of time, they might expect the more exposed defensive positions on the bottom-right corner of Figure 1 to be reached. In this research, an analysis is made of this pressure through different contextual factors that could influence the staged response, the framing contest, and eventually, the political outcomes of a crisis.

2.3 | Contextual factors

Several contextual factors can influence the framing contest and subsequent political outcomes. They account for potential variety in the crisis responses and deviation from the standard patterns as described by Boin et al. and Hood et al.

First, mass media can be seen as a way for office-holders and their opponents to communicate their frames outside the formal political arena, in this study outside the municipality council (e.g., Boin et al., 2009; Coombs, 2015; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007). However, media do not exclusively serve as communication channels, but have the power to influence how frames are broadcasted outside the framing contest that takes place within the municipality council. Media can positively and negatively influence how frames of both the mayor and his political opponents are represented (or misrepresented) with the potential to enhance or release pressure on the office-holders.

Another factor refers to the time spent in office by the particular office holder in charge. According to Boin et al. (2009), office-holders that have served only a short time in office are more likely to survive a crisis exploitation framing contests than those who have spent a long time in office. Office-holders that served for a short period are to a smaller degree seen as representatives of status quo policies that failed during the crisis (Boin et al., 2009).

Finally, the crisis exploitation contest in the aftermath of a crisis could be influenced by an official inquiry that is issued as a result of the crisis (e.g., Boin et al., 2009; Hood et al., 2007; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; McConnell, 2003; Resodihardjo et al., 2016). By issuing an inquiry into the occurred events, the mayor and his political opponents can postpone specific claims about the role of the office holder and status quo policies at the beginning of the aftermath (Hood et al., 2007; McConnell, 2003). This could result in unclear and indecisive frames until the inquiry report is published (Hood et al., 2007). The conclusion of the report in turn could inform the framing and exploitation efforts of both the mayor and his political opponents (Boin et al., 2009; Hood et al., 2007).

3 | METHODS

3.1 | Multiple, most similar case study

Unravelling the link between postcrisis framing strategies and political outcomes requires analysis of speech acts by mayors and political

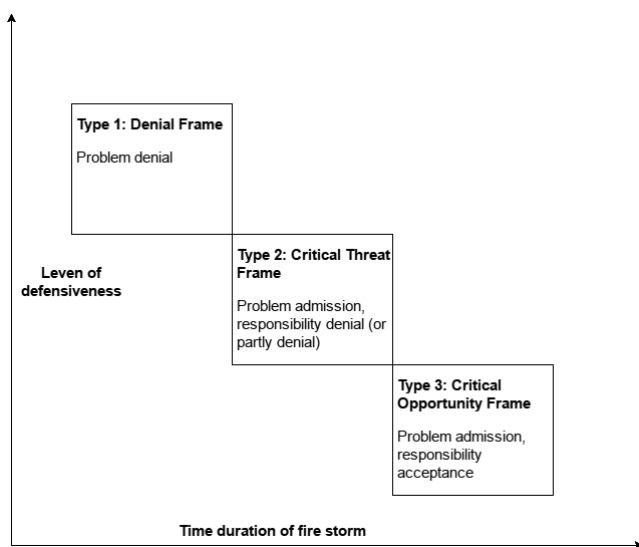


FIGURE 1 Staged response and crisis frames

Theory	Concept	Definition	Indicators	Data sources
Theory of crisis exploitation (Boin et al., 2009)	'crisis frames'	Crises have a socially constructed nature, since actors confronted with the same set of events may adopt fundamentally different perspectives (Entman, 1993; Boin et al., 2009) Boin et al. (2009:84) distinguish three types of crisis frames that can be used by actors: 1) denial 2) critical threat 3) critical opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Denial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor states that no crisis occurred ○ The mayor minimizes the significance of events ○ The mayor states that office holders are not to blame for the occurred events ○ The mayor argues to go back to business as usual ● Critical threat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor states that a crisis occurred, but exogenises the cause ○ The mayor acknowledges event significance ○ The mayor argues that blame for the occurred events is diffuse/not clear ○ The mayor defends the status quo policy practices ● Critical opportunity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor states that a crisis occurred and endogenises the cause ○ The mayor maximizes events significance ○ The mayor focuses on the question of blame around the occurred events ○ The mayor attacks the status quo policy practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Press statements of the mayor -Interviews of the mayor with broadcasting agencies -Statements of the mayor during the municipality council meeting on the topic of the crisis
	'contextual factors'	The framing contest in the aftermath of a crisis can be influenced by contextual factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor or a political opponent states that the media has misrepresented his narrative ○ The mayor or a political opponent states that the media has confirmed their narratives ● Time in office: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The political opponents state that the mayor is less responsible for the occurred events due to his short time in office ○ The political opponents state that the mayor is to blame for the occurred events due to his long time in office ● Official inquiry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In response to the occurred events an official inquiry is issued ○ The inquiry evaluates the policies in place and the performances of the mayor during the crisis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipality council meeting(s) on the topic of the crisis -Inquiry reports
	'political outcomes'	A framing contest can have different political implications: elite damage, elite escape, and elite gain (Boin et al., 2009:91)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elite damage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor resigned after the crisis; ○ Most municipality council members fully blame the mayor and his performances during the crisis. ● Elite escape: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor stayed in power after the crisis; ○ Most municipality council partly blame the mayor and his performances during the crisis. ● Elite gain/rejuvenation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The mayor stayed in power after the crisis; ○ Most municipality council members praise the mayor and his performances during the crisis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Municipality council meeting(s) on the topic of the crisis -Vote results on 'motions of distrust' within the council meeting on the topic of the crisis

processes on municipal level while be open to contextual factors affecting them. Therefore, the methodological approach adopted for this study is a qualitative multiple case study. Qualitative analysis of

a small number of cases enables to generate in-depth findings of real-life phenomena and their encompassing contextual conditions (Yin, 2012).

In our attempt to identify the mechanisms that link a specific framing strategy used by a mayor to a particular political outcome, we selected three “most similar” cases (Gerring, 2007). This implies that cases were kept similar on contextual factors that might affect the crisis exploitation game and its outcome; type of crisis, number of victims, impact on local society, and amount of media attention. All three cases are riots in the public sphere in the Netherlands during the past decade; had a few victims, a substantial impact in local society, a large amount of media attention; and were first of all addressed by local authorities. This set of case selection criteria led to the following cases: the riots in the Hoek van Holland during the Veronica Sunset Grooves festival (2009), the Project X riots in Haren organized through Facebook (2012), and the riots in the Schilderswijk in The Hague as a result of escalated pro-Gaza and pro-Patria demonstrations (2014) as described in further detail in section four.

3.2 | Data sources

By means of data collection procedure, a triangulation of data sources has been applied by making use of video recordings and a wide variety of textual reports. Press statements, media interviews, reports of municipality council meetings served as primary data sources in all three cases. Videos and documents were considered relevant data when they shed light on the units of observation for every case: (i) the frames used by the mayor, (ii) the political outcomes of the framing contest, and (iii) contextual factors affecting their interplay. For each case, data were collected for a period marked by the first press statement given by the mayor directly after the occurred events to the final debate on the topic of the crisis within the municipality council (see Appendix for an overview of all data sources).

3.3 | Data analysis

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify and analyse crisis frames, political outcomes, and contextual factors for each case. Predetermined theoretically based categories were deprived from the conceptual model and were translated into real life indicators (see operationalization scheme). This resulted in a deductive and structured analysis of frame types, type of outcomes, and relevant contextual factors in play in all cases. (Non)patterns in these case study findings were generated by means of a cross-case analysis on how Dutch mayors frame riot-related crises and to what extent they were successful in terms of political outcomes as presented in Section 5.

Internal validity and construct validity (Yin, 2009) of our case study findings were boosted by, respectively, triangulation of data sources and the use of a coding protocol based on pre-established indicators. External validity, referring to the transferability of case study findings for comparable cases beyond the scope of our case section (Yin, 2009), is inherently limited in a small N, qualitative case study design. Instead, we aim to translate the findings of our explorative case study design into suggestions for further research on how a combination of the crisis exploitation theory (Boin et al., 2009) and staged response

theory (Hood et al., 2007) could be further refined to explain how crisis rhetoric affects political outcomes and under which conditions.

4 | CASE DESCRIPTIONS

4.1 | Beach riots Hoek van Holland

In the evening of 22 August 2009, the festival Veronica Sunset Grooves at the beach of the Hoek van Holland (Rotterdam, the Netherlands) became the stage of large-scale violence (Het Parool, 2010; NOS, 2010; NRC, 2009). As the evening progressed, a group of rioters that called themselves “Rotterdam Hooligans” and bystanders joining the rioters engaged in violent conflict with the police. This eventually led to warning shots fired by the police, resulting in several casualties and a deadly victim (COT and Beke, 2009). The aftermath of this incident was centred around a debate on the performances of the mayor, the police, and existing policies (NRC, 2009).

After the riots mayor, Aboutaleb (2009a,b) emphasized the significance of the events claiming he was shocked and acknowledging the disruptive effects. He, furthermore, stated sufficient police officers were present during the festival and emphasized his appreciation of their performance (Aboutaleb, 2009c). He condemned the extreme violence leading to a shot fired by the police (Aboutaleb, 2009d).

However, months later shortly after official inquiry results (COT report) were made public Aboutaleb acknowledged the lack of information, proper risk assessment by the police, and insufficient police capacity prior to the events (Aboutaleb, 2009e). While taking final responsibility for the organizational failures, Aboutaleb argued he did not have direct influence on the range of mistakes made by the police organization (Aboutaleb, 2009e). Aboutaleb was confronted with a motion of distrust within the council, but a majority allowed him to remain in office to lead organizational reform (Gemeenteraad Rotterdam, 2009).

4.2 | “Project X” Haren

At 21 September 2012, large-scale riots took place in the centre of Haren. It all began with the publication of a birthday event on Facebook by a young inhabitant. The event was published with a so-called public status, as a result the event was widely shared across social media (Commissie ‘Project X’ Haren, 2013). Around 3000 to 5000 youngsters came to Haren in the evening of the 21st of September (AD, 2012; Commissie ‘Project X’ Haren, 2013; NOS, 2012; RTV Noord, 2012; Volkskrant, 2012). As the evening progressed riots broke out, youth turned against the police, damaged public and private properties, and started looting shops (AD, 2012; Commissie ‘Project X’ Haren, 2013; NOS, 2012; RTV Noord, 2012; Volkskrant, 2012). After the occurred events, questions were raised about what happened and what went wrong with regard to the performances of the mayor, the police, and existing policies (Gemeenteraad Haren, 2012).

Shortly after the event Mayor Bats emphasized Haren experienced extreme violence by rioters who purposefully sought the

confrontation with the authorities (Bats, 2012a). Bats (2012a) was critiqued for not taking precautionary measures that according to him would have increased the attraction effect. In the week after the events, Bats (2012b) issued an inquiry to evaluate his own performances, as well as, the role of social media in relation to the events. Months later the inquiry results mainly blamed the local authorities and in particular the mayor for a lack of preparation and adequate performances during the events (Commissie 'Project X' Haren, 2013). Bats (2013) recognized that the conclusions of the report primarily touch upon the responsibilities of the mayor and decided to resign.

4.3 | Riots in the Schilderswijk

During a pro-Gaza protest in the Schilderswijk, The Hague at 24 July 2014 protesters used anti-Semitic slogans, the Hitler salute and Jihad flags, and assaulted a journalist of the Dutch online news platform "Geenstijl" (NOS, 2014a; NRC, 2014; Volkskrant, 2014). No arrests were made (NOS, 2014a). Mayor Van Aartsen (2014a) stated that the public order had not been at stake (Municipal administration the Hague). Two weeks later at the 10th of August, another demonstration was held. This demonstration was organized by the extreme right-wing "pro-patria" group, who promoted their demonstration as an anti-ISIS demonstration and a "march of freedom" (Omroep West, 2014; Volkskrant, 2014). During the demonstration of the pro-patria group, a group of radical Salafi-Muslims in turn started a pro-ISIS counterdemonstration (Omroep West, 2014; Volkskrant, 2014). Due to the high risk of violent confrontations between the two groups, the riot police needed to act. Consequently, protesters of both groups turned against the riot police (NRC, 2014; Omroep West, 2014; Volkskrant, 2014). Riots broke out during which amongst others sidewalk tiles were thrown against the police (NRC, 2014).

Shortly, after the escalation of this second protest, Dutch national media (e.g., newspapers the "Telegraaf," the "Volkskrant," and broadcasting agency the "NOS") and local politicians blamed the mayor for not immediately taking action nor returning from his holiday (NOS, 2014b; De Telegraaf, 2014; Volkskrant, 2014).

In response to his critics, Van Aartsen (2014b) argued only a small part (of the residents of the Schilderswijk) caused difficulties and that the municipality and the police took sufficient measures. He stated not to have forbidden demonstrations at an earlier stage based on the freedom of expression and that sufficient measures by the policy and the local authorities were taken (Van Aartsen, 2014b). Van Aartsen (2014b) blamed the media for exaggerating the events and held the support of a majority of the council.

5 | ANALYSIS

Our analysis indicated the crisis frames deployed by mayors, the political outcomes of the crises and the contextual factors in play for each case. Table 2 shows the case study findings and allows us to compare between cases in order to generate overall findings.

5.1 | Crisis frames and political outcomes

The analysis of the three most similar cases (Table 2) demonstrates there is no consistent pattern between a specific frame that was used and the political outcome of a crisis. In the first case, the mayor used an initial frame that leans towards a critical threat type and remained this position despite some defensive adjustments to his frame. The political outcome in the first case was successful as only limited reputational damage was inflicted and the mayor could remain in office. In the second case, the mayor used an initial frame

TABLE 2 Case study findings

	Crisis Frames		Political outcome			Contextual Factors		
	Initial Frame type	Shift towards frame type	Elite rejuvenation	Elite escape	Elite damage	Media	Time in office	Official inquiry
Case 1 Hoek van Holland	Critical Threat (3/4) ^a	Critical Threat (2/4) ^b	No	Mostly	Partly	Not perceived by stakeholders as a pressing influence	+/- 8 months Topic of framing contest	COT report
Case 2 Haren	Critical Threat (2/4) ^c	Critical Opportunity (3/4) ^d	No	No	Yes	Not perceived by stakeholders as a pressing influence	+/- Not a topic of framing contest	Cohen Rapport
Case 3 The Hague	Denial frame (4/4) ^e	Denial	No	Mostly	Partly	Perceived by stakeholders as a pressing influence	+/- Not a topic of framing contest	None

^a(3/4) acknowledges significance, exogenizes causality, blame denial (denial frame), defends status quo policies.

^b(2/4) acknowledges significance, causality blurred (alternative frame), blame is not clear/diffuse, attacks status quo policies (critical opportunity frame).

^c(2/4) acknowledges significance, causality (no position taken), blame is not clear/diffuse, existing policies and practices need to be evaluated (leans to critical opportunity frame).

^d(3/4) acknowledges significance (critical threat frame), endogenizes causality, focuses blame by resigning, existing policies and practices need to change.

^e(4/4) minimizes significance, no crisis occurred, no blame, back to business as usual.

that leans towards a critical threat type, and adjusted this frame during the aftermath to a less defensive almost self-harming frame close to the critical opportunity type to address a comparable crisis. The political outcome of the second case was unsuccessful in terms of elite damage. In the third case, the mayor consistently used a denial frame during the entire aftermath and the political outcome was successful in terms of elite escape.

Furthermore, all three cases show that frames used in the aftermath of a crisis do not necessarily fit within the standard types of denial, critical threat, and critical opportunity which was presented in the crisis exploitation theory of Boin et al. Besides the frame deployed by the mayor in the third case, the other used frames by the mayors more or less deviated from the standard frames using different combinations of indicators regarding the elements significance, causality, political, and policy stance.

In short, these cross-case findings suggest that frames used by mayors may deviate from standard type frames. Moreover, there is no specific framing strategy that coincides with a particular degree of political success in terms of elite damage, elite escape or elite rejuvenation.

5.2 | Staged response

In addition, the first (Hoek van Holland) and the second case (Project X/Haren) show that used frames by mayors are time sensitive and change during the aftermath of a crisis. In the first two cases, the mayors seem to have used a form of staged response by adjusting their frames on specific elements to a more defensive position during the aftermath. This observation corresponds with the staged response theory that argues that during the aftermath of a crisis the development of frames takes the form of a staged retreat. The third case (the Hague) did not show a staged response.

Regarding the first case, this staged retreat is likely to have contributed to the successful political outcomes. During the last debate on the Hoek van Holland riots in the city council, mayor Aboutaleb partly altered his initial critical threat frame. He played down his message on the causality of the crisis being completely exogenous by acknowledging that the current policies and practices were to blame and by supporting reform, as well as by taking full responsibility. Aboutaleb made these adjustments after the publication of a report revealing shortcomings in risk assessment and preparedness prior to the events in Hoek van Holland (COT and Beke, 2009). It might be that due to the partial adjustment of the mayor's frame towards a less defensive stage, Aboutaleb avoided a clash or blame showdown after the publication of the report.

The case analysis of the second case demonstrated an even more fundamental frame shift during the aftermath of the crisis. After the publication of the inquiry report (Commissie 'Project X' Haren, 2013), mayor Bats adjusted his frame to the least defensive "critical opportunity" stage of blame acceptance. He altered his initial frame, of leaning towards a critical threat frame, to one leaning towards a critical opportunity frame. This seems to imply a staged retreat influenced by the pressure of the conclusions of the Cohen

report. Striking about this case is the fact that the mayor resigned even before the final debate on the conclusions of the report could take place, which makes it difficult to make solid statements on the outcomes of his staged retreat. It is uncertain whether the council would have dismissed him after the debate. Therefore, it is unclear whether is stage retreat would have benefited him.

To sum up, two of the three cases clearly showed a stage response in the sense that the mayors adjusted their frames to less defensive positions. This suggests that crisis framing is a dynamic process in which strategies may shift.

5.3 | Contextual factors matter

Both shifting frames and variation in political outcomes detected in the previous sections may be partially explained by the contextual factors media, time in office and official inquiries.

Analysis of the three cases shows that the contextual factor "media" has only been identified in the third case. The media seems to have played a role in the framing contest prior to the official debate in the municipality council as media commented on both mayor and council members during and right after the crisis. The mayor and some political opponents experienced the media prior to the municipality council meeting as a critical influence which publishes unjust reports about the severity of crisis and the mayor's (non)actions. However, the analysis also shows that a majority of the mayor's political opponents did not go along with the media's interpretations of the crisis and some of them even openly criticized the media for misinterpreting the events. This implies that the media played their part in the immediate aftermath of a crisis but became less influential in shaping frames and political outcomes as the aftermath evolved.

Regarding the contextual factor "time in office," one case (Hoek van Holland) shows that a relatively short amount of time spend in office by the mayor make political opponents less focused at blame which affects the political outcome of the framing contest. During the council, debate arguments were presented that favoured the role of Aboutaleb in the light of the short time he had spent in office. As Aboutaleb had only been in office for 8 months, he was not regarded as the cause of the problematic culture are structural problems by almost all council members, not even by his "most opposing" opponents.

