Het stempel op de besluitvorming
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Summary

‘Who’s running this community?’ is a central question in Community Power research. This type of research is almost completely absent in the Netherlands. It forms a sharp contrast to the enormous amount of American research since the 1950s that has attempted to find out whether a small (economic) elite dominates decision-making or whether power and influence are distributed more evenly. In this study we offer insight into the way power and influence are distributed in the city of Amsterdam. To do so we use a recently developed model: the Two Stage Model of policy-making.

The research has been guided by two questions. The first question is concerned with the possibility of predicting outcomes of decision-making. To see whether the Two Stage Model is a valid instrument with which to generate a distribution of power, we will test it in a direct way. We will predict outcomes of decision-making. The second leading research question is concerned with the way power and influence are distributed among organizations in two policy domains in Amsterdam. We will try to answer the question of which actors are able to leave their mark on decision-making in the city. To answer this question we will also use the Two Stage Model. In the model different aspects of power and influence are brought together. A secondary question is how the power structure in the city looks.

In chapter 1 we consider what is known about the distribution of power in Dutch cities in general and Amsterdam in particular. The general conclusion is that the mayor and aldermen have a stronger position than the city council. This conclusion is shared by authors who have examined the situation in Amsterdam. The parties within the city council are seen as an ‘extension’ of the mayor and aldermen. On specific policy domains the aldermen responsible hold the strongest position. The social democratic party (PvdA) has the strongest position within the city council and among the mayor and aldermen. We can conclude (on the basis of the number of seats in the council and the number of social democratic aldermen) that the PvdA dominates local politics (especially within the council session 1986 - 1990). Amsterdam leans to the left politically.

Little is known about the relative power positions of the city council and mayor and aldermen on the one hand and the civil service on the other hand. In large cities such as Amsterdam the power of the civil service is generally seen as considerable. However, the situation in Amsterdam is unclear. The question is whether or not the power of the civil servants is an important factor. Some services have been split.

There is a lot of research on the influence of pressure groups on local policy. The conclusion is that pressure groups are successful now and then. The same holds true for the situation in Amsterdam. Amsterdam has the reputation of being a ‘troublesome’ city. The outcomes of decision-making cannot be understood without taking pressure groups into account. Whether this situation is true today can, however, be questioned. Power and influence are not evenly distributed in the city. Most commentators on the situation in Amsterdam hold the opinion that the power pattern is elitist, but they do not agree on whether it is a political, economic or civil service elite. Our conclusion is that on the basis of the existing literature it is impossible to say how power and influence are distributed in the city.
Who dominates decision-making?
In chapter 2 we discussed the long-standing elitist-pluralist debate. This debate centers on the different empirical findings, the normative aspects in classifying the local communities and the appropriate research method in community power research. Among the empirical findings are the classical studies of Hunter (who found an economic elite in Atlanta) and Dahl (who found a more even spread of power in New Haven). In general, three criteria are used to classify communities: a) it is important to know whether influence is evenly spread among actors; b) it is of interest to see which actors dominate decision-making in different policy domains; and c) it is important to know which category (economic, political etc.) a possible elite belongs. The third element in the debate involves the method used. Besides the decisional method, network analysis, the reputational and the positional method are used.

In Dutch research on power, influence and decision-making different methods are common. One research group uses the "intensive qualitative" method, a descriptive case study approach. A second group uses the 'process effect' method, an approach that tries to measure in comparable circumstances. A third group takes network analysis as a point of departure. They look at relations between organizations. In the course of years these three groups have developed their methods. The group that uses network analysis for instance has developed a policy-making model in which the network is put in an appropriate place (see Stokman and Van den Bos, 1992).

This modelling approach builds on other studies of German (Pappi and others) and American (Laumann and others) research teams. They in their turn base their approach on the work of James Coleman. Coleman developed a social exchange model in which the power of actors is related to events. On the basis of this model predictions can be made. The Coleman model was used by Laumann and Pappi to analyze three cities (Towertown, Altneustadt and Rivercity). The resources of actors and the structure of the network were related to the outcomes of decision-making. For the cities of Altneustadt and Towertown the power of the actors was measured and the outcome of decisions predicted. The predicted outcomes were compared with the actual outcomes and the quantified power of actors compared with results from the reputational method.

We conclude that community power research has seen several important developments since the second half of the 1970s. Our own approach tries to incorporate these developments. In the first place we will use a modelling approach: the Two Stage Model of Policy-making. Second, we will predict a large number of outcomes of local decision-making. Thirdly, our approach will be comparative. Two policy domains (Urban development and Minorities policy) are compared. A fourth development we concur with is the fact that cities (such as Amsterdam) should be treated as open systems. We will deal with actors within and outside the borders of the city. Fifth, we will not focus on individual actors but on actors at the organizational level. The organization (civil services, firms, local groups, advisory boards etc.) is the unit of analysis. Sixth, we use different (complementary) methods. Finally we are of the opinion that cities can be ranked on a elitist-pluralist continuum.

The Two Stage Model of Policy-making
In chapter 3 we present the Two Stage Model. The model incorporates five elements. The first element is the policy position of actors. The second element is the salience
attached to the decisions by those involved. Power should be treated as a capacity. Only if decisions are salient to actors will they try to influence the outcome. The third element is the access actors have to each other. Whether an actor has the right formal or informal relationships can be crucial. The fourth element is the combination of resources an actor can possess. They do not all have the same amount of financial means, expertise or other resources at their disposal. The fifth element in the model is the voting power of the actors. Only public actors possess voting power. Their voting power depends on their weights in the voting procedure and on the decision rule (unanimity, majority). On the basis of these elements, we can estimate the (positional) power of the actors.

These elements are brought together by Stokman and Van den Bos (1992) in the Two Stage Model. In the first stage, actors attempt to influence one another’s position. Influence can take place in several rounds. After the first round of influence the actors change their initial policy positions. In the second stage, the final decision is taken. On the basis of the new policy positions of the public actors we predict the final outcome.

After having presented the set of assumptions underlying the model, we indicate how the model elements are operationalized. By interviewing the actors involved we estimate the model elements (with the exception of voting power). First, we establish the initial policy positions of the actors. These were the positions before either the mayor and aldermen or the commissions of the council took a decision. Second, the organizations that were interviewed were asked to indicate the salience of the selected issues on a scale of 0 to 100. Third, the element ‘access’ was operationalized by asking from whom they received information and advice. Fourth, we distinguish eight resources. The respondents were asked to indicate which influential actor possessed one or more of these eight resources. In this way, influential actors received a resource score. The element ‘voting power’ was calculated independently of the actors. The mayor and aldermen all received an equal weight and ‘unanimity’ was used as decision rule. The different parties within the commission and city council received voting power on the basis of their number of seats, and ‘majority’ was used as the decision rule.

**Two Policy Domains: Urban Development and Minorities Policy**

In chapter 4 we concentrated on the two selected policy domains. We indicated on which basis the domains urban development and minorities policy were chosen. In the urban development domain we paid specific attention to the IJ-shores project and in the domain of minorities policy to unemployment and affirmative action. In the urban development domain several important changes take place. In the 1980s there seemed to be more interest in large urban renewal projects than in small neighborhood renewal schemes. An example of a large urban renewal project is the IJ-shores project.

The IJ-shores project has over the course of time changed from a pedestrian ‘promenade’ to a waterfront project worth millions of guilders. The way the project should be given substance is a matter of debate. Although the local government wants the project to be supported by the inhabitants of Amsterdam this does not work for all the issues. Several issues in this subdomain were highly controversial.

In chapter 4 we also introduce the minorities policy domain. In comparison to other large Dutch cities we note that the city of Amsterdam has the highest number of immigrants. The minorities policy of Amsterdam has two main goals: to fight
discrimination and racism and the disadvantages on the labor market and the lack of education of immigrants. A large percentage of the immigrants is unemployed. By means of work projects and a policy of affirmative action, the city has tried to improve their situation. Minority organizations are represented in advisory boards.

Next, we indicated how the issues were collected and how a selection was made. A total of 287 organizations seemed to be involved in one way or another in the issues selected. All these organizations were approached for an interview. Of the 245 organizations that confirmed that they had participated in the decision-making, 204 were successfully interviewed.

**Issues in the IU-shores and employment and affirmative action subdomains**

In the chapters 5 and 6 we described the selected issues in both domains. We paid attention to the different aspects of the issues, the actors involved, their policy positions, the different alternatives that played a role and the outcome of the decision-making processes.

**Results and conclusions**

In chapter 7 the results of the study are presented. We re-examined the model elements. Not all actors had policy positions on the issues. On some issues only experts had positions. The salience attached to the issues varied. With regard to ‘access’ some actors resembled a spider in its web. The aldermen responsible for the two domains received the most resources. The social democratic party (PvdA) had the largest amount of voting power in the two election periods 1986 - 1990 and 1990 - 1994. In the period 1990 - 1994 also the centrist party D66 received a large amount of voting power. Next, we looked at the activities undertaken by the organizations to influence the outcome of the decisions. Most of them used formal and informal contacts.

After examining the different model elements we addressed the predictions we made. A distinction was drawn between retrospective predictions (the majority) and prospective predictions. In two examples we showed how the policy positions of the actors changed after a number of rounds of influence. To get an idea of the predictive qualities of the model we compared the predicted outcomes with the real outcomes. They proved to be highly correlated. We were able to correctly predict 85% of the outcomes on the urban development domain and 74% on the minorities policy domain. This is close to the percentages the German and American studies came up with.

Next, we had a closer look at the hierarchies of (positional) power that were generated by the model. The urban development domain and minorities policy domain were compared. We also analyzed the networks of the two domains. They were found to be centralized. The next step was to show how the actors perceived each others’ power. For both domains we examined the influence reputation of the actors. This influence proved to be highly correlated with positional power.

Chapter 8 presents the conclusions. In the urban development domain the alderman responsible, the social democratic party PvdA and the Physical Planning Department (civil service) appeared to be the dominant actors. In the minorities policy domain this was once more the alderman responsible, the mayor (Van Thijn), the PvdA and the ‘Green Left’ (the most left-of-center party). In both domains political actors (the aldermen, the parties within the council) possess the most positional power. If the
situation in the two domains represents the situation for the city as a whole, we can conclude that the city is dominated by a political elite. However, on the basis of the three criteria we conclude that the power structure is more pluralist than elitist. The power of this political elite in Amsterdam (which can be held responsible during elections too) is tied to specific domains.