



# **NL in NL: neoliberalism in development cooperation of the Netherlands in the sphere of water**

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## **Abstract**

The following paper is a theoretical research of the Dutch development cooperation and the way world-wide tendency for neoliberalism is manifested in the foreign policy of the Netherlands. The interest for this topic was sparked by the Aid for Trade agenda adopted by the Dutch government, which reveals the tensions between the self-interest and moral motivations of the country. Selection of water as the case is not random – the Dutch are famous for their water governance model and water management skills and expertise. The paper discusses how the instalment of water as a key development spearhead in the Dutch development policy, the heritage of water and the fact that it is perceived as a part of the Dutch national identity is affecting the direction the current development policy is heading. It problematises neoliberalisation of the Dutch development cooperation, which uses market logic in providing global public goods such as water in accordance with the issues posed by climate change.

Adopting a qualitative methodological perspective, the author analyses key documents in the Dutch development and water policies and conducts a series of interviews with government officials, practitioners, consultants and academics in the sphere of Dutch water governance.

The findings reveal that the foreign policy in the Netherlands, in particular in the field of water, is heavily affected by the “deep marketisation”, which has had impact on how the country’s relationship with the recipient countries is forming and the way the private and public sectors operate. In addition, the findings reveal that water has become something much bigger than just water management for the Dutch, they are using it as a strategic tool to solve issues like economic crisis, immigration and climate change while trying to capitalise on their knowledge at the same time.

## **Relevance to development studies**

The topic of water in development cooperation and foreign aid has become a more prominent area of interest, especially with the adoption of Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. While both neoliberalism in foreign aid and Dutch water management are well-researched themes, there is a need to make the parallel between the two, situate Dutch foreign policy within the neoliberal theoretical framework of development studies, analyse its effects and contingencies in order to inspire further interest in the topic, start a dialogue and search for ways of improvement.

## **Keywords**

Netherlands, Dutch, aid, development, development cooperation, development aid, neoliberalism, marketisation, water, private sector

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## List of Acronyms

AAA – Accra Agenda for Action

AfT – Aid for Trade

CBI – Centre for Imports from Developing Countries

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DDA – Dutch Delta Approach

EU – European Union

ESCAP – United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

GATT – General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GNI – Gross National Income

HDI – Human Development Index

IFI – Indirect Foreign Investment

IGG – Inclusive Green Growth

IMF – International Monetary Fund

IMG – International Investment Fund

IOB – Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

ISS – International Institute of Social Studies

IWA – International Water Ambition

LDC(s) – Least Developed Countries

MEA – Ministry of Economic Affairs

MENA – Middle East and Northern Africa

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MI&E – Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment

NGO(s) – Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

NIWA – Netherlands International Water Ambition

NWP – Netherlands Water Partnership

ODA – Official Development Assistance

OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PPP(s) – Public Private Partnership(s)

PWC – Post-Washington Consensus

RHDHV – Royal HaskoningDHV

RVO – the Netherlands Enterprise Agency

SDG(s) – Sustainable Development Goal(s)

SME(s) – Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise(s)

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UN(O) – United Nation (Organisation)

WB – World Bank

WC – Washington Consensus

WTO – World Trade Organisation

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# Chapter 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background of the study

For the last 70 years development cooperation has been a pertinent topic in international political economy, development studies and policy analysis. For many decades, the Netherlands has been the frontrunner in development cooperation and an exemplary donor for the aid projects (Spitz, et al., 2013, p. 6). However, in 2012, adjusting to the outcomes of the global economic crisis, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Liliane Ploumen, decreased the official development assistance (ODA) budget to 0,59% of GNI for the first time in 50 years (Ibid, p. 6). In addition, the new agenda for development cooperation of the Netherlands, formulated in the 2013 document “A World to Gain”, took a dramatic neoliberal turn by enforcing engagement of private sector in the development projects financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This change clearly indicated a motivation of self-interest lying at the core of the Dutch development cooperation.

This political shift is, admittedly, not new: foreign policy of the Netherlands has been in constant pendulum away from or closer to engaging national businesses in projects in developing countries and promoting the Dutch self-interest abroad (Hoebink 2007; 2017; Kazimierczuk 2015; van den Vaart 2017). However, putting profit-making for the national water sector and following market logic as the cornerstone of the Dutch development cooperation appears to be a symptom of neoliberalism, or, more specifically, “deep marketisation”.

The term “neoliberalism” was introduced by Carroll and Jarvis (2014) and is understood here as a form of increased financialisation of development cooperation, prioritising market-based finance initiatives and attracting foreign direct investment. Acknowledging that neoliberalism is a complex concept, which is open to interpretation, the paper will use neoliberalism and marketisation interchangeably and will address the debates on neoliberalism, its origin and forms in Chapter 2. Understanding the tension between water as a public good and its increased commodification, discovering the balance between aid and trade, self-interest and intrinsic motivation in international development cooperation is what this thesis does with the focus on the Dutch water sector.

From the beginning of development aid in the Netherlands, the country’s discourse on development cooperation has been vastly influenced by the Dutch national identity (Veen, 2011, pp. 77-78). The first prism of the national image of the Dutch leads back to the “Golden Age” of the country, where ideas of peace and democracy were linked closely to trade and commercial profit. Since the 1950s, the identity of “merchant” has been closely adopted by the Dutch foreign policy (Ibid, 80). On the flipside of the “merchant” is the so-called “clergyman”, i.e. moral interests in the country’s development policy. Prior to the existence of the ODA, these interests were projected by the Christian church sending its representatives abroad to provide basic education and medical services (Lieshout, et al., 2010, p. 27). But in the 1960s, with the focus on missionary work getting weaker, moral aspect of the Dutch foreign policy was projected though supporting the spread of humanitarian and egalitarian ideas, rule of law and international cooperation (Voorhoeve, 1979, pp. 18-22). In addition to the merchant vs clergyman dichotomy, several scholars propose a three-fold Dutch



foreign policy motivation: self-interest, “enlightened” self-interest and moral obligation (Veen 2011; Vaart 2017). Unlike self-interest, which relates to purely pursuing a country’s economic prosperity and political influence, “enlightened” self-interest refers more to achieving goals which will benefit entire humanity – such as preventing climate change, fighting terrorism and combating poverty (Vaart, 2017, p. 12).

Apart from the national identities, the Dutch foreign policy also reflected major trends in international development cooperation. In the 1960s, post-colonial discourse quickly shifted to ideas of fostering development through creating conditions for economic growth and structural adjustment of the state. Leading development economist W. W. Rostow proposed an attractive thesis where conditions of rapid industrialisation and accumulation of capital, linear progress and economic development are guaranteed (Lieshout, et al., 2010, p. 121). A decade later a new discourse in development aid emerged as a reaction to the war in Vietnam, coup d’état by Pinochet in Chile and apartheid regime in South Africa. Development policy focus shifted to human rights protection and poverty reduction (Ibid, p. 27)

The 1980s brought neoliberal tendencies in development cooperation in a form of the Washington Consensus (WC). Structural adjustment programmes dominated development policy and shifted focus from public to private regulation of the ODA. This period is characterised by the rise of influence of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as political decision-making bodies (Ibid, pp. 45-46). The Washington Consensus principles were used as a blueprint solution for developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and later in Post-Communist space throughout the 1980s – 1990s. During this era, the leading industry for bilateral aid was industrial development, with more than 50% of the funds spent on infrastructure and 40 % dedicated to industrial activities, with the remaining amount dedicated to other spheres, such as institutional facilities (Kazimierczuk, 2015, p. 14)

In the late 1990s, Post-Washington Consensus (PWC) agenda shifted from the structural adjustment to the social dimension of development: the United Nations (UN) Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995 prioritised education and healthcare as the key steps for poverty reduction (UN, 1995). In 1996 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published a document “Shaping the 21st Century”, with goals to improve economic well-being of the poor, bring social development and ensure environmental sustainability by 2015 (OECD, 1996). At that time, Jan Pronk was appointed the Minister for Development Cooperation for the second time. He initiated the reform of foreign policy by eliminating division between development cooperation and diplomatic corps. Since then, aid workers and diplomats have been working hand in hand to reach political changes, advocate human rights and sustainable development. In the later years, with the adoption of the Aid for Trade agenda, which will be discussed further, the Dutch embassies started to play a major economic role through attracting the Dutch companies in developing countries (Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2019).

With a poverty reduction focus gaining its momentum, the World Bank started a Poverty Reduction Strategy Program (PSRP). In 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit, a target to half the world’s poverty level by the year 2015 was set in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2000). Pronk’s successor, Eveline Herfkens, continued the focus on poverty alleviation, good governance, human rights, environment, gender and peace and security.

The events of 9/11 and the global war on terrorism initiated by the United States government, has left a print on the Dutch development policy during the time of the Minister Agnes van Ardenne (2002-2007). She steered the focus away from the private sector and introduced the “Dutch Approach”, also known as the 3 Ds: Defence, Diplomacy, Development. (Spitz, et al., 2013, p. 12). Apart from the apparent focus on security, Dutch aid was also strongly connected with the MDGs (with an emphasis on education, public health and water provisioning) and PRSPs. In a key policy document of 2003, the Netherlands committed to increase aid spending to 0.8% of the Gross National Product (GNP) and listed 36 long-term partner countries. As for the 3 D’s approach, defence has been substituted with security, such as climate, water and food security as a focus area, while diplomacy and development continued to play a major role in the Dutch foreign aid policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011).

The Aid for Trade (AfT) framework was established internationally at the sixth World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in 2005. It was agreed that building the capacity for foreign investment in developing countries, particularly the least developed ones (LDCs) would help them implement the WTO agreements and expand their trade (WTO, 2005).

In 2010, in the aftermath of the global economic crisis, the new Minister for development cooperation of the Netherlands at that time, Ben Koenders, cut the budget for the aid from the previous 0.8% to the EU required 0.7% (Bade & Petri, 2015, p. 7). The number of the countries receiving bilateral aid was reduced to 15. Koenders also advocated for the role of the private sector in development and made sure that the Dutch businesses could get a larger share in the implementation of development programmes and projects (Ibid, p. 8).

In 2012 a joined post of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation was created and taken by Lilianne Ploumen, thus moving the mandate for Foreign Trade, which previously was under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During her term, the development cooperation budget fell to the unprecedented 0,59% of the national income, the lowest in the Dutch history and way below the internationally and EU-wide agreed 0,7% threshold (Kazimierczuk, 2015, pp. 37-40). Ploumen mapped down 3 major goals of the Dutch development policy: eradicate extreme poverty in one generation; achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth around the globe and secure success for the Dutch businesses abroad (Government of the Netherlands, 2019). This course was later reaffirmed in the policy document “A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment” (2013). Creation of good business climate in developing countries, mutual benefit and support for Dutch businesses abroad were the key aspects of the policy (Government of the Netherlands, 2013, p. 40).

Post-Plaumen development agenda continued the Aid for Trade strategy: in 2018 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a new document “Investing in Global Prospects – For the World, For the Netherlands”. The policy was heavily influenced by the international human development framework document “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, best known as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Another notable aspect of the memorandum is making a greater effort to prevent major issues such as violent conflicts, poverty, inequality, climate change or irregular migration. “By focusing more on this now, you will first of all prevent a great deal of human suffering, but also billions in spending on emergency aid, relief in the region and reconstruction. That is better for the world and better for the Netherlands,” says the new Minister for Foreign

Trade and Development Cooperation Sