Political-executive decision-making concerning future infrastructural developments in the Netherlands is often perceived as problematic, taking too much time and producing suboptimal outcomes. The problematic aspects of such processes are partly ascribed to the practices of political-executive decision-making in the infrastructural setting. However, the actual decision-making practices of Ministers, Provincial Delegates and Alderpersons remain enigmatic and difficult to grasp. This research considers political-executive practices of decision-making as a form of meaning making. How do political-executives with diverging strategic agendas negotiate and enact a common ground that enables them to make legitimate decisions about potential infrastructural developments? A meaning making lens based on story-telling, framing and power is developed, providing an alternative view which makes these enigmatic political-executive decision-making practices more commonsensical.

The research findings are based on the interpretive analysis of a multitude of narratives derived through in-depth interviews with political-executives and other decision-makers involved in these processes. The study demonstrates that decision-making practices of Ministers, Delegates and Alderpersons can be regarded as a form of strategic story-telling. All of them attempt to tell powerful stories in order to frame the meaning of potential future infrastructure to their own advantage. Since there are many political-executives who are telling their stories, the result is a negotiation of a mutual story which gives common meaning to a potential project. Moreover, Ministers, Delegates and Alderpersons are less interested in such a specific project and more interested in realizing their own broader strategic agenda. Therefore they use decision-making processes as vehicles or stepping stones for bringing their plans into being: instead of thinking ‘what can I do for decision-making’, they think ‘what can decision-making do for me and my community’. Ministers, Delegates and Alderpersons are involved in a struggle for meaning as they all try to influence not only the meaning of specific projects but also the meaning of the overall national agenda for future infrastructural development.