Civil Servant Tactics for Realizing Transition Tasks
Understanding the Microdynamics of Transformative Government

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Samenvatting

Het transitie denken claimt dat de overheid een belangrijke rol heeft in het faciliteren van socio-technische transities. De urgentie en noodzakelijkheid om te handelen wordt steeds groter, zie het laatste IPCC-rapport. Dit paper streeft een theoretisch en een empirisch begrip van de rol van overheden door het analyseren van het werk van ondernemende ambtenaren. Deze ondernemende ambtenaren proberen transitietaken uit te voeren, maar stuiten regelmatig op verzet bij hun collega's die dominante bestuurskundige principes aanhalen, zoals willekeur voorkomen, rechtmatigheid en doelmatigheid. Dit roept de vraag op hoe ondernemende ambtenaren om moeten gaan met weerstand en hoe ze de uitvoering van transitietaken kunnen managen. We introduceren een heuristiek ronde model om het samenspel tussen tactieken om transitie taken uit te voeren en contestatie te begrijpen. Omdat we het over de tijd analyseren, kan het model laten zien hoe er met voortdurend tactisch werk genavigeerd wordt tussen tegengestelde rationales. Het laat zien hoe tactieken van het begin van het traject nog in een later stadium door kunnen werken. We illustreren de waarde van het model aan de hand van de casus Mobility as a Service in Nederland vanuit het perspectief van het ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat.

1. Introduction

The transition literature attributes governments an increasingly prominent role in guiding societal transformations to overcome wicked societal problems (Borrás & Edler, 2020; Kanger, Sovacool, & Noorkõiv, 2020). Therefore, the transitions literature considers civil servants as crucial actors for realizing socio-technical transformations. This perception conflicts with dominant frameworks about the legitimacy of Public Administration (PA) (Stout, 2013; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2016) that prescribe civil servants' legitimate roles and generally oppose transformative actions (Braams et al., 2022). Models that help to understand how entrepreneurial civil servants do institutional work to execute transition policies in the face of the public administration's resistance are currently lacking. Combining the literatures on transition studies, dominant frameworks in public administration, and change agents, this paper develops a heuristic rounds-model that can study this tension of entrepreneurial civil servants executing transitions policy in the face of the public administration's resistance.

The transition literature, building upon evolutionary economics, innovation sociology, institutional theory, innovation systems theory, complexity science, and governance studies (Köhler et al., 2019), focuses on the societal transitions needed to overcome grand societal challenges. These challenges comprise societal and environmental problems, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion (Köhler et al., 2019). Transitions literature conceptualizes and explains how societal transitions should take place to overcome societal challenges. This includes supporting emergent sociotechnical and innovation systems and destabilizing dysfunctional socio-technical structures (Kivimaa & Kern, 2016). From this perspective, transition scholars prescribe governments various (normatively-laden and therefore politically sensitive) transition tasks (Borrás & Edler, 2020).

Although transition literature argues government transition tasks are crucial for dealing with grand societal challenges, these tasks are hard to legitimize for civil servants (Braams et al., 2021) through standard normative frameworks for PA, such as traditional public administration, new public management, and new public governance (Stout, 2013; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2016). These frameworks emphasize and prescribe stability and incremental change rather than transformative change (Thompson, 1965; Pressman & Wildawsky, 1984; Mulgan and Albury, 2003); the radical new pathways needed for societal transformations require civil servants that can invoke new forms of legitimation. To understand how entrepreneurial civil servants execute transition tasks despite internal resistance stemming from institutionalized frameworks for legitimizing public administration, this paper develops a heuristic model building on political models of organizational decision-making (i.e., the policy process of Lasswell (1956); the stream model of Kingdon (1984); and the rounds model of Teisman (2000)). Our model helps develop a context-specific understanding of change agents' tactics in response to internal opposition within public organizations and how such struggles evolve over several rounds in the policy-making process to push transition tasks forward.

The value of this heuristic rounds-model is illustrated with the case of civil servants at the Dutch Infrastructure and Water Management Ministry facilitating the transition to Mobility as a Service (MaaS). MaaS promises to fundamentally reshape mobility with multimodal data and algorithms as an alternative for car ownership while reducing CO2 emissions (Audouin & Finger, 2018). In the Netherlands, the objective with seven

national MaaS-pilots focused more on understanding this new market with startups, understanding travel behavior, and learning how to optimize mobility on policy objectives using data from MaaS. The entrepreneurial civil servants facilitating MaaS were constrained by their interactions with opposing, more traditional-oriented directorates, whose support is necessary to change the regimes' configuration. The case shows how civil servants employed several tactics in response to this opposition, the consequences of these tactics, and how the tactics and opposition changed over several rounds of interaction.

2. A heuristic rounds-model for understanding micro-dynamics in transformative governments

The transition literature attributes government a crucial role in transformative societal change. Transition scholars, therefore, formulate transition tasks for governments to execute. Government must steer the transition toward societal needs by articulating demand, vision, and ambition (Boon & Edler, 2018; Hekkert et al., 2007; Rogge & Reichardt, 2016). It must also activate and facilitate multiple stakeholders to participate in societal transformation processes (Fagerberg, 2018; Loorbach, 2010; Söderholm et al., 2019). Government must furthermore focus on aiding new sustainable developments to replace dominant regime practices in the future (Hekkert & Negro, 2009; Kemp et al., 1998). This replacement process also requires government to proactively put pressure on unsustainable practices via, e.g., regulation or taxation (Hebinck et al., 2022; Kivimaa & Kern, 2016). Transition literature argues that for all these new tasks, government requires new capabilities and structures (Bergek et al., 2008; Quitzow, 2015). Braams et al. (2021) reviewed and typified these transition tasks as Give Direction; Support Governance; Support the New; Destabilize the unsustainable; and Create New Capacities and Structures.

The execution of these new tasks is, however, not granted. Civil servants do not have unlimited discretion for these new tasks aimed at societal change; in fact, as Table 1 describes, they are constrained by normative traditions for legitimizing public administration. Civil servants, for instance, must obey their Minister and prevent arbitrariness (Pollitt, 2003), refrain as much as possible from interfering in the market to be efficient and effective (Osborne, 2006), and co-design policy with society to guarantee broad societal support (Bevir, 2010). Civil servants operate within contexts that are, by default, adverse to change (Thompson, 1965). Thus, doing things differently is a potentially dangerous occupation for civil servants as it creates resistance from those uncomfortable with uncertainty. It may also easily impair their career within the civil service (Adler, 1996).

Table 1: Constraints from public administration traditions for civil servants' transformative tasks (based on Stoker, 2006; Torfing and Triantafillou, 2016).

Traditions in public administration	**Associated constraints for transition tasks of civil servants**
Traditional Public Administration	Civil servants have no authority to execute new transition tasks. Politicians define inputs and expected output; rules and procedures must be strictly followed hierarchically. Because the goals are stability and predictability, change is incremental.

New Public Management	If civil servants do not identify market failure, no interference is accepted. By using deregulation and performance elements, civil servants achieve efficiency and effectiveness. However, such competition policies hamper the collaboration needed for change, and performance auditing produces an aversion to change.
New Public Governance	Outcome is co-produced by government and society through networks. Civil servants must be responsive through emergent coalitions. They cannot control hindering efforts of powerful incumbents.

From a strict Weberian perspective (i.e., Traditional Public Administration), civil servants' actions to parry resistance and navigate opposing forces can easily be labeled illegitimate, as resistance represents broadly accepted public values. Civil servants can construct legitimacy by drawing on additional widely accepted frameworks, such as New Public Management and New Public Governance (Stoker, 2006; Stout, 2013; Torfing & Triantafillou, 2016), but these frameworks also introduce restrictions such as respecting current markets rather than radically re-ordering them (for New Public Management) or working through current coalitions rather than breaking the power positions of actors opposing sustainability (for New Public Governance). When civil servants cooperate with innovative parties challenging incumbents and see a need to execute new tasks, these different interpretations conflict with other civil servants emphasizing traditional public administration, new public management, and new public governance. Although opposing civil servants often do not note underlying principles (Van der Steen et al., 2018), a discursive struggle within ministries over what is considered good practice determines whether transition tasks are executed.

The contextualized institutional restrictions produce resistance to transformative change and form opposing rationalities within the civil service. We define 'opposing rationalities' as underlying organizational discursive resistance resulting from normative traditions in PA questioning transition tasks' legitimacy. These opposing rationalities are institutional logics that shape the rules of the game, distributing power and status through means-end relations (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). The three logics within public organizations, grounded in traditions in public administration (Stout, 2013), coexist, complement, and compete (Fuenfschilling & Truffer, 2014) within government. However, from a transition perspective, these logics (or traditions) within government merge into undifferentiated opposing rationalities, hindering the execution of the transition tasks. Opposing rationalities endorsed by dominant traditions thus create a stable counterbalance to change as transformative change requires legitimacy since new transition tasks can easily be disputed within the civil service. Change agents play a crucial role in constructing new forms of legitimacy for transition tasks.

Change agents can successfully overcome resistance (Brouwer & Biermann, 2011) to execute new tasks. Extensive literature across disciplines documents change agents (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). It is clear, therefore, that agency can be crucial in accounting for policy changes necessary to influence the rate and direction of change (Capano & Galanti, 2018). There are different change agent branches in the literature[1]; they are defined within radically divergent contexts (Huitema et al., 2011).

[1] For instance: policy entrepreneurs (Frisch Aviram et al., 2019; Mintrom & Norman, 2009); institutional entrepreneurs (Battilana et al., 2009); brokers (Stovel & Shaw, 2012); intermediaries (Kivimaa et al., 2019); inside activists (Hysing & Olsson, 2018); champions (Sergeeva, 2016); deliberative practitioners (Forester, 1999).

Intermediaries, for example, can be actors or institutions working within any societal transition domain, whereas inside activists are specific to government administration. Although these conceptual understandings of change agents all describe change agents who possess some 'knowledge, power, tenacity, and luck to exploit key opportunities' (Cairney, 2018: 201), none of these concepts were designed to incorporate the restrictiveness imposed by traditions in public administration on civil servants' room for maneuver. This means change agents' willingness and motivation to undertake activities deviating from the norm can radically differ from restricted civil servants. Capano and Galanti (2018) foreground actors' activities, allowing detection and detailed understanding of successful actors' tactics. The present research focuses on how actors can counter opposing rationalities, making Capano and Galanti's approach the most suitable for studying the tactics of entrepreneurial civil servants aiming to realize government transition tasks.

Recognizing the entire variety of entrepreneurial civil servants' possible tactics is essential to understanding attempts to bypass opposing rationalities. Building on Frisch-Aviram et al.'s (2019) systematic entrepreneurial policy activities review of 229 peer-reviewed articles and structured by tactic, Table 2 shows a condensed change agents' activities list, complemented with insights from other change agents literature.

Table 2: Change agents' tactics, adapted from Frisch-Aviram et al. (2019).

Tactics	**Description**
Problem-solution framing	Frame a problem politically and culturally acceptable and desirable and offer a solution.
Venue shopping to influence the policy-making process	Move decision-making authority to a new policy arena. For instance, divide policy development into stages, influence the planning, and evaluate policies.
Using symbolism	Use stories, images, and symbols to stir passion, capture public attention, and build support.
Risk-taking	Use (subversive) actions with potential price entrepreneurship.
Information dissemination	Use information strategically among actors in the policy process.
Team leadership	Lead policy networks.
Stimulating beneficiaries	Praising policy's benefits to different audiences.
Forge intra-, inter-organizational and cross-sectoral partnerships	Create networks with actors from different sectors and organizations among politicians, bureaucrats, private and third sector players.
Involve civic engagement	Organize the public to be active in policy issues.
Political activation	Become active in policy decision-making and politics.
Gathering evidence to show a policy's utility	Engage with others to demonstrate a policy proposal's workability.

Figure 1 integrates our discussion on transition tasks, legitimizing traditions in public administration, opposing rationalities, and change agents in a heuristic model. This model presents a lens for studying context-specific and emergent interactions between change agents and the opposing rationalities of incumbents. It helps to understand how entrepreneurial civil servants execute transition tasks despite internal resistance stemming from institutionalized PA frameworks.
Building on the structural phases of the policy cycle of Lasswell (1956) and the input-output model with a feedback loop introduced by Easton (1957), our model has four components. These are 1) initial tactics of change agents, 2) opposition and contestation,

3) adjusted tactics due to the feedback loop, and 4) effects. The rationalities behind the aims of change agents and their internal opposition can be seen as existing policy streams within a public organization (see Kingdon, 1984).

The model highlights the dynamics between 1) entrepreneurial civil servants executing change agent tactics in pursuit of realizing transition tasks and 2) opposition obstructing these changes. The heuristic model presents an understanding of the clash between change agents and adversaries to change. Contestation is expected when entrepreneurial change agents see transformative projects as necessary but are opposed by institutional rules and norms.

When confronted with contestation, adaptable change agents adjust their tactics to retry and generate new opportunities for advancing transition tasks. This adjustment creates another round of contestation when faced with opposing rationalities. Thus, the transformative project's character evolves via tactical adjustments and readjustments triggered by successive rounds of contestation. Strong opposition, external events, and adjusted tactics change the contestation structure. Following Teisman (2000: 944), we structure these empirical contestation triggers as rounds with 'starting and concluding points of a certain period,' claiming that a policy process is more accurately described as a series of rounds, all with their own dynamics. Each round can have three potential effects: it leads to transition task execution, it does not lead to execution, or a negotiated middle way is found.

Contestation, feedback loops, adjusting tactics and rounds

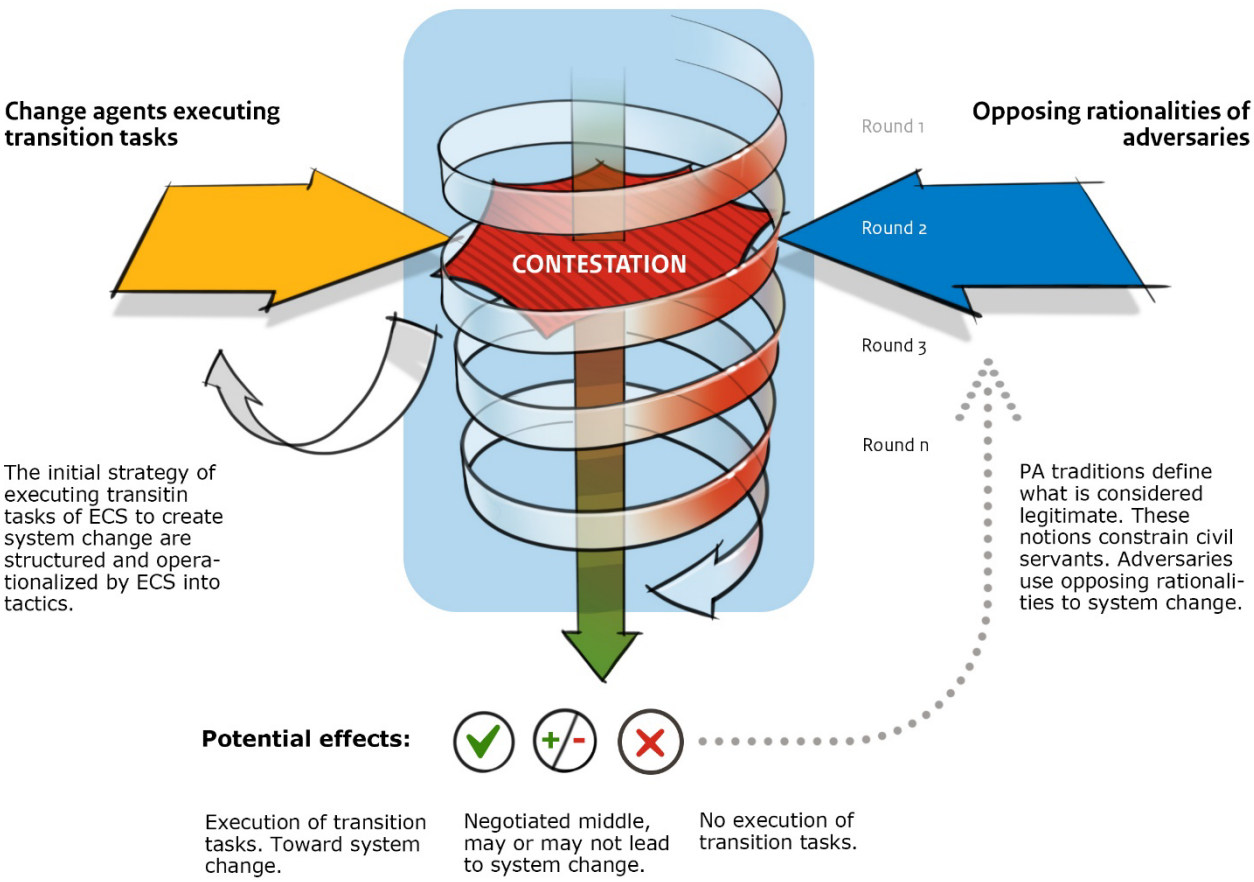

Figure 1: Dynamics between Entrepreneurial Change Agents' tactics and opposing

rationalities. The first feedback loop (yellow arrow) depicts tactics adjustment; change agents understand their previous tactic triggered contestation and search for alternative ways to counter the opposition. The second loop maintains the current regime stabilization if, after subsequent rounds, no transition tasks are executed.

3. Method

Since few studies report on entrepreneurial civil servants pursuing transition tasks within their opposing environment, we considered an exploratory, illustrative case study approach beneficial. It helps inductively identify new variables, hypotheses, and causal paths. We selected the Dutch Infrastructure and Water Management (I&W) 'Mobility as a Service'-team as a single case study due to its potentially transformative impact on the whole mobility system.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) is categorized as a disruptive niche innovation that stimulates mobility systems transformation (Kivimaa & Rogge, 2022) and as 'a possible game-changer' (Audouin & Finger, 2018: 25). It promises transformative change in the mobility sector by providing seamless door-to-door (public) mobility services, which would decrease CO2 emissions and the need for personal cars. Such ambition requires a mobility transition integrating all modalities' layers of data and algorithms (Audouin & Finger, 2018). Incremental change by the Ministry seems insufficient to keep up with the rapidly digitalizing mobility domain, creating many opportunities for newcomers and incumbents alike.

Realizing MaaS does not depend on a single organizational unit. I&W defines MaaS as the provision of multimodal, demand-driven mobility services, with personalized travel options offered to customers via a digital platform and real-time travel information, including payment and transaction settlement (Ministry I&W, 2021). This definition means all the Ministries' directorates must work together internally and with relevant market parties to determine how MaaS could reshape mobility's future. This case illustrates the dynamics between entrepreneurial civil servants' attempts to build the project and the opposing rationalities of other directorates responsible for the current systems' maintenance.

I&W fully cooperated with interviews and provided other data sources. The Ministry already had substantial experience in 'managing' transitions over the last 20 years (Loorbach, 2007) and intended to deepen their transitions' understanding via this study. We searched for civil servants who tried to foster societal change within the MaaS project by combining extreme case sampling and snowball sampling. To avoid the 'hero innovator's trap' (Meijer, 2014), we interviewed an array of respondents after consulting the program leader and his two confidants. We targeted both entrepreneurial civil servants and civil servants from other policy units who play various roles at different hierarchical levels.

To prepare the case, we searched ministerial digital archives using the terms: 'MaaS' and 'Mobility as a Service.' The Ministry provided the lead researcher with two-hour training to learn to use complex software (Content Manager). MaaS-teams records and several meeting sequences came up, including 94 elements about case development or case decisions. We triangulated these sources (memos, reports, as well as formal and informal

policy documents) with a LexisNexis media analysis (184 articles in Dutch newspapers between 2014 and September 2021) to get an extensive timeline of essential events and internal decisions. A simplified timeline version was used as a PowerPoint slide structuring the thirteen online interviews.

All relevant actor types were interviewed for this case (n13), including MaaS-team members (5), consultants working for the MaaS-team (2), civil servants and managers of other I&W directorates (5), and semi-public transport manager (1). We included MaaS-team adversaries (4) to confirm and deepen the understanding of the tactics used. The interviewees are neither named nor numbered to secure their anonymity on this politically sensitive topic. Interviews were semi-structured and therefore adaptable to the specific tactics disclosed. The interviews lasted from 45 to 210 minutes[2]. Since this paper analyzes internal collaboration and decision-making, we explicitly choose not to interview market parties.

MaaS-team members were asked what arguments were used to oppose and resist their project. Adversaries were asked how they perceived strategies and tactics used by the MaaS-team members. Interview data were all transcribed and coded in NVivo. We constantly analyzed the transcripts during the fieldwork and compared them with observations and internal documents to correct for subjective respondents' interpretations. We coded key strategies (transition tasks), tactics (both the transitions tasks' operationalization and literatures change agents tactics), opposing rationales (arguments contending tactics used by the MaaS-team or notions indicating resistance), and adjusted tactics (an alteration of the previous tactic after recognizing opposing rationality creates problems for the project) within designated contestation moments.

4. Results

The results are structured in four rounds. Each presents a sequence of critical moments introducing the round, the initial transition aims, and entrepreneurial civil servants' tactics. Next, we recall the rationality of the opposition (based on PA; see Table 1) and document how tactics are adjusted, resulting in an effect (see Figure 1).

Round 1: MaaS-optimism

From the outset of the Maas Project, a MaaS-team member remembered a techno-optimism mindset:

> 'We heard market parties were eager to provide MaaS services; they could work with what they already had. We had a Silicon-Valleyish feeling of large data sets and smart algorithms adaptable for personal preferences. Who would not want such an app? (MaaS-team member)'.

This optimism focused on technology and supporting startups because startups are more adaptable to new realities. They felt much urgency to learn what MaaS could become: 'otherwise, a Google [with all their data and investment power] would take over. It felt like a race against time' (MaaS-team member). They aimed to 'support governance' and 'support the new' to develop an ecosystem.

[2] The interview-time varies because participants entered and left the project at different moments.

MaaS-team's initial aims and tactics. At this stage, the team's rationale was to discover what MaaS could entail and create healthy competition to avoid monopoly power and loss of government control in the mobility system. The project leader opted for a few scalable national pilots to compare outcomes and prevent a rudimentary monopoly installation to learn as fast as possible. The director-general extended the amount on pragmatic grounds to seven. There are seven mobility regions in the Netherlands; each region was given a pilot matched with a topic different political parties would find interesting, such as social aspects, regional mobility, corporate users, and sustainable mobility (MaaS-team member). This pacifying tactic would safeguard the pilots from future political coalitions. However, it made the consortia facilitating the pilot more vulnerable to specification and technological lock-in due to competitive pressure (consultant MaaS-team).
Opposing rationality. When broad internal support is missing, civil servants are uneasy about uncertainty. New developments can be seen as contingent, arbitrary, and unworthy of reconfiguring existing structures.
Opposition and contestation. The Ministry's Public Transportation and Railway directorate (PTRD) had other priorities than MaaS due to their daily business' being bound to railway investments, safe level-crossings, international lines, safety, and vibration. PTRD oversees the semi-governmental, state-owned National Railway (NR) company, which holds the concession for the principal network, and is the largest mobility provider in the Netherlands (Intranet I&W, n.d.). The MaaS-technology sounded like wishful thinking to PTRD because of its comprehensiveness (civil servants I&W). This perceived urgency disparity between the MaaS-team and PTRD affected the legal department responsible for all ministerial legal matters; they felt not everybody was comfortable with MaaS, making them question its priority (official legal department).
Adjusted tactics. To spark interest within PTRD, the MaaS-team members used roundtables and conferences to share white papers with external parties, hoping to create waves in the market and activate their counterparts within. However, this did not work; PTRD did not attend meetings even after repeated invitations. Their opposing rationality was not to favor new parties at the current systems' expense. Reflecting on their approach toward other directorates, another MaaS-team member said: 'I think they found us a bit pushy (MaaS-team member).' The MaaS-team also shared news articles and commissioned more research to get PTRD's attention, which did not help (MaaS-team member). The lack of response within the organization resulted in the MaaS-team seeing their counterparts at PTRD as 'MaaS non-believers,' who 'just' needed to keep trains running normally and did not focus on an integrated mobility system. This absence from other directorates led to the adjusted tactic of hiring external consultants. Because of the previous decade's personnel cuts, hiring external consultants was common practice to fill project teams (MaaS-team member).
Effects. The MaaS-team convinced Minister and Ministry's management to learn from MaaS via pilots and shape these to prevent rudimentary monopoly formation. They, however, lacked broad support within all directorates.

Round 2: Mobility data
After a few months, the project got much more urgent after the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam had to deal with Asian companies who tried to conquer the mobility market with free-floating bicycles (Duursma, 2017). The cities soon banished them due to adverse effects on public space. The MaaS-team used this event to highlight that digitization and shared concepts were entering and reforming the mobility domain. They pushed the idea of interoperability between different modalities with data, algorithms,

and application programming interfaces. Large platform companies could scale quickly, disrupting the physical sphere. In their eyes, this diagnosis legitimized the more proactive governmental role in this development (MaaS-team member). The team articulated the direction, activated actors, and established market formation.
MaaS-team's initial aims and tactics. A senior MaaS member explains the team's intent at this moment: 'we were trying to create a level playing field; otherwise, large mobility parties would crush smaller ones' (MaaS-team member). Boosted by the explicit backing from the new coalition agreement, the MaaS-team rapidly implemented an open market consultation. Eighty-five companies showed interest and reacted to 30 consultation questions (Parliamentary letter, 2018a). The market parties agreed government needed to take a proactive role in sharing data to make MaaS work. The MaaS-team created governance structures between the Ministry and the regions to construct pilot tendering procedures and secure adequate public financing (Memo Ministry I&W, 2018).
Opposing rationality. Destabilizing incumbents feels unethical for civil servants because they fulfill an indispensable role in maintaining the current system.
Opposition and contestation. Although other incumbents participated in the pilots, the NR did not express interest in participating within pilots because of a previous trauma when the Dutch Authority for Consumers and Markets accused NR of power abuse in a tender (NR official).' The MaaS-team expected PTRD to address NR to go along with this development, 'but these negotiations are super sensitive between PTRD and NR; there are a hundred dossiers to settle with them' (MaaS-team member). However, the absence of NR, the largest mobility provider and therefore vital for MaaS development in the Netherlands, worried commercial parties. A letter in the leading financial newspaper appeared from the Transdev Netherlands CEO (an international parent transport provider company in the Netherlands) about NR data monopoly and their unwillingness to share traveler data (Clahsen, 2018). NR reacted to these allegations: these commercial parties painted an unconstructive NR image toward the MaaS-team (and thereby the Ministry) out of self-interest to cut away NRs business case (NR official).
Adjusted tactics. The MaaS-team had problems conveying digitalization urgency to PTRD and other involved directorates. They, therefore, targeted external events to create internal attention for their project and adjusted their tactics in partnering up with mainly commercial MaaS-parties. However, this tactic made them a lobbying instrument for commercial parties in NR's eyes. Moreover, their focus on the external ecosystem and neglecting the internal organization did not prepare them for legitimizing the transition tasks 'destabilizing unsustainable structures.'
Effects. The MaaS-team focused its tactics on creating a level playing field and succeeded in sparking broad interest in the market. These interactions, however, destabilized the largest state-owned mobility provider's position, increasing their opposition to the MaaS pilots.

Round 3: Escalation in the ecosystem
The MaaS-team reported via the Minister to Parliament an overwhelming interest for MaaS in the market, and 41 wide-ranging consortia signed up for the tender, from which 24 were admitted to the framework contract, meaning these could compete to be the MaaS provider for one or more pilots in the region (Parliamentary letter, 2018b). The team 'gave direction' by trying to understand market development to optimize policy objectives and reconfigure the market if needed. Although the aim was to explore opportunities, colleagues of other policy units understood this as destabilizing efforts by reducing support for the dominant regime.

In early 2019, the estrangement between the MaaS-team and the NR intensified. The four largest semi-public transport providers decided to start their own MaaS-platform, RiVier (Memo Ministry I&W, 2019). The NR felt threatened as they perceived the commercial parties' intentions as cherry-picking and monopolistic. 'These commercial parties wanted to resell our subscriptions without the risks and costs we take and make for this' (NR official). NR saw RiVier as an attempt to put public value in a pilot and as their societal role to realize MaaS for the total accessibility in the Netherlands (ibid). The RiVier development alarmed commercial MaaS parties, and the Authority for Consumers and Markets was concerned about monopoly issues (ACM, 2021). Commercial parties immediately informed the MaaS-project leader, accusing NR of illegally using its market domination.

MaaS-team's initial aims and tactics. At this stage, the Minister positioned MaaS as the mobility transition facilitator in the parliamentary letter (Parliamentary letter, 2018b). This positioning implies a pro-active role from the government, intending to create urgency within the organization (civil servant I&W). The MaaS-team expected a proactive role from PTRD to keep NR on board.

Opposing rationality. Destabilizing the old regime can seem unwanted by society and politics and cost-inefficient. Furthermore, incumbents are part of the governance structure and therefore influence decision-making.

Opposition and contestation. In PTRD's eyes, the MaaS-team lobbied for drastic changes for commercial parties, ignoring the current concession constellation. This controversial approach toward everyday operations led other policymakers to dislike the MaaS-team (PTRD official). It was hard for the Ministry to intervene in the concession with NR if, by doing this, NR's business case would change. 'This is the heart of the [mobility-] system. The concession systematic has built-in expected returns the Finance Ministry has already booked as income for the upcoming decade. This dynamic hinders policy reforms. The discussion about MaaS is suddenly at the policy discussion's core (civil servant I&W).' Due to this, higher management did not escalate orders on NR.

Adjusted tactics. 'When we learned the NR had started its own MaaS platform, the alarm bell went off' (MaaS-team member). The MaaS-team was afraid RiVier would create a monopoly, as NR and the other RiVier parties combined to make 80% of all current mobility transactions. The MaaS-project leader remembers heated conversations between the director-general and himself with the NR management and commercial parties to prevent any winner-takes-all situation and advocated standardized data sharing and ticketing (MaaS-team member). The main contested issue was NR's discount (40%), used by them to manage rush hour and bind customers; they were unwilling to extend this discount to MaaS providers who need to resell NR tickets. If these issues were not solved, MaaS would not work as a total solution (MaaS-team member).

Because PTRD was primarily absent in this conflict, the MaaS-team proactively installed an account manager within PTRD. This person brought MaaS knowledge into their current discussions and processes, leading to a much-improved relationship, cross-fertilization, mutual understanding, and a place at the table to write necessities for data sharing in the new concession (consultant MaaS-team). This adjustment gave direction within the situation structurally via these concessions (MaaS-team member). Concerning RiVier, the MaaS-team used different tactics: in the letter to Parliament (Parliamentary letter, 2019), it expressed concerns that traditional mobility providers would not share their data, showing commercial parties they addressed the issue (MaaS-team member). Another way to prevent RiVier from becoming a monopoly was that market parties were in touch with the Authority for Consumers and Markets (MaaS-team member). Second, they would stay in close contact with the NR to avoid alienation (consultant MaaS-team).

Thirdly, working with PTRD, the MaaS-team initiated MaaS-worthiness, a new set of guiding principles for future public transport concessions about selling tickets and exchanging data. This collaborative 'soft' intervention greatly impacted the reconfiguration of the mobility system (MaaS-team member).
Effects. The MaaS-team understood that the MaaS invention alone was insufficient to make a sustainable impact. It needed to be incorporated into the system—efforts to change the concession system created much resistance in the ecosystem.

5. Comparative rounds analysis

The case study illustrates how the heuristic rounds-model can analyze the dynamics between change tactics and opposing rationalities; different role perceptions are at the root of the tensions we analyzed in this case study. On the one hand, the mobility domain is quickly changing, requiring the Ministry to adapt, guide, and support this change to prevent new monopolies and seize opportunities to create new public value. On the other hand, the Ministry is responsible for the entire mobility system, which cannot be destabilized for pilots with uncertain outcomes when accessibility, reliability, and transparency are at stake and risk discomforting the Minister. The contestation dynamics between these two perceptions can be seen when the MaaS-team claimed MaaS to be the potential transformer of 'the mobility systems heart' with data, integrating different modalities and introducing new market parties. Such a system change triggers all kinds of opposition within the current regime, explaining why this case has so many facets. The heuristic rounds-model helps understand the ongoing tactical work of entrepreneurial civil servants aiming to execute transition tasks within the context of legitimizing PA traditions; see Table 3 for an overview.

Table 3 – Dynamics of the heuristic rounds-model for the Dutch MaaS case (with tactics in italics)

Round 1 – MaaS optimism	
Initial tactics	The MaaS-team used stories about looming tech giants' monopolies to create urgency to act and capture attention to legitimize the given direction *('using symbolism' tactic).* They framed the MaaS-project as 'pilots to learn from,' aiming to optimize mobility based on data and reduce resistance (*problem-solution framing*). Their *team leadership* started pilots to bring mobility-related problems together with regional governments and new market developments. They actively formed a market demand.
Opposition and contestation	Civil servants of other directorates did not believe in the MaaS' feasibility and did not support the change.
Adjusted tactics	The MaaS-team hired external consultants and *activated and informed an ecosystem outside* the Ministry to counter the lack of support.
Effects	Pilots were initiated but lacked broad internal support.
Round 2 – Mobility data	
Initial tactics	MaaS team used *political activation* by using the frame of MaaS from the coalition agreement. They encouraged companies to form consortia, forming new networks *(force partnerships).* Their main focus was to build a level-playing field for startups, incumbents, and commercial parties from other domains *(stimulating beneficiaries)*.

Opposition and contestation	Higher management temporized and was partly unwilling to create too much instability in the system by instructing semi-public mobility providers to participate in the pilots.
Adjusted tactics	MaaS-team focused on the ecosystem instead of the internal organization by partnering with commercial MaaS-parties.
Effects	MaaS-team created broad interest in the market and subsequently became a lobbying instrument for commercial parties in their colleagues' eyes.
Round 3 – Escalation in the ecosystem	
Initial tactics	The MaaS-team positioned MaaS more firmly to acquire resources (*problem-solution framing*). The MaaS-team moved its development via MaaS-worthiness principles to concession negotiations and data regulation domain to influence policy-making *(Venue Shopping)*.
Opposition and contestation	The fundamental interventions of the MaaS-team led to a semi-public MaaS providers' counter initiative, securing their position in the market.
Adjusted tactics	To keep supporting commercial MaaS-providers, the MaaS-team had to destabilize current configurations. To ensure all parties would abide by data sharing, the MaaS-team advised activating the Authority of Consumers and Markets at risk of estranging National Railways *(risk-taking)*. Furthermore, they sent letters to Parliament, positioning MaaS and signaling parties to comply *(disseminate information)*.
Effects	The MaaS-team guided the discussion toward integrating the innovation into the system, creating much resistance.
Round 4 – The legal predicament	
Initial tactics	The pilots aimed to collect data and analyze this in the learning environment to gather evidence for MaaS *(Gathering evidence to show policy's utility).*
Opposition and contestation	The legal department did not buy the 'Google would take over' frame anymore and firmly checked the actions' legality.
Adjusted tactics	The MaaS-team conducted a second opinion of the legal directorates' assessment.
Effects	The MaaS-team had to scale down ambitions with the learning environment.

6. Discussion

This paper aimed to bring transition literature's considerations for policy-making, i.e., transition tasks (Braams et al., 2021), into the Public Administration's interdisciplinary congregate to create a heuristic rounds-model able to study the contestation between entrepreneurial civil servants championing transition tasks and the intraministerial opposition rationalities they face. In essence, this is a clash between the normative perspectives on public values of transition literature and the transition tasks it postulates and PA, which prescribes what role civil servants should play. Applied to the Dutch case of MaaS, our model shows the extensive contestation dynamics unfolding between proponents and opponents of governmental transition tasks. This level of contestation illustrates the need for transition literature to more meaningfully connect with PA's normative and democratic principles and values, agency within public organizations, policy and organizational models, and for PA to relate its concepts like 'emergence' to transition literature's ideas of directionality, niches and phasing out unsustainable structures to prevent inertia within highly needed transitions or technocratic transition tendencies in democratic societies.

Implication for transformative government

A critical dynamic shown by the rounds-model is the tactics' temporariness. They can be helpful in a particular round but can backfire in the next. For example, hiring consultants or focusing on the external ecosystem solves the continuation problem when other directorates are not committed. It, however, creates distance between directorates and limits the need for supportive internal network building, which can be crucial in a subsequent phase. Instances like this may not need a radical governmental redesign but skilled change agents. From the MaaS-case, we induce the following tentative insight for skill development in future tactical work. Future research could identify comparable insights.

1. *Use redundancy in design.* The MaaS-team needed to position MaaS both inside and outside the Ministry in the first round. They kept the political arena out by initiating seven pilots and preventing capture by political interests. The redundancy created helped reduce political uncertainty (Ting, 2003).
2. *Learn to (and be careful with) create waves*. To activate and change the attitude of the internal organization, the MaaS-team created waves in the external ecosystem. What is considered 'the system' is an implicit battle between the different rationalities; is the system an internally focused, autonomous, and rational hierarchy or an organic ecosystem, responsive and with fuzzy boundaries (Porter, 2006). However, working outside-in can backfire when the internal organization feels ignored and is needed to change existing structures.
3. *Take small, helpful steps.* The reflex not to make drastic changes because of uncertain outcomes from pilots is understandable; these are highly susceptible to legal action or popular disapproval (Van de Walle & Vogelaar, 2012). It seems helpful to invest in the resisting regime by installing an account manager, which helps relieve workload and change the systems' basic configurations to benefit innovation. Such incremental steps (Termeer & Dewulf, 2019) can mitigate tension between new stimuli and old habits.
4. *Codify unorthodox information*. A disruptive urgency frame can, when not accepted, disqualify the project. Such messages are generally not understood within ministries because unorthodox codified information is considered unplanned and unexpected (Cunha et al., 2003) and therefore shunned; however, it is essential for new information to emerge (Van de Walle & Vogelaar, 2012).

From a transition perspective, anticipative capacity could help prepare for change within public organizations. Change agents can build scaffolds[3] between the old and the new, thereby softening potential resistance. Our tentative insights hint in such a direction, building redundancy and reflexivity in an open system, with a tolerant view toward unorthodox information benefits transition in ministries. However, from a traditional PA perspective, demanding drastic changes quickly in the system's core without trusted evidence cannot be accepted. This dynamic may be the transformation's tragedy within public organizations; the need to disrupt the current system isolates the entrepreneurial civil servant.

Limitations

Some limitations are worth noting. Although the Ministry's documentation is thorough, their documents are formalistic and do not display personal opinions, let alone sensitivities or irritations. We complemented the Ministry's documentation with interviews

[3] See forthcoming work of Maessen, Lauche and Van der Lugt.

to understand stakeholders' interpretations of the studied tactical dynamics. Another limitation is respondents' memory; they had difficulties precisely placing their anecdotes in the five-year timeline, despite our structuring devices. Triangulation of data helped overcome this.

Finally, the specificity of the case limits the generalizability of our findings. The MaaS-case was developed in the Dutch Infrastructure and Water Management Ministry, which focused on transitions management for over 20 years. It may therefore be more inclined to accept transition tasks, suggesting that resistance to them may be more prominent in other ministries and countries. At the same time, this case is unique as destabilizing the state-owned organization's interests undermines other valued public ideas. This likely caused more internal contestation than with other transitions. Applying the heuristic framework to a more extensive set of cases, i.e., across ministries, transitions, and countries, can provide further insights into these mechanisms and show us to what extent these mechanisms occur in different contexts.

7. Conclusion

In synthesizing several components of influential policy models (Easton, 1957; Kingdon, 1984; Lasswell, 1956; Teisman, 2000) with tasks for government prescribed by transition literature (Borrás and Edler, 2020; Hekkert et al., 2007; Rogge & Reichardt, 2016), we studied the opposing roles within ministries in grand societal challenges. We open the black box of government actions and provide an understanding of seemingly contradicting courses of action. This paper has shown how the government's realization of tasks aimed at facilitating societal transition should be understood as an internal political struggle between opposing rationalities. This struggle can be understood as a series of contestations in which tactics are applied, adjusted, and readjusted to push the realization of transition tasks forward in the government organization.

This in-depth illustrative study shows how the model can be used to provide a rich empirical understanding of the complex microdynamics of realizing transition tasks in government. The study has provided insight into dynamics that play a role in these struggles between entrepreneurial civil servants and opposing rationalities. To work with these struggles, we identified tentative insights on the trade-offs in their future tactical work regarding creating redundancy in design; creating waves; taking small, helpful steps; and introducing codified unorthodox information in traditional ministries.

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