In addition, cross-case analysis shows that in two of the three cases the contextual factor "official inquiry" played a role. The contextual pressure of an official inquiry in the first two cases is closely linked to the earlier described staged response in these cases. The publication of inquiry results influenced the framing contest by informing the mayors, as well as their political opponents, on how to adjust their frames to address this new information. The publication of new information about the role of the mayor and status quo policies seems to have informed the mayors in the first two cases to adjust their frames to a less defensive position. It made mayors reluctant to any more statements about questions of causality and blame. The absence of an inquiry in the third case has provided the political opponents of the mayor with less tools to challenge his

frame, which may have enhanced the possibility for the mayor to deploy a more defensive framing position and might explain the absence of a staged response.

6 | CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The question guiding this research was: "What framing strategies are used by Dutch mayors during riot-related crises and to what extent and how are the strategies of the mayors successful in terms of political outcomes?" Findings of this research suggest no similar pattern in the use of a specific framing strategy and subsequent political outcomes across comparable cases. This research shows that the deployed frames contain various and changing compositions of positions regarding the significance, causality, political, and policy implications of the occurred events. It further shows that mayors do not always take position on all these aspects. Consequently, our findings suggest that mayors use a variety of frames that generally do not fit completely into the standard types of Boin et al. Framing contests cannot be fully captured in terms of standard frames denial, critical threat, and critical opportunity.

There seems no predetermined ideal framing strategy leading to a most successful outcome in terms of political survival. Instead, two of the three cases underpin the expectations of the staged response theory of Hood et al. (2007) that continued pressure over time is likely to lead to a staged retreat in the sense that the mayors adjusted their frames to a less defensive position as the aftermath of the crisis evolved. Furthermore, one case corresponded to the assumption of the staged response theory that office-holders are likely to start from the most defensive position when they get the opportunity.

In addition, findings suggest that contextual factors matter (c.f. Boin et al., 2009). Individual cases showed that contextual factors media, time in office, and official inquiry potentially influence the use and adjustment of frames during the aftermath of a crisis and need to be included when explaining the development of framing contests and the eventual political outcomes (c.f. Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; Boin et al., 2009; Hood et al., 2007; McConnell, 2003). Future research on a theory of crisis exploitation and the link between framing strategies and political outcomes should therefore acknowledge that frames used by office-holders may deviate from standard type frames and that they could alter parts of their frames over time. Crisis exploitation research should furthermore incorporate other forces potentially influencing the aftermath to enhance our understanding of crisis framing and political outcomes.

The acknowledgement that contextual factors matter, a notion that has been widely established within contemporary crisis communication literature (Coombs, 2015; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Ulmer et al., 2007), seems however not satisfactory. As this research has indicated, it is important the view different contextual factors in the light of the idea of the framing contest as a dynamic process. An official inquiry poses for instance a contextual pressure influencing not only the used frames but also the timing (i.e., delay) of certain frames during the aftermath of a crisis. On the other hand, the

factor media may influence the instigation of a debate and initial frame, but may be less influential during the course of the aftermath. Time in office is a factor that primarily influences the blame elements in the used frames.

A future research agenda should thus explore the aftermath of crises in terms of a process that is influenced by context- and situational-dependent elements. It should focus on contextual factors and include a systematic, empirical inquiry of the type of crisis frame deployed by local leaders and the coinciding political outcomes. We suggest that a future research design could include a set of carefully selected, comparable crises with a successful and non-successful outcome to be subjected to process tracing. This research design allows assessing to what extent the level of success for the political leader after a crisis was affected by particular frames, frames shifts, contextual factors, and/or other factors.

