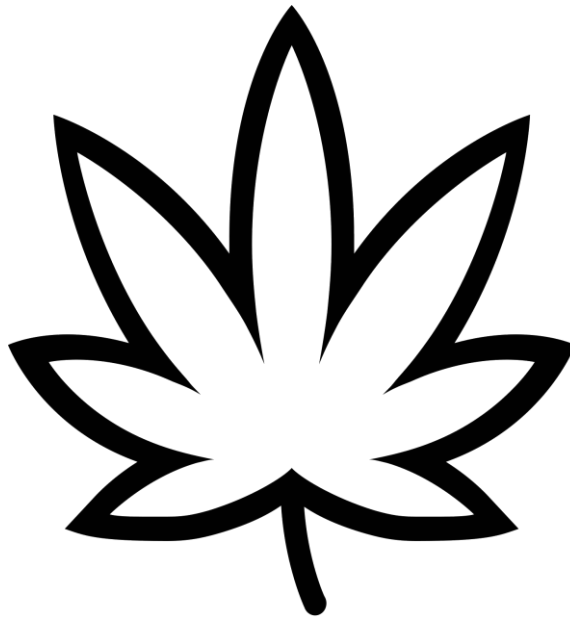# Stakeholders' view on the 'Closed Coffeeshop Chain' experiment

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Executive Summary

Since 1972 the Netherlands distinguish two types of drugs; drugs with acceptable risks for user and society and drugs with unacceptable risks. This became known as the distinction between softdrugs and harddrugs where cannabis was considered a softdrug. The use and possession of cannabis were regarded as a violation instead of a crime. The goal of the separation of markets was to prevent people from switching to harddrugs and the risks that are connected to them. From that time cannabis was available in coffeeshops which had to act according to five criteria; no advertisement, no harddrugs, no nuisance, no sale to minors, no more than 30g per person. Later these criteria were sharpened to a maximum of 5g per person and a maximum of 500g in stock. In 2012 and 2014 a 'resident' and 'distance' criteria were added to decrease the nuisance. Whereas the coffeeshops have a tolerated license to sell cannabis the cultivation of cannabis is still illegal which means that it is not known where that cannabis comes from and purchase is regarded as illegal. A variety of stakeholders, including municipalities and coffeeshops, have indicated that this tolerance policy is not maintainable and therefore they want regulation of the 'backdoor'.

In September 2017 the Dutch government indicated in the coalition agreement they want to execute an experiment with the regulated cultivation of cannabis for recreational sale called 'closed coffeeshop chain experiment'. Reactions on the preliminary design of the experiment were mixed because stakeholders were afraid it would not meet their needs and wishes. Since the opinions of stakeholders are considered valuable for the design due to their extensive knowledge and experience within this sector the aim of this research was to formulate effective strategies for the Dutch 'closed coffeeshop chain' experiment by gaining insight into the beliefs and ideas of stakeholders regarding cannabis cultivation in the Netherlands. Therefore, the research question was: What are the beliefs and ideas of the stakeholders regarding the 'closed coffeeshop chain' experiment in the Netherlands?

This research adopted a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth insights into the beliefs of stakeholders. The stakeholders that participated included: 6 coffeeshops, 4 municipality representatives, 2 medicinal cannabis representatives, 1 consumer association, 1 testing facility, 1 ministry representative. The beliefs of the participants are explored using an adapted version of the Advocacy Coalition Framework. First, the core beliefs and core policy beliefs of the participants are discovered. These beliefs are relevant to explore to understand the views of the participants and to see whether coalitions can be or are formed to pursue their objectives as a group. Second, the secondary aspects of the participants are explored. The secondary aspects involve fairly definite ideas on how the issue has to be approached. These ideas are divided into categories which are based on the supply chain and include; production, distribution, and retail. A new concept appeared during the interviews: policy development. Subsequently, these secondary aspects were translated into recommendations for the experiment.

Two different preferences of policy direction can be distinguished in the group of participants. On the one hand complete legalization of cannabis without any regulations and on the other hand regulation of cannabis cultivation. Participants in favor of complete legalization both derive from businesses involved with medicinal cannabis and therefore, added to their core policy belief, they might form a coalition. The norms and values substantiating the core policy belief in the group that prefers regulation differentiates. Whereas the coffeeshops have a more pragmatic and entrepreneurial approach to the regulation the municipalities and ministry emphasize the desire to decrease drug use and crime. Whereas the objectives of the coalitions in this study are compatible, to a certain extent, the objectives in Dutch society have appeared not to be.

The first concept to be discussed in the secondary aspects was production. An important point to consider is to ensure variety and quality of the product. If variety is limited or quality is insufficient the consumer might shift towards the illegal market which would decrease the chance of a successful experiment. A certain expertise is needed to produce qualitative good cannabis, therefore, it might be effective to use the expertise of current cannabis cultivators that are willing and able to exit the criminal cultivation business. Added to that, to prevent people from smoking cannabis with tobacco

edibles and extracts should become available in coffeeshops together with good information for the consumers.

Currently, the distribution of cannabis is a difficult point for the coffeeshops since they are not allowed to have more than 500g of cannabis in stock but most sell more than 500g a day. The amount of cannabis that is sold a day is known by the municipality and authorities, therefore to increase the safety this criterion should be deleted. To meet the needs of the consumer and ensure the product appeals to the public a phased introduction of the new cannabis product might be effective.

Whereas some municipalities consider coffeeshops not necessarily in charge of retail the other participants do think that the stringent regulations of the past years have made them suitable for retail in the experiment. The coffeeshops appear to have a positive effect on the prevalence rates of cannabis use among Dutch citizens and the separation of markets appears to decrease the likelihood of people to be confronted with harddrugs. Therefore the coffeeshops appeared to reach their goals.

Most participants confirm the fact that they consider the involvement of coffeeshops and other stakeholders as valuable for successful policy development and implementation. The quality mark developed in Haarlem is an example of successful co-creation of cannabis policy. A point of anxiety of the participants was the fact that the experiment would only last for four years, thereafter the situation would have to return to the current situation. To ensure legal certainty for the entrepreneurs and the Dutch population and financial certainty for investors it would be sensible to consider making the experiment a law with an evaluation clause

Introduction

Currently, the Netherlands execute a tolerance policy regarding cannabis which separates softdrugs (cannabis) from harddrugs. The separation of these two markets is established to prevent cannabis users from any contact with harddrugs and the illegal market (van der Gouwe et al, 2009). This policy entails that cannabis can be sold in coffeeshops according to strict regulations. This so-called frontdoor has been successfully regulated since 1995 (Zaken, 1995). However, ever since, the Dutch government has struggled with the backdoor policy, the purchase for sale. It is still illegal to cultivate cannabis for sale which forces coffeeshops to purchase their stock at the illegal market. Now, consumers are tolerated to buy cannabis but it is unknown where the product comes from and what the composition of the product is. This discrepancy between the front- and backdoor has been a major point in political debate for years where the more progressive parties want to regulate the cultivation of cannabis in order to decriminalize it, but the more conservative parties want to solve this problem by prohibiting retail and possession as well and see regulation as legalization and normalization (Algemeen Overleg Coffeeshopbeleid, 2017).

The current Dutch government wants to do an attempt to decriminalize the cultivation of cannabis. In the agreement of the Rutte III coalition is stated that the government will conduct an experiment with the licensed and regulated production of cannabis for sale on the recreational market. The way it is currently formulated, the experiment will be executed through coffeeshops in six to ten municipalities. In order to accomplish this a 'closed chain' system will be created where the cultivation, distribution, and retail of cannabis are linked and monitored by the government (Regeerakkoord, 2017). However, reactions to the announcement of this experiment are mixed and many stakeholders, among which coffeeshop owners, are concerned that the experiment might not meet their interests and wishes.

The ideas of the stakeholders are valuable for a successful experiment. First of all, they have extensive experience in this sector. Stakeholder engagement has increasingly been accepted and perceived as contextual evidence to complement research and influence policy (Lemke & Harris-Wai, 2015). Second, they might eventually have to execute this experiment. The norms and values regarding the topic of cannabis policy appear to differ between people involved in cannabis policy. Furthermore, since to this day different parties have not accomplished to formulate effective policy, it can be assumed there is no consensus on the knowledge that is considered relevant in finding a solution to the problem. Therefore this unstructured problem needs structuring by revealing the norms and values, and knowledge considered relevant by all stakeholder (Hischemoller, 1993. Hoppe, 2018). The aim of this research was to formulate effective strategies for the Dutch 'closed coffeeshop chain' experiment by gaining insights into the beliefs and ideas of stakeholders regarding cannabis cultivation in the Netherlands. Therefore, the research question was: What are the beliefs and ideas of the stakeholders regarding the 'closed coffeeshop chain' experiment in the Netherlands?

Contextual Background

History of cannabis policy in the Netherlands

In 1919 the Netherlands adopted a new law (Opiumwet) which set rules for drugs, mainly opiates and, cocaine. However, Dutch police hardly focused on the users of these drugs, the main target was the illegal trade. After the second world war, new drugs that were not included in the Opiumwet became available on the Dutch (illegal) market, among which cannabis. This rise changed the Dutch approach to more repressive and also targeting the users instead of only the illegal market. One reason for this repressive policy was the popularity of the drug among youth. Nevertheless, this policy was widely criticized and in the late 60s, it transferred from repressive towards more tolerant (van der Stel, Everhardt & van Laar, 2009).

In 1972 the research commission Baan published a report in which they made a distinction between drugs with acceptable risks for user and society and drugs with unacceptable risks. This became known as the distinction between softdrugs and harddrugs, where cannabis is regarded a softdrug. This meant that the use and possession of cannabis would be considered a violation instead of a crime. Meanwhile, the problems linked to a drug with unacceptable consequences, heroin, were rising and to tackle this problem penalties for cannabis cultivation and trade were lowered whereas penalties regarding trade in harddrugs were strengthened. The idea behind this policy was to prevent people from switching to the riskier harddrugs and the criminal world that was connected them. Cannabis was available in coffeeshops and was sold, restricted under five criteria; no advertisement, no harddrugs, no nuisance, no sale to minors, no sale of more than 30g per person (van der Stel, Everhardt & van Laar, 2009).

The rules in relation to coffeeshop policy were sharpened in the 'drugsnota' that was presented in 1995. One adjustment was the maximum amount of cannabis the coffeeshops were allowed to have in stock, which was limited to 500g. Additionally, the amount of cannabis that could be sold to a consumer used to be 30g and was now reduced to 5g (Borst-Eilers, Sorgdrager, Kohnstamm, 1995). The reason for this change was an attempt to decrease the amount of 'drug-tourists'. It was also desirable to decrease the number of coffeeshops that had emerged in the previous years, especially since a large amount was under command of criminal organizations (Laar, Ooyen-Houben, 2009). In may 2012, a new rule was added to decrease the nuisance of drug-tourists experienced by inhabitants of border regions. This became known as the 'resident criterion' where only Dutch citizens are allowed to enter a coffeeshop. Since non-residents could not enter coffeeshops anymore street dealer activities increased, causing even more nuisance for the residents. In 2013 local authorities became the decision whether they want to enforce this or not (van Ooyen-Houben, Bieleman & Korf, 2014). After the addition of a criterion where all coffeeshops need to have a minimum distance of 250m from a school in 2014 a great number of coffeeshops lost their license. Evaluation research showed however that nuisance in the neighborhood of the schools has not decreased and softdrug use of the students has also not appeared to decrease (Bieleman, Mennes & Sijtstra, 2015). Additionally, between 2003 and 2014 the trend in cannabis use has decreased among students below the age of 18 (Van Laar & Gestel, 2017).

After the adjustments of the coffeeshop policy, the number of coffeeshops in the Netherlands dropped from about 1200 in 1995 to 573 in 2017. Whereas the amount of coffeeshops has decreased in these years the use of cannabis has increased. In 1997 19,1% of the Dutch adults has indicated to have ever used cannabis. This number increased to 22,6% in 2005 but has decreased to 20,9% percent in 2016. During this entire period, the percentage of male users has been higher than the percentage of female users (Trimbos-instituut, 2017).

Current coffeeshop policy, 2018

Cannabis is available in 573 coffeeshops spread over 103 municipalities (van Ooyen-Houben, 2017). A coffeeshop has to act according to several criteria; must not cause any nuisance, not permitted to sell; harddrugs, to minors, large quantities and, not permitted to advertise drugs (van der Stel, Everhardt & van Laar, 2009). If coffeeshops do not act upon the criteria the municipality is allowed to close the coffeeshop.

The drugsnota of 1995 primarily focused on the small-scale and modest operation of the coffeeshops. With that in mind, it was assumed that ideological small-scale home cultivators could provide the coffeeshops with enough cannabis for the sale (Laar, Ooyen-Houben, 2009). This meant that large-scale cultivation of cannabis for the coffeeshops would be penalized. However, the small-scale home-cultivators do not provide enough for the coffeeshops and since the cultivation for sale is not regulated or tolerated this forces coffeeshops to find their stock elsewhere, which is often the illegal market (van der Stel, Everhardt & van Laar, 2009).. This discrepancy between the frontdoor and the backdoor has been a point of discussion ever since the toleration policy of the 70s (Korthals, 2000).

Currently, 61 municipalities, with a total of 466 coffeeshops, have signed the 'Joint Regulation'. The 'Joint Regulation' is an appeal to the government for a national system of certified and regulated cannabis cultivation. The municipalities which signed the 'Joint Regulation' want to ensure the health of the consumers, safety in the neighborhoods and contribute to a more effective attempt to eliminate organized crime related to drugs (Joint Regulation, 2014).

Experiment

In the coalition agreement of the Rutte III government, published in October 2017, is stated that the Dutch government wants to execute an experiment with the regulated cultivation of cannabis for recreational sale. This means that the cultivation, distribution, and sale of cannabis are monitored by the government (Regeerakkoord, 2017). One, uniform, experiment shall be executed in 6 to 10 municipalities, The rules for coffeeshops that will participate will maintain the same (Grapperhaus & Bruins, 2018). The aim of this experiment is to see what the effects of this regulated cultivation, distribution and, retail are on public health, crime, safety and nuisance (Grapperhaus & Bruins, 2018).

In advance of this study not much of the experiment was published and developed yet, however, an advisory committee was appointed to give recommendations for the experiment. The key recommendations of their research are stated below.

Key recommendations advisory committee, June 20th 2018 (Knottnerus et al, 2018)
- Cultivators that want to participate in the experiment will have to act according to the defined requirements regarding cultivation, storage, transportation, distribution and product information
- Cultivators are required to not engage and exclude all criminality from the cannabis chain
- To meet quality requirements of cannabis, independent testing is necessary
- For the time being there is no reason to set any restrictions on the amount of active ingredients in the cannabis to be cultivated
- The parties in charge of retail will also have to act according to the defined requirements regarding purchase, preservation, and transparency of their administration
- In addition to the AHOJG-I criteria a new criterion should be added regarding the prevention (P-criterion)
- The price of cannabis should not differ too much from the current prices
- If the experiment appears to be successful, it should not be stopped after four years
- To meet sufficient representativeness the number of municipalities that will participate might have to increase

Concepts and Theory

Some political problems are relatively easy to solve whereas others do not have one solution According to Hisschemoller (1993) a problem can be structured, which means that all stakeholders agree on the norms and values related to the problem but they are also certain which knowledge is relevant for solving this problem. These problems can be solved by technical methods or procedures. However, other problems like the problem of cannabis policy in the Netherlands do not have one answer to solve this problem. These problems can be considered as moderately structured or unstructured since it is not clear whether the stakeholders agree on the norms and values that are at stake but also on the knowledge that is considered relevant for the problem. Badly or moderately structured problems are often part of a controversy in ethical dimensions, resulting in symbolic policies that often do not address an effective solution to the problem (Hisschemoller et al, 2001).

Based upon the difference in arguments hold in the past it can be said that cannabis policy appears to be an unstructured problem. The views put forward by the parties in the Dutch government have notable differences and that way the tolerance policy was developed. Whereas the more conservative parties argue that drug use should be banned at all, the progressive parties rely more on the fact that they believe the policy will not influence the prevalence of use and therefore controlling the excesses is the best option (Grund et al, 2017). The positions held by political parties represent the different perspectives on the subject of cannabis in society. On the one hand, people can take a more a pragmatic approach, whereas others can approach it from a more ideological perspective. Also, the viewpoints of the participants can differ; while some focus on a health perspective others can lay more emphasis on law enforcement (van Ooyen-Houben et al, 2015. Moravek, 2008).

In finding a solution to this problem all sides of a problem need to be explored to produce new insights into a problem and structure it (Hoppe, 2018). Turnhout et al (2008) have defined the policy process in an unstructured problem as policy as learning which means that stakeholders 'develop and reflect upon conflicting perspectives'. Whereas the existence of these conflicting perspectives is known, it is not yet very clear what they are. Turnhout et al (2008) define the role of scientists and science as, respectively, the person and tool to signal what the problem is. What knowledge is considered relevant regarding the problem is based upon the different perspectives of the stakeholders on the intervention. Therefore no clear solution can be found to this problem, however, the perspectives can be explored in an attempt to structure the problem.

This study will try to explore the differentiating beliefs of different stakeholders on cannabis policy as an aid to structure the problem. Their norms and values and knowledge of this topic will be analyzed using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The Advocacy Coalition Framework is a framework which is developed to tackle complicated public policy issues which involve different actors, within and outside of governmental institutions (Weible and Sabatier, 2007). This framework can help to visualize the conflicting perspectives of stakeholders by exploring the core beliefs and core policy beliefs of different stakeholders.
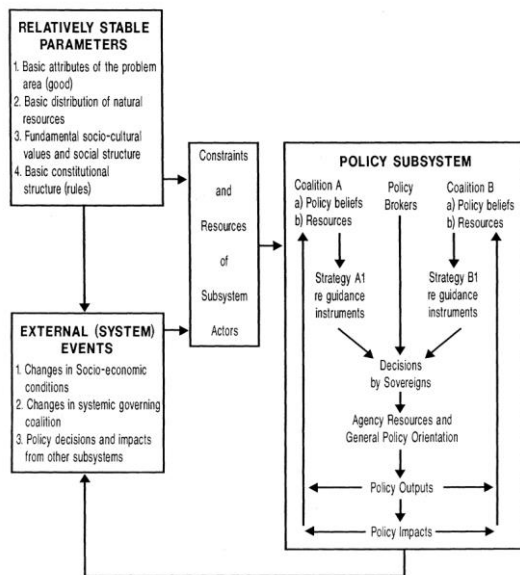
Figure 1, Advocacy Coalition Framework

According to the ACF, policy-making happens in the policy subsystem. This policy subsystem contains policy participants derived from different layers of governmental organizations but also interest groups, media, and research institutions. The policy subsystem is characterized by a specific topic and affected by the relatively stable parameters. These parameters frame the nature of the problem but also influence the constraints and resources of the policy participants in the policy subsystem (Weible and Sabatier, 2007). This study will not focus on the relatively stable parameters and external events since these are already discussed in the current and previous chapter. An elaborate analysis of the external events and stable parameters will not change the societal differences and therefore the focus is on the policy subsystem(Weible, 2006).

The policy participants within the subsystem have specified different objectives which they seek to pursue. The policy participants attempt to collect the right resources in order to change contradictory policies. To accomplish this, different policy participants who share a core policy belief form a coalition. Elgin and Weible (2013) argue that people who have similar beliefs have a better chance of successful interaction than people who do not share these beliefs. These advocacy coalitions translate their beliefs and resources into policy strategy. Within the subsystem, the coalitions battle for their objectives and eventually, helped by policy brokers who mediate between the policy conflicts translates this into decisions (Weible and Sabatier, 2007).

Belief system

The core of how the different stakeholders think about how should be dealt with certain public policy problems can be found in their beliefs. These include norms, values, political beliefs, concerns, and opinions (Cook, 2010). Therefore stakeholders' beliefs concerning cannabis policy are their positions in the ongoing debate regarding cannabis policy. (Wolsink & Breukers, 2010) The beliefs in this research are structured in a belief system which consists of two belief categories; core beliefs and core policy beliefs (Sabatier 1988).

The first category is the core beliefs. These beliefs are not specific to one particular policy domain but are applicable to more domains (Wolsink 2004). Waller et al (2000) defined these core beliefs as 'absolute, unconditional and dichotomous cognitions about oneself and the world'. Core beliefs are very resistant to change and one of the reasons suggested for this is the fact that these core beliefs are a product of adaptations from a persons' childhood (Elgin 2013; Young 1994). They contain

an individual's ideas about appropriate norms and primary values; security, health, freedom of choice (Sabatier, 1988). With respect to cannabis policy, a liberal core belief might affect a stakeholders; perspectives. In this case, this person might prefer the government to leave more responsibility to the people instead of setting up rules for them to follow. Since core beliefs are not necessarily specified to one subject this mindset might be applicable to other policy domains as well.

The second category is the core policy beliefs. These beliefs are, besides the normative assumption which is apparent in the core beliefs, also influenced by empirical beliefs. This translates into beliefs that are also resistant to change, however, since they can be influenced by empirical facts they are more sensitive to change than core beliefs (Elgin 2013). Like the name of this category implies, these are the core beliefs that apply to the policy issue in which the stakeholder is specialized but also in which this stakeholder usually participates (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2014). The policy core beliefs embody the stakeholders' perceptions of the nature of the policy issue and their perception of the likelihood of a resolution. These perceptions can define the position of the stakeholder in a potential policy conflict (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2014). An example of a policy conflict that is often subject to policy analysis is the aim for economic growth versus the preservation of the environment (Weible and Sabatier, 2007). In relation to cannabis policy, the core policy beliefs that might emerge among the stakeholders are the desire to regulate cannabis cultivation or, on the contrary, pursue prohibiting cultivation and also prohibit the sale through coffeeshops. In case actors want to try to form coalitions to achieve their objective they will reach out to their potential partners based on shared core policy beliefs (Sabatier 1988). An example of such a coalition that has emerged in order to influence cannabis policy is the Joint Regulation which has been signed by 61 municipalities to strengthen their position in favor of regulating cannabis cultivation.

Secondary Aspects

This research will also explore the possibilities of solving this problem by gaining insights into the ideas of the stakeholders. The ideas can be found in the secondary aspects of the ACF. The secondary aspects are the tools and facts that are necessary to explain how to apply the core (policy) belief (Kubler, 2001; Bennett 1992) and strategies that are needed to realize their objectives (Hommes et al, 2009). Examples of secondary aspects are experimental initiatives or allocation of the budget (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2014; Wolsink 2004). The secondary aspects involve fairly definite ideas on how the issue has to be approached. This means that the scope of these aspects is rather narrow and therefore these aspects are more susceptible to change than the core beliefs and policy core beliefs (Jenkins-Smith et al, 2014).

The secondary aspects will include ideas about different links of the cannabis chain, therefore these aspects will be structured in three links; production, distribution, and retail. The division of these secondary aspects is based on the Supply Chain. The supply chain involves all the activities from the product as a raw material until the delivery to the customer. (Lummus & Vokurka, 1999). The supply chain system must be regarded as one integrated process where various parties cooperate to convert raw materials into a product (Beamon, 1998). This is in line with the objective of the 'Closed Coffeeshop Chain' experiment, which pursues a system of production, distribution, and retail. To ensure this system to be waterproof, free of any criminal interference, the different entities should cooperate. Production includes every step from seed to the cannabis that is suitable for sale. Distribution includes the process from the cultivator to the backdoor, so to the point where the cannabis will be visible for the administration. Retail includes everything from the shop until consumer.

Resources

Resources entail material resources but also human and social resources. The latter two provide a person with the ability to reinforce their own choice. Social resources also mirror the norms and rules on the distribution of authority (Kabeer, 1999). Additionally, these norms and rules also reflect that

the material, allocative resources are to a great extent embedded in authoritative resources (Giddens, 1979), which, gives the person with decision-making authority the ability to prioritize and reinforce claims (Kabeer, 1999). In policy change, this decision-making authority is more valuable if it is legally defined. Weible (2006) argues that actors with a formal authority position have more direct political access. Other resources take a more material shape, these include financial resources and information. Having sufficient financial resources can help actors to gain other resources. Information can be scientific or technical and is predominantly the fundament of an argument (Weible, 2006).

In this study, resources can take different shapes, on the one hand, material resources (e.g. financial resources or facilities) but on the other hand resources in the shape of knowledge. This knowledge can also be used for the problem structuring framework. This study will adopt the division between two types of knowledge of Hommes et al (2009), expert knowledge and practical knowledge. Expert knowledge is mainly based on (scientific) research. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, is merely based upon the experiences of people. The 'two types of knowledge' are not always compatible, mostly because of the different discourse that fits the knowledge. If one considers something effective due to their experience and the other cannot find any scientific proof they might consider it not effective (Eshuis et al, 2005).

Conceptual Model

The ACF is often used in a retrospective manner, however, this study will look at this public policy problem in a prospective way. Rather than explaining the policy change, it will give recommendations for future policy change. Therefore, the use of the ACF in this study deviates from use in many prior studies. This is the reason a majority of the concepts used in the original ACF are omitted from this conceptual model. The external events and relatively stable parameters are useful for understanding the context of policy change. This research focusses more on coalitions which can be formed based on the beliefs of the stakeholders and recommendations for policy change based upon the ideas of stakeholders. Additionally, the output of the policy and the impacts of the policy are not known since this policy is not formulated or implemented yet. For this reason, also the decisions made helped by the policy broker and policy outputs and impacts are not relevant for this research. This leaves the beliefs, secondary aspects, resources and, coalitions. In the original model, secondary aspects are part of the belief system whereas in this research it will be approached separately in order to formulate a clear distinction between the beliefs and the ideas on how to realize the beliefs. Additionally, is not clear whether coalitions are apparent in this research, therefore the adjusted version of the ACF only shows one coalition.
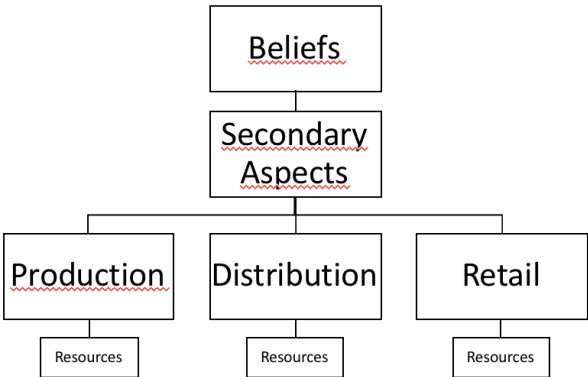

Figure 2, Adjusted Conceptual Framework

First, to discover the complexity of developing cannabis policy the beliefs of the participants will be analyzed. Each participant will be asked for their core beliefs and since this core belief does not have

to be linked to the specific topic this question will focus on policymaking in general. It is important to find out whether the stakeholders have a more conservative or progressive approach or whether they are more liberal or ask for a more paternalistic government to understand their view on the topic of cannabis. These core beliefs will eventually be linked to the topic of cannabis policy. This entails the stakeholders' preference of the direction of policy for the coming years. Participants with similar beliefs might have formed coalitions in order to pursue their objective, therefore it is interesting to consider the possibility of different coalitions that are formed among the stakeholders (Wolsink 2004).

Second, the participants will be asked for how they had pictured a possible solution to this problem. These secondary aspects will be divided into stages based on the supply management chain; production, distribution, and retail. Additionally, for realizing these solutions the participants will be asked for any resources they consider relevant in order to formulate effective strategies.

Subquestions

The main research question of this research is; 'What are the beliefs and ideas of the stakeholders regarding the 'closed coffeeshop chain' experiment in the Netherlands?'. To answer this questions using the framework discussed above these subquestions emerged:

What are the core beliefs regarding cannabis policy?
What are the core policy beliefs regarding cannabis policy?
What are the ideas regarding the production of cannabis?
What are the ideas regarding the distribution of cannabis?
What are the ideas regarding the retail of stakeholders?

Methods

Methodology

This research adopted a qualitative research design. The qualitative design is executed through conducting semi-structured interviews. Elaborate information on the beliefs and ideas of stakeholders is needed to formulate adequate recommendations for the experiment. The exploration of the ideas and beliefs of stakeholders makes this an interpretive study where a stakeholders' context cannot be seen separate from its views (Given, 2008). A qualitative research design is more appropriate for an interpretive study than a quantitative design, therefore a qualitative design is adopted. The semi-structured interviews helped to obtain thorough insights into the beliefs and ideas of the stakeholders. Due to the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, the stakeholders have enough space to address new topics or concepts. Yet the interviews were structured enough to assure that all relevant topics were discussed and the questions could redirect the conversation to the topic relevant for this research (Gray, 2014). Data analysis started immediately after the first interview was conducted, this also helped in following interviews.

All interviews are conducted face-to-face. This allowed the participants to express their opinions and change the direction of the conversation if they wanted to. Face to face contact will help the interviewer to ask for clarification if needed but also to observe and react to non-verbal communication of the participant (Turk et al, 2014).

Participants

The participants were targeted through purposive sampling. To know which stakeholders should be taken into consideration for a stakeholder analysis Colby (1992) states that focus should be on two aspects: whether the group or actor have a certain concern (stake) for a for the particular topic and what resources they have to influence the direction of that topic. These two aspects are in line with the definition of stakeholder from Buse et al (2012). These authors state that a stakeholder has a certain interest in an issue, this also includes the people who execute this issue or have decision-making power over this issue. Freeman (1984) defined stakeholders as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives'. This definition is in particular useful for this study. The achievement of the organization's objectives is in this case the cultivation experiment that is initiated by the Dutch government. This means that the stakeholders in this study are all people that can affect but also are affected by this experiment.
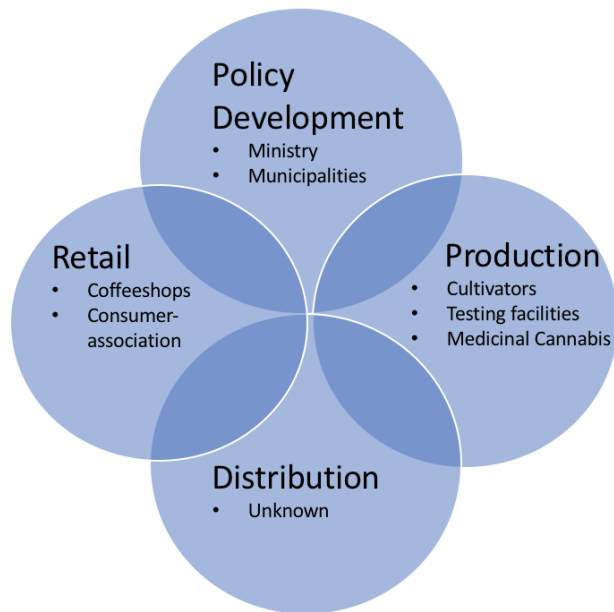
Figure 3, Stakeholder map based on Conceptual Framework

The targeted population if this research includes coffeeshop owners, cultivators municipality representatives, medicinal cannabis representatives, a consumer association, testing facility and a representative of the ministry of health, welfare, and sports. It was not possible to contact cultivators and people engaged in the distribution of cannabis. Four of the coffeeshops are located in Amsterdam, one in Haarlem and one in Zwijndrecht. The coffeeshop owners that participated were reached by phone or through email. The municipal officials were reached through the general phone number of the municipality they work for. The municipalities that participated are Amsterdam, Haarlem, Rotterdam, and Breda. These municipalities were selected because Amsterdam and Rotterdam are the two largest cities in the Netherlands with a large share (±200) of coffeeshops (CBS, 2017. van Ooyen-Houben, 2017). Haarlem is the only Dutch municipality that has developed a quality mark for its coffeeshops and Breda is close to the border with Belgium. Municipalities close to the border are known for problems related to drugs tourism (CBS, 2017). Additionally, a policy official at the ministry of health, welfare and sports, the president of the cannabis consumer association, a testing facility and two people involved with medicinal cannabis were interviewed. The participants were asked to participate in a 30 to 60-minute interview.

	City	Function
M1	Rotterdam	Municipality representative
M2	Haarlem	Municipality representative
M3	Amsterdam	Municipality representative
C1	Zwijndrecht	Coffeeshop
CA1	Terneuzen	Consumer association
M4	Breda	Municipality representative
C2	Haarlem	Coffeeshop
C3	Amsterdam	Coffeeshop
MC1	Tiel	Medicinal Cannabis
H1	The Hague	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports
MC2	Tilburg	Medicinal Cannabis
T1	Echt	Test Company
C4	Amsterdam	Coffeeshop

C5	Amsterdam	Coffeeshop
C6	Amsterdam	Coffeeshop

Figure 4, Participants

Data collection

Data were collected through recordings on a mobile phone and another recording device. The double recording was to make sure that at least one of the recordings was sufficient for the transcription. The interviewer also made a few notes during the interview as a tool to see if all relevant topics are addressed. The concepts discussed in the conceptual framework were translated into questions on beliefs, secondary aspects, and resources. Interview questions for the different 'categories of participants' were formulated differently. This is to make sure that the way to ask the question was suitable to the audience. The length of the interviews was between the 30 and 60 minutes.

Validity

The first interview was approached as a pilot interview and was used to check the validity of the interview guide. If interview questions did not answer according to the research objectives, or the answers were not in depth these questions were adapted for future interviews. If the interview guide still showed flaws after following interviews, adaptations were made. However, no major alterations were made since all interviews still had to cover similar topics and concepts. A summary of all interviews was sent back to the participants to make sure the interpretation of the interviews was correct.

Analysis

All interviews were transcribed by the interviewer using the audio recordings from during the interviews. A day after the transcription of the interviews the interviews were reread and checked. During this check, the interviewer also started with open coding to discover all topics that have been discussed during the interview. The first step of analysis was through open coding to make sure that all useful material provided by the participants was included in the research. After the open coding, the concepts discovered with open coding were compared to the conceptual framework. If codes did not fit within the themes of the concepts new themes were created. After this selective coding was continued based upon the conceptual framework and the concepts. All codes were added and analyzed in excel 16.10.

Timeframe

The timeframe for the entire research was 20 weeks. The first six weeks were reserved for the development of the research proposal. The interviews were scheduled week for seven till week fifteen. During these weeks the interviews that were already conducted were analyzed. In the final five weeks, the rest of the data were analyzed, and conclusions were drawn based on the data.

Ethical considerations

The topic of cannabis regulation is a controversial topic in Dutch policy making. Since some of the participants still execute an illegal profession it is of major importance that the confidentiality of all participants was guaranteed. All participants were therefore informed about the content and the purpose of the research. Additionally, the participants have signed an informed consent prior to the

interviews. This guaranteed the participants that all data will be handled with great consideration and it will grant the author of the report to use their statements in the interviews. However, it also included that if the participants wished to erase something from the recordings this is possible and how they had to indicate this (this did not happen). The participants also had to indicate if they want to participate anonymously and if not, how they wanted to be addressed in the research. After the interviews, the transcripts were summarized and sent to the participants to check if their statements are interpreted correctly.

Results

The results of this research are structured according to the Advocacy Coalition Framework. First, the secondary aspects are presented, divided into three stages of the supply chain. Production, distribution, and retail Some of the statements the participants made are substantiated by resources, which are also part of the Advocacy Coalition Framework. These resources include (scientific) research, practical experience, and facilities, however, they are not be mentioned separate but in line with the statements made in the secondary aspects. Also, a new concept that became apparent in the interviews will be discussed; policy development. Policy development embodies all the information provided by the participants about who should be involved in policy development, how policy should be developed and how the experiment should be build up.

Thereafter, the belief systems of the participants including the core beliefs and core policy beliefs, are discussed, to discover whether different coalitions can be acknowledged among the stakeholder groups. Additionally, revealing the beliefs will give some insight into the norms of values of the participants which is useful in understanding their ideas in the secondary aspects. The policy core beliefs could be derived from the transcripts from the interviews. The core beliefs of the participants, however, were not always mentioned explicitly. Hence, the core beliefs had to be read between the lines and is partially based on the interpretation of the author. Nevertheless, it is important to have an idea of the core beliefs of the participants to see if different coalitions can be distinguished in the group of participants.

Secondary Aspects

Production

When being asked about the production of cannabis all participants mentioned the importance of variety and quality. In particular, all coffeeshops emphasized the fact that if the variety of cannabis would be restricted the consumer would turn to the illegal market. This goes together with the restriction on active ingredients. The municipalities shared this fear of a rise of the illegal market. Added to that C4 mentioned that if cannabis would be irradiated it would change the chemical formula of terpenes which give the taste to cannabis, therefore irradiation of cannabis is undesirable to prevent the consumer to go to the illegal market where cannabis is not irradiated.

> M1: 'So it will need sufficient active ingredients, sufficient variety, sufficient quality and no major change in price.'

Opinions about who has to be licensed to cultivate cannabis differed among the participants. C5 states that even if someone has all the materials for growing a cannabis plant it will still be hard to grow a good quality, therefore you need the experience of current cultivators to grow cannabis. The participant indicated that Canada also encountered this problem, therefore they 'imported' knowledge and materials for cultivation from the Netherlands. In the Netherlands these people are currently, according to the law, engaged in criminal activities since growing cannabis is illegal, therefore they would need some sort of amnesty in case they will be the future cultivators. On the other hand, M4 says that in case someone has experience in growing any plant they can also cultivate cannabis plants. This would make it easier to license people to grow cannabis. The participants did agree on the fact that facilities and materials are available in the Netherlands because of the well-developed agricultural business in the Netherlands.

All coffeeshop participants indicate that they prefer a 'brewery' model for the production. This means that there will be a few bigger players that grow a rather standard species and additionally some

smaller craft growers that grow the more specific species. C5 explained this is important since each year new cannabis strains are popular and if the coffeeshops are not able to acquire these the consumer will search for them on the illegal market. He also indicated that research showed that between 40 and 50% of cannabis consumers already obtain their product at the illegal market. Because the coffeeshops are the ones that can respond fastest to these trends they should be the ones that can assign the cultivators they want to work. Additionally, C1 proposed it is important to allow market forces because this will force the cultivators to grow according to the consumers wish, preventing them from buying their product on the illegal market. In response to optimizing this market mechanism, some coffeeshops indicate that they would also prefer the option of cultivating themselves.

> M4: 'You will need a product that the consumer will buy because if they won't buy what is available in the coffeeshop these shops will lose their customers which might lead to illegal trade.'

Considering public health CA1, MC1, MC2 proposed to remove cannabis extracts and edibles from list 1 of the opium law, which indicates it is a hard drug. The main reason is to discourage smoking cannabis with tobacco. Furthermore, MC1 and MC2 desire more research on the active ingredients in cannabis since it is mainly CBD and THC which are the point of discussion but cannabis contains many other ingredients. The coffeeshops share this desire, additionally to offer a wide range of products.

A frustration expressed by the coffeeshops was the prohibition on testing for contaminants and composition of active ingredients because it was still seen as a preparatory action of cultivating cannabis on a great scale. C6 states that they do test their product but this involves risk for the company that provides this service, however they do want to inform their customers about their product. All other participants point out this is seen as a problem by them as well and indicate testing of cannabis should be a condition from a public health point of view and including it in the commodity law. A system for testing is already developed by T1, however, they cannot perform their service as long as testing is prohibited.

> MC2: 'This is a crooked system in the Netherlands. I think it is good for public health if all cannabis were to be tested for contaminants.'

All participants, except for H1, expressed fears with regards to the experiment as it was formulated at that time. The fear which was expressed most was the fact that the experiment would only last for four years and after that time the situation has to go back to the previous situation, as it is now. For all coffeeshops this would not be an option because that would mean they would lose their suppliers and do not believe that people would be willing to make such large investments without the insurance they would keep this after four years.

> T1: ''The industry does not want that because after four years you lost your suppliers and besides it will be impossible to find an investor who will invest so much money for four years''.

Distribution

M2 and M3 would rather not enforce the rule of a stock maximum of 500g. According to the participating coffeeshops the rule is outdated and impossible to enforce. In 1995, when the rule was formulated the number of coffeeshops in the Netherlands was double the number of coffeeshops now. Additionally, tourism has increased immensely, therefore the demand per coffeeshop has increased as well. The maximum of 500g also creates a problem for the municipalities because they have to enforce this rule, however, they do know that the coffeeshops have a so-called stash room somewhere else.

Added to that it also creates a safety issue because the transportations from the stash rooms to the coffeeshops are vulnerable for robberies. Nevertheless, when this happens the coffeeshops cannot report this to the police because these transports are illegal. M2 agrees with the coffeeshops that this creates mixed feelings since the municipality wants to ensure safety. In addition, insuring an illegal stock is impossible so any robberies will cause a financial setback. To increase the physical and financial safety of the all coffeeshops want transparency in the distribution and purchase of their stock. They state that everything they sell is registered so the enforcement organizations already know how much they sell so it would be a relief for them if they could also register their purchase and insure this.

C4: 'We want to do the same with the backdoor, make it completely transparent'

Another reason for a transparent backdoor the coffeeshops suggest is to make it harder for malicious entrepreneurs to use a double entry accounting system. C1 and CA1 indicate that some coffeeshops appear to abuse this opportunity.

CA1: 'Since all the purchase happens at the black market it is easy to register a different price in your book-keeping. This gives people the opportunity to make some extra money for themselves'

As an effective way to regulate the cultivation and purchase of cannabis the coffeeshops propose a phased introduction of 'regulated cannabis'. To make sure the consumer will remain to buy their product in the coffeeshop the coffeeshops consider gradually adding 'regulated cannabis' to their menu most effective. They trust that the consumer will choose for the tested cannabis of high quality and if the consumer is not satisfied the cultivators have to improve. This can easily be monitored through the administration of the coffeeshops.

C5: 'For the needs of the consumer and for better monitoring we suggested a phased introduction of regulation'

Retail

Whereas the coffeeshops are convinced they should remain in charge of the retail of cannabis some municipalities do not necessarily agree. M1 brought up the idea of a dispensary system to remove the coffeeshops from the chain to make it easier to eliminate criminality. M4 agrees with the fact that the coffeeshops are not necessarily the only designated place for retail, however, the coffeeshops that are going to be part of the chain should have to option to get assistance by getting out of the organized crime behind the backdoor. Another option that M4 brought up was to execute the experiment in municipalities that do not have coffeeshops yet and to open new coffeeshops there to ensure they do not have any connections with the organized crime.

M4: 'It is possible you want to separate yourself from the organized crime but the question is whether they want to let you go.'

M1 is in favor of eliminating the coffeeshops, however, the other participants are in favor of retaining the coffeeshops for retail. The coffeeshops emphasize that their shop has an important societal role and that they are informing their customers. Because of the rule that a coffeeshop can only sell softdrugs it raises the threshold for consumers to buy harddrugs since these are not available in a coffeeshop. In the experience of the coffeeshops the illegal market does not make a distinction between hard and softdrugs. Additionally, coffeeshops are not allowed to welcome underaged

customers, another rule that is not enforced at the illegal market. Also, the coffeeshops stated that their personnel is able to distinguish potential problematic cases and they will intervene if necessary. CA1 witnesses that more and more coffeeshops work with certified personnel which has positive effects on the customers and their drug use.

> *C5: 'At a certain point there was a need for some rules, well one of them was 'no access under the age of 1'8 and another 'no harddrugs in the shop', both very important.'*

The coffeeshops explained that during the last four decades regulations have become extremely stringent, therefore, all coffeeshops left are under strict supervision of the municipalities. C6 points out that this means that the municipalities can make a well-substantiated choice which coffeeshops are suitable for regulating the backdoor and which ones are not. Added to that, Amsterdam is developing a pilot where they want to translocate some of the coffeeshops and chose good locations for new coffeeshops. Similarly, Haarlem has chosen for a density of 1 coffeeshop on 10000 inhabitants to limit the nuisance, which has succeeded. Furthermore, Haarlem has a quality mark for their coffeeshops which includes additional criteria to the national criteria. All these factors make that the municipalities have enough tools and information to supervise retail trough coffeeshops according to the coffeeshops.

> *C6: 'In general the majority of operators that are still functioning have their act together, otherwise they would already be cleared away based upon the enforcement rules.'*

M2, M4 and the coffeeshops advise other coffeeshops to organize themselves to enlarge their influence on policy in the future. Equally important is to maintain close contact with the municipality, police and the neighborhood they are located. If any problems would occur these organizations and people could be of help.

Because the coffeeshops also consider themselves responsible for informing their customers they would prefer their products to be tested as mentioned earlier in production paragraph. Additionally, they assume that if customers know what the composition and the strength of the product is, they will use it rationally. Therefore the coffeeshops, CA1 and T1 think that information can serve as a good prevention. In addition to the testing service T1 developed, they can also provide a QR-code on the packaging which can be scanned by the consumer and which will provide all the information on their telephone. A prevention method for drug use for underaged children could be informing the parents. CA1 explained that he used to organize an outing for parents to get them acquainted with coffeeshops and cannabis, so they could inform their children and recognize it if their children would use drugs.

Policy Development

All participants agree on the fact that changes in soft drug policy have to be organized nationally. At the moment some municipalities have made little alterations to the national regulations, like the resident criterion that is not enforced in every municipality. C4 testifies that although they have benefitted from some of the local alterations in the past decades they prefer to have a sufficient national policy. However, C3 states that the safety and enforcement measures partially have to be arranged on a local level.

> *C4: 'Just make this a national policy, these are the rules, they count for everyone'*

With regards to the experiment participants M2, C1 and M4 considered it more effective to execute more, different experiments in a greater amount of municipalities to see what works best. Additionally,

CA1 suggested evaluating after two years already instead of waiting four years and potentially make alterations to the experiment.

M4: 'It might be sensible to initiate different variants of the experiment'

Whereas CA1, C4 and, C6 consider the current formulation of the experiment a big step forward where controlled cultivation seems to be the future they also express some fears regarding the experiment. Together with the other coffeeshops they do acknowledge the fact that two of the four coalition parties that created the agreement are always considered to be fierce opponents of softdrugs and the third was responsible for the clearing away of many coffeeshops in the last five years. Therefore they express fears that this experiment might be created to fail. Added to that, the coffeeshops, M1 and M2 mention that if the experiment would last for four years it would mean that the next coalition would have to decide whether to pursue this policy or not. The decision would then be based on these parties' interpretation of the outcomes of the evaluation.

An important thing to consider according to the coffeeshops when developing policy according to the participants is to involve them and others involved in the cannabis industry. They have 40 years of experience which is valuable for future policy. However, the coffeeshops did not experience that their opinion has had any influence on soft drug policy in the previous 40 years. The policy development process in Haarlem is an example where co-operation of the municipality and coffeeshops has led to a quality mark with which both parties are satisfied. M2 declared that although it is an investment of time it has brought them a lot.

M2: 'It is not about what I want or what the municipality wants but about what the coffeeshop owners want'

Belief system

CA1, T1 and all the coffeeshops that participated argued that the cultivation of cannabis should be regulated. The foremost reason for the coffeeshops is the contradictory policy between the frontdoor and the backdoor which made entrepreneurship difficult for the coffeeshops. They also mentioned the billions of euros this market could potentially generate but which now disappear in the illegal market.

C1: 'You have to stop fighting and start regulating, other countries are making that move now as well'

Besides an entrepreneurial core belief, the coffeeshops also let some of their public health belief shine through. Together with CA1 and T1, they did emphasize that only adults visit a coffeeshop and therefore, are for a large part responsible for their own behavior, however, they also indicated they have a responsibility in informing the customer and creating a safe space for cannabis use.

CA1: 'People that visit a coffeeshop are adults, they are responsible for their own behavior'

MC1 was convinced that people need the freedom to make decisions of their own and any intervention of one person over another degrades them to animals. Therefore cultivating and consuming cannabis should be completely legal without any regulations. MC2 agreed with the complete legalization of the plant because people benefit from its effects and it is not up to the government to deprive them of these benefits.

MC2: 'If repressive powers increase too much it will lead to an explosion'

M1 and M3 were in favor of regulating the cultivation of cannabis enforcement of the tolerance policy have been very hard due to the paradoxical clauses in current policy. However, to ensure that safety increases and criminality decreases, rules have to be enforced.

M1: 'For forty years this has been an issue that is impossible to solve in the city'

M4 had a more pragmatic approach and stated that the discussion whether drug use is good or bad is not effective but there is a problem of criminality and that needs to be solved. Therefore the retail and cultivation need to be regulated instead of the tolerance policy that is currently executed. M2 had a similar way or reasoning but also believes in the good faith of coffeeshops and thinks a bottom-up approach for designing policy is most effective. Both M4 and M2 are in favor of regulating cannabis cultivation.

M4: 'Nowadays we are not arguing whether this is good or bad, but we approach it like we have a problem and we have to solve it. A possible solution could be regulation'

H1 considered it the governments duty to protect its citizens from drug use. However, also states that it feels like choosing between two lesser evils since, on the one hand, the government wants to prevent their people from using any drug, but on the other hand the demand is present and if the drugs are not provided in a legal way the consumer will obtain them illegally. That way you nourish an illegal market and the products that are sold are not controlled which can have negative influences on the public health. H1 did not express its core policy belief

H1: 'Sometimes it is choosing between two lesser evils. Either to prohibit cannabis with the possibility of street dealers and bad quality or to regulate which might send a signal to the population that drug use is okay'

Actor Group	Core Beliefs	Core Policy Belief
Municipalities	Value of safety	Regulation of cultivation to eliminate organized crime
Coffeeshops	Value of freedom	Regulation of cultivation for transparency of the 'backdoor' and increased quality of products
Consumer Association	Value of health and freedom	Regulation of cultivation to increase quality of product
Medicinal Cannabis	Value of freedom	Liberation of cultivation to enjoy benefits of cannabis
Testing Facility	Value of health	Regulation of cultivation to increase quality of product

Figure 5, Core Beliefs and Core Policy Beliefs per Actor Group

Discussion

This study aimed to formulate effective strategies for the Dutch 'closed coffeeshop chain' experiment by gaining insight into the beliefs of stakeholders regarding cannabis policy in the Netherlands. First, the belief system will be discussed to observe whether different coalitions can be formed between the participants. Second, the secondary aspects will be discussed and elaborated on.

Belief system

Two different preferences of policy direction, core policy beliefs, can be distinguished in the group of participants, on the one hand, complete legalization of cannabis without any regulation and on the other hand regulation of cannabis cultivation. The participants in favor of complete legalization of cannabis both derived from businesses involved with medicinal cannabis and both emphasize the benefits of cannabis use for certain diseases. Based on their background and core policy belief these participants might form a coalition. Both participants were, however, mentioned by other participants to be consulted on a regular basis, therefore it might be possible to form coalitions based on the similarities that can be found in their core policy beliefs. In the group that prefers regulation of cannabis the norms and values behind this idea differ. Subsequently, three coalitions can be formed from the participants of this research.

Coalition	Members
1	MC1, MC2
2	C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, CA1, T1
3	M1, M2, M3, M4

Figure 6, Coalitions

These coalitions are visible in the organizations they joined. The coffeeshops that participated in this research are part of local unions and a national union, Cannabis Connect. The coffeeshops developed this union to unify their partners and to give added weight to their views and propose policy initiatives. The municipalities in this study all signed the 'Joint Regulation' (Joint Regulation, 2014), to indicate they want regulation of the cultivation of cannabis. However, considering that Sabatier (1988) stated that stakeholders mostly reach out to potential partners based upon their core policy beliefs it can be argued that the objectives of coffeeshops and municipalities are not incompatible. Therefore, in order to pursue their core policy beliefs these coalitions might cooperate. Due to the compatibility of the objectives expressed by the participants the coalitions mentioned above are only vaguely present. However, the norms and values of the participants do differ, therefore the policy problem cannot be regarded as structured according to Hisschemoller (1998).

This is in line with the differentiating norms and values regarding cannabis policy expressed in society (van Ooyen-Houben et al, 2015. Moravek, 2008). However, the ultimate goals, on which consensus lacks in society, appears to show similarities among participants of this research. Therefore it seems like the problem of cannabis policy can be considered an unstructured problem in society, whereas it appears to be a moderately structured problem in this research. According to Turnhout et al (2008), a moderately structured problem is defined by actors, or advocacy coalitions, which have reached a certain degree of consensus on the goals but are still in conflict on how to reach these goals in the most effective way. Moderately structured problems should be approached with the negotiation strategy which sets a process in motion different coalition negotiating and pursuing their self-interest (Turnhout et al, 2008). If cannabis policy is, in fact, an unstructured policy problem in society it should be dealt with in a different way (Hisschemoller et al, 2001). In this case, the problem should be approached with problem structuring and the learning strategy. This research has done an attempt in

structuring the problem by confronting, evaluating and integrating contradictory information. However, the extent of contradictory information was limited. In the learning strategy, all actors included should be regarded as equals and it requires a shared sense of responsibility, all parties should be willing to learn from each other (Hisschemoller et al, 2001).

Production

Whether a new product becomes a success is dependent if the customers buy it, therefore businesses try to become more market-oriented (Narver, Slater & MacLachlan, 2004). Chadha et al (2017) state that even though the cannabis market is regulated the consumer will eventually dictate this market. In the same research, one of the findings was that 75% of the customers would demand 'varied derivative products'. To ensure this variety and quality, a 'brewery model' of licensed cannabis cultivators is proposed. This way a few bigger players are able to produce the more standard strains on a large scale and smaller cultivators are able to specialize in more particular strains.

To ensure the variety and quality, it might be effective to use the expertise of current cannabis cultivators that are willing and able to exit the criminal cultivation business.

One of the reasons mentioned to remove edibles and extracts to list one of the opium law is to prevent people from smoking cannabis with tobacco. Smoking cannabis cigarettes with tobacco creates a risk of nicotine dependence (Agrawal et al, 2008). Additionally, people consider it harder to quit smoking if they still smoke cannabis (Akre et al, 2009). However, extracts and edibles are often higher in active substances and cause different effects than smoking cannabis. Inhaled THC might cause a more satisfactory effect with regards to fatigue or a headache whereas orally administered THC might cause a more narcotic effect which can be considered as more intense (McPartland, Russo 2001). If extracts and edibles were to be available sufficient information needs to be provided, however, the coffeeshops argue that they are able and willing to offer their customers this information.

In the light of public health, testing cannabis on composition and contaminants was one of the conditions all participants preferred to be executed in the future. Testing facilities do exist already however since testing is still illegal are not operational at the moment. When legalizing cannabis in some states of the United States the existing testing facilities appeared not all to meet the mandated testing requirements (Unger et al, 2014). Misleading results from the test were assumed to have possible worse effects on the public health than no testing, therefore the states Oregon, Washington and Colorado turned their existing testing facilities to these requirements. The criteria they enforce are consolidated in the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and therefore these criteria are also applicable to Dutch products (Unger et al, 2014). In an experiment where only a limited number of coffeeshops participate, it is important that the other coffeeshops, which do not participate, will also get the possibility of testing their products in the interest of public health.

Distribution

According to the coffeeshop an important criterion that needs adjustment is the 500 g in stock criterion. The maximum of 500 g is created to limit the growth and the service of customers of the coffeeshops (Nelen & Siegel, 2017). However, the amount of coffeeshops has declined by half and the amount of cannabis users has increased. Most coffeeshops sell more than 500 g a day, which is known by the municipality and tax authorities since all transactions are registered. Because having more than 500 g of cannabis in stock can give the risk of a shutdown most coffeeshops have a stash room and couriers that transfer the cannabis from the stash to the coffeeshop (Maalste, van den Brink, Brouwer & Schilder, 2010). This transfer is not without any risks because the couriers are always at risk of being caught or being robbed, which subsequently brings negative safety risks. Whereas municipalities and public prosecutors shut down these stashes and report these cases, judges often indicate that any

shop cannot operate without having a sufficient amount of their product in stock, which results in no punishment (Savona, Kleiman & Calderoni, 2017).

A typical managerial dilemma when replacing products is how far they can go in changing the market offering without losing their customers (Saunders & Jobber, 2014). This same dilemma occurs on the cannabis market where coffeeshops are afraid they will lose their customers to the illegal market if they are not able to offer them similar products as before. To cope with this dilemma several phasing strategies are developed. The coffeeshops propose a phased introduction of a new product. This is in line with a roll in roll out strategy where the old product is introduced at a small market to see whether the new product appeals to the public (Saunders & Jobber, 1994). If the product is successful the distribution can be expanded.

Retail

Whereas some participants argue that the coffeeshops do not necessarily have to be in charge the experiment, currently, carries the name 'closed coffeeshop chain', which implies that the government prefers to retain the coffeeshops for the retail function. Current coffeeshops need to have a transparent administration and they have to abide by stringent regulations. Based upon these regulations and the information known by the municipalities these municipalities should be able to make a well-substantiated choice with which coffeeshops they want to proceed and which not.

According to Monshouwer et al (2011), the coffeeshops appear to have a positive effect on the prevalence rates of cannabis use among Dutch citizens, since this is below the European average. Added to that, the use of harddrugs, in general, is also below the European average which indicates that the separation of the markets might have a positive influence on the use of harddrugs. The coffeeshops that participated in this research emphasize these effects and also argue that they play an important role in informing their customers and preventing them to buy their product on the illegal market. Wouters et al (2009) state in their research that people are less likely to buy cannabis on the illegal market if the coffeeshop density is higher in their surroundings. Furthermore, unlicensed selling points were more likely to also sell other drugs than cannabis (Wouters et al, 2009; van Laar et al, 2009).

Since another goal of the experiment is the decriminalization of the cannabis market, other participants express the fear of the coffeeshops not being able to take distance from the criminal market they are involved now. Proposed for this problem is a program to help coffeeshops to get independent from their current suppliers. These programs can somewhat be compared to prostitution exiting programs. Whereas many prostituted adults around the world are arrested in order to stop them from sex trading, the criminalization of these adults often only drives them further away from any possibility of a normal life (Roe-Sepowitz et al, 2014). Programs that focus on the support of exiting this appear to be much more effective (Preble et al, 2016). Nevertheless, not all coffeeshops will need such a program, it might be useful to formulate a program to offer this to the coffeeshops that do need it. Further research is needed to how such a program should be developed and designed.

Policy development

Public engagement in research has been introduced to increase joint understanding and innovation by generating mutual benefits, which has positive effects on the implementation of research in reality (Page et al, 2017). An example of successful co-creation of cannabis policy is the quality mark that is created in Haarlem. The mutual benefits generated with the quality mark are for the municipality the extra criteria added to the national regulation in order to secure safety, minimize nuisance and protection of the consumer, and if the coffeeshops pass the yearly test they will qualify for milder sanctions if they did commit a violation (Hageman, 2012). The quality mark was introduced in 2012 and in 2017 all coffeeshops passed this test which indicates that this policy was implemented fast and effectively (Gemeente Haarlem, 2016). Blickman (2014) states that drug policy reform should be a

bottom-up process. In the Netherlands, coffeeshops are increasingly organizing themselves and an increasing amount of municipalities are signing the Joint Regulation. These stakeholders can offer valuable information but also resources needed for successful policy change.

The option to execute experiments has been set up for regulations with an expectation that they are effective but this is not to be said with certainty (Experimenteerbepaling). The experiments are a tool to provide insights to that certainty. Additionally, all experiments need to be temporary for evaluation. The temporary feature of the experiment might be a threat to the success of the experiment as investors will not be willing to make investments in the cannabis industry without any security the industry will last.

In the general experiment clause of the Dutch government, a few success and failure factors are formulated which are still questionable in the experiment as it is formulated now (Rijksoverheid, Experimenteren). An experiment has a chance of success if it reveals new information which indicates changes need to be made in current legislation, and if the government is willing to learn from this experiment and use this to optimize legislation. Whether or not the experiment will reveal new information is not to be influenced, however, the willingness of the government is. If the experiment starts all parties, opposition and proposition, should be able to evaluate the effects objectively. The fear of unwillingness of the coalition is nourished by the two research reports regarding nuisance of coffeeshops and legalization of cannabis that were rewritten to the direction the ministry of that time desired, with negative results for the cannabis industry and coffeeshops sector (NRC, 2017). Therefore future evaluation research should be completely objective and free from any political color. Factors that could fail the experiment are first the exclusion of (stakeholder) groups, a too limited participation in the experiment, the experiment time is too short (Experimenteerbepaling). Suspicions were expressed for all three criteria; the coffeeshops indicated that they fear that they will lose their authority as retail, the indication of 6 to 10 municipalities also raises questions with the participants whether this scope is large enough, the period of four years is experienced as not achievable.

The Netherlands handles different forms of experimental legislation in order to test whether a law is effective or not. The effectivity of laws might be hard to predict since society is complex and the future is uncertain. However, laws also provide legal certainty and people need to get used to new laws so laws cannot be all experimental (Veerman & Bulut, 2011). This is why it might be sensible to consider a different form of experimental legislation for the legalization of cannabis cultivation; an evaluation clause. Where an experiment is characterized by the fact that it has to end after a certain period of time an evaluation clause is characterized by the fact that evaluations for potential alterations in the law. Veerman & Bulut (2011) define this as 'the law continues to apply, unless …'. This way it would provide more security for stakeholders and potential investors, but it leaves the option to legislators to make alterations to the law.

Strengths and limitations

The first strength of this study is the qualitative design and use of semi-structured interviews. This offered the participants to express their beliefs freely and explore their ideas about cannabis regulations. After the interviews, a summary of the interviews was sent back to the respondents to check whether the interpretation of the interviews was correct. Another strength is the beliefs of the participants that are discovered and reported. When reading the ideas of the participants it is important to know their beliefs behind these ideas to know their frame of reference. Additionally, for the group of coffeeshops the data collection continued till saturation.

Some limitations need to be taken into consideration. The participants included in this research are all in favor of regulation or liberation of cannabis cultivation whereas it would have been interesting if people in favor of prohibition were included as well. Especially since the framework of coalitions and problem structuring would have had different outcomes if more opposing views were expressed by the participants. No explicit coalitions can be distinguished based upon the core (policy) beliefs of the

participants. Additionally, the problem of cannabis policy does not appear to be unstructured based on the norms and values of the stakeholders participating in this research in combination with the knowledge they consider relevant for the solution. Whereas there has been an attempt to target these people as well it appeared to be difficult to discover people involved with the subject of cannabis on a daily basis who were also in favor of prohibition. Another limitation which might be interesting to consider in future research is the inclusion of more municipalities. Although the municipalities in this research are chosen carefully inclusion of more might give a more diverse range of opinions better representable for all municipalities in the Netherlands. Also, limitations should be addressed concerning the data collection and encoding which is performed by only one person.

This study has shown that the Advocacy Coalition Framework offers a suitable framework in formulating recommendations for policy change. Defining different coalitions, their core beliefs, core policy beliefs and ideas for realizing their core policy beliefs can offer a tool for structuring unstructured problems (Hischemoller, 1998). Revealing all sides of a problem can, therefore, show new insights into a problem in order to come to a solution (Hoppe, 2018). To a certain extent this study has shown different sides of this problem, however, the study population does not lend itself to reveal all perspectives on the topic of cannabis prevalent in society. Whereas, slight differences could be discovered in the secondary aspects defined by the participants the differences were not insurmountable in the formulation of recommendations. The differences in views within Dutch society and government have not yet shown an opportunity to reach a consensus on how to proceed cannabis policy, therefore it appears that these views are not as compatible as the ideas expressed in this study.
Secondary aspects were divided into four categories according to the supply chain. Three of these categories (production, distribution, and retail) were also apparent in the report presented by the advisory committee that was appointed to formulate recommendations for the experiment.

Conclusion

Whereas, the core policy beliefs of the participants are similar or show great similarities the core beliefs differ. Therefore it can be said that the norms and values of the participants regarding the problem of cannabis policy differ but they do show similarities in the goals they pursue. However, different ideas are expressed on how to reach these goals.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion several recommendations can be made for the closed coffeeshops chain experiment. The recommendations will be structured similarly as the secondary aspects in the results and the discussion; production, distribution, retail and, policy development.

Production:

An important factor to enlarge the chance of success of the experiment is the variety and quality of the products that will be produced. Meeting consumer demand is essential to prevent the consumers to go to the illegal market.

To avoid pitfalls in cultivating cannabis it might be effective to use the knowledge of existing cultivators. It is, however, important to make sure these cultivators are willing to engage in benevolent business.

Making cannabis edibles and extracts available might have beneficial effects on the public health. It encourages smoking with tobacco, however, oral administration of cannabis has different effects so sufficient information is essential.

All cannabis that will be cultivated in the experiment should be tested for composition and crop protectors. Recommended is to explore the potential of using the existing Dutch testing facilities and turning them to the ISO criteria. These testing facilities should also be available for coffeeshops which do not participate in the experiment.

Distribution:

In order to enlarge the safety in the surroundings of the coffeeshops the 500 g criterion should be abolished.

To prevent customers from going to the illegal market it is suggested to replace the old product with new, regulated products in phases. This way it can be monitored whether the new product appeals to the public or needs improvement.

Retail:

Based on the roles of coffeeshops in the past, it is recommended to retain coffeeshops as licensed selling points. With that license they have the responsibility to inform their customers and prevent cannabis abuse. Due to stringent monitoring of the coffeeshops in the current policy the municipalities should be able to choose the coffeeshops they want to work with based on the coffeeshops integrity and location. Additionally, it is advised to offer an exiting program to the coffeeshops that have difficulties to get free from the organized crime.

Policy development:

In the development of new policy or revising of current policy it is advised to involve municipalities and coffeeshops that have organized themselves and act as serious stakeholders. If cultivation becomes regulated in the experiment, newly licensed cultivators might also become part of this important stakeholder group.

The government has announced to develop an experiment to regulate the cultivation of cannabis, however, for the continuity of investments and legal certainty, it is recommended to consider designing a law with an evaluation clause.

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Annex 1, Interview Guide

Inleiding:

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om uiteindelijk aanbevelingen te schrijven voor het gesloten keten cannabisteelt experiment. Dit wil ik doen aan de hand van interviews met mensen en organisaties die belang hebben en betrokken zijn bij het experiment. De mensen die hierbij worden geïnterviewd zijn coffeeshophouders, telers en mensen binnen gemeenten die betrokken zijn bij het cannabis en coffeeshopbeleid.

Er zullen vragen worden gesteld naar het huidige beleid, het gewenste toekomstige beleid en, uiteraard, het vaste keten experiment.

Algemene vragen:
- Op welke manier is uw werk gerelateerd aan cannabis en/of coffeeshopbeleid
- Hoe lang bent u al actief in dit veld (werk gerelateerd of misschien ook anders)

Openingsvragen:
- Wat vindt u van het huidige beleid? (coffeeshop, cannabisteelt)
- Wat zou de perfecte situatie zijn? (Waar moeten we naartoe)

Stoppen, terug naar het huidige beleid

Huidige beleid
- Kunt u goede en slechte onderdelen van het huidige beleid noemen?
  - o Heeft u zorgen over het huidige beleid? Welke?
  - o Zijn er al (effectieve) veranderingen geweest in de afgelopen jaren?
- Wat betekent het huidige beleid voor uw werk?
  - o Op welke manier beïnvloedt het beleid uw werk?
- Hoe komt dit huidige beleid tot stand?
  - o Wie zijn de belangrijkste spelers in dit beleid?
  - o Wie hebben hier de final say (meeste macht)?
  - o Wie hebben allemaal belang bij dit beleid, en wat is dat belang dan?
- Heeft u zelf de indruk dat u invloed heeft op dit beleid?
  - o Kunt u hier voorbeelden van noemen (ja en nee)

U vertelde net al wat over wat u de perfecte situatie zou vinden voor de toekomst, nu wil ik daar nog even verder op ingaan. Samenvatting van het antwoord op 'vraag 2'

Toekomst
- Hoe denkt u dat we dit het beste kunnen realiseren?
  - o Wat is hiervoor nodig?
    - ▪ Geld
    - ▪ Mensen
    - ▪ Mindset?
  - o Lokaal of landelijk
  - o Wie moet verantwoordelijk zijn om dit te realiseren/coördineren?
- Heeft u zelf ook contact met anderen om dit toekomstbeeld te realiseren?
  - o Met wie dan?
  - o Weet u ook van andere mensen/partijen dat zij dit ook doen?

Experiment

- Wat vindt u van het idee van een experiment gesloten coffeeshopketen?
    - Welke voordelen ziet u in dit experiment
    - Welke nadelen/gevaren ziet u in dit experiment
    - Experiment of wetswijziging
- Zoals het experiment er nu ligt, zijn er veranderingen die u misschien zou willen maken om het experiment beter te maken?
- Als het experiment uitgevoerd gaat worden waar moet men dan op letten?
    - Uitvoerende gemeente?
    - Coffeeshophouders?
- Wanneer zou het experiment volgens u geslaagd zijn?

Slotvragen

- Zijn er nog dingen die ik niet behandeld of gevraagd heb waarvan u denkt dat ze wel relevant zijn voor mijn onderzoek?
- Zoals ik al gezegd heb ga ik coffeeshophouders, telers en ambtenaren binnen de gemeente interviewen, zijn er nog andere mensen die ik hierbij zou moeten betrekken naar uw mening?

Annex 2, Informed Consent Form

Dit interview is onderdeel van een onderzoek naar de belangen en ideeën van mensen en organisaties die belang hebben bij het 'vaste coffeeshopketen' experiment. Het uiteindelijke doel van het onderzoek is om aanbevelingen te schrijven voor dit experiment.

      Het interview zal ongeveer 30 tot 60 minuten duren. Gedurende het interview zullen er vragen worden gesteld naar het huidige beleid, het gewenste toekomstige beleid en, uiteraard, het vaste keten experiment. U bent niet verplicht om antwoord te geven op alle vragen en daarnaast mag u het interview op alle momenten stopzetten.

      In het belang van accurate dataverzameling zal het interview opgenomen worden. Alle opnames zullen enkel door de onderzoeker teruggeluisterd worden om vervolgens te transcriberen. Alle persoonlijke informatie zal niet meegenomen worden en alle opnames zullen na het onderzoek verwijderd worden. Als u iets heeft gezegd tijdens het interview wat u graag van de tape verwijderd zou willen hebben dan kunt u dat bij de interviewer aangeven en dit zal dan worden verwijderd/niet worden meegenomen.

Als u nog vragen heeft kunt u deze aan de interviewer vragen.

Hierbij verklaar ik dat ik: bovenstaande informatie gelezen heb, of dit is aan mij voorgelezen. Ik heb de mogelijkheid gehad om vragen te stellen en deze vragen zijn tot mijn tevredenheid beantwoord. Ik geef mijn vrijwillige toestemming om mee te doen in dit onderzoek.

Tijdens het onderzoek wil ik aangeduid worden als:
- Anoniem
- Naam van de organisatie
- Functie binnen mijn organisatie
- Mijn naam
- Naam van de organisatie, functie en mijn naam
- Other ……………………

In het eindrapport wil ik aangeduid worden als:
- Anoniem
- Naam van de organisatie
- Functie binnen mijn organisatie
- Mijn naam
- Naam van de organisatie, functie en mijn naam
- Other ……………………

Organisatie: _____

Naam:_____

Datum: _____

Handtekening: _____