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APPENDIX 1

Data sources case 1: Riots Hoek van Holland (2009)			
Type	Date	Description	Source
Press statement directed at the broader public	23 August 2009	First reaction of the mayor of Rotterdam Aboutaleb	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wczY59Giw&list=PLD9F45A0EC6B36A20
Written statement directed at the council	24 August 2009	Written statement of mayor Aboutaleb sent to the members of the municipality council (3 pages)	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2995
Written statement directed at the council	2 September 2009	Written statement of mayor Aboutaleb sent to the members of the municipality council (11 pages)	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2995
Statement municipality council meeting	3 September 2009	Statement of mayor Aboutaleb during the first council meeting on the occurred events. (pages 141-142)	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2914
Municipality council meeting	3 September 2009	The first council meeting on the occurred events.	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2914
Inquiry report	8 December 2009	COT report	https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2010/03/16/rapport-cot-strandrellen-in-hoek-van-holland
Media Interview	9 December 2009	Reaction of mayor Aboutaleb regarding the COT report	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhJnzMWK7vM&index=6&list=PLD9F45A0EC6B36A20
Statement municipality council meeting	17 December 2009	Statements of mayor Aboutaleb during the council meeting on the conclusions of the COT report (pages 1- 64)	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2995
Municipality council meeting	17 December 2009	Council meeting on the conclusions of the COT report.	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2995
Voting results regarding 'motions'	17 December 2009	Voting procedures led by the chair 'Voorzitter' during the council meeting on the conclusions of the COT report	http://www.ris.rotterdam.nl/cgi-bin/agenda.cgi/action=view/id=2995

Data sources case 2: Project X Riots Haren (2012)			
Type	Date	Description	Source
Press statement direct at the broader public	22 September 2012	First reaction of the mayor of Haren after the occurred events	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q__qnCS8eEE
Statement municipality council meeting	1 October 2012	Municipality council meeting after the project x riots. Statement mayor Bats (89:00-98:30 & 133:43-144:30)	http://player.companywebcast.com/gemeenteharen/20121001_1/nl/player
Municipality council meeting	1 October 2012	Municipality council meeting after the project x riots.	http://player.companywebcast.com/gemeenteharen/20121001_1/nl/player
New-years speech	8 January 2013	The annual new-years speech of the mayor.	http://www.harendekrant.nl/nieuws/nieuwjaarstoepspraak-burgemeester-rob-bats-lessen-leren-en-niet-alleen-maar-veroordelen/
Inquiry report	8 March 2013	Cohen Report	https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2013/03/08/twee-werelden-hoofdrapport-commissie-project-x-haren
Press statement	8 March 2013 I	Press statement mayor Bats during the presentation of the Cohen Report	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn-iuZHuFhI
Media interview	8 March 2013 II	Media interview with mayor Bats shortly after the presentation of the Cohen Report	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HDexsPtN_E

(Continues)

APPENDIX 1 (Continued)

Data sources case 2: Project X Riots Haren (2012)			
Type	Date	Description	Source
Statement municipality council meeting	12 March 2013	Special municipality council meeting after the Cohen Report. Statement mayor Bats. (59:20-73:45)	http://player.companywebcast.com/gemeenteharen/20130312_1/nl/player?start=381ef6d1-763f-43db-ac71-e987a69103d2
Municipality council meeting	12 March 2013	Special municipality council meeting after the Cohen Report.	http://player.companywebcast.com/gemeenteharen/20130312_1/nl/player?start=381ef6d1-763f-43db-ac71-e987a69103d2

Data sources case 3: Schilderswijk Riots in the Hague (2014)			
Type	Date	Description	Source
Written statement	29 July 2014	Written reaction of the municipal administration led by mayor Van Aartsen on questions of the council related to the riots in the Schilderswijk (pages 1-4)	https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/document/3763434/1/264RIS274886_Antisemitische_Pro-Gaza_demonstratie
Statement municipality council meeting	14 August 2014	Debate regarding the riots in the Schilderswijk. Statement Van Aartsen (pages 364-365 & 400-408)	https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/modules/13/Overige%20bestuurlijke%20stukken/81536
Municipality council meeting	14 August 2014	Debate regarding the riots in the Schilderswijk.	https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/modules/13/Overige%20bestuurlijke%20stukken/81536
Voting results regarding 'motions'	14 August 2014	Debate regarding the riots in the Schilderswijk. Presented voting result by the chair 'Voorzitter'.	https://denhaag.raadsinformatie.nl/modules/13/Overige%20bestuurlijke%20stukken/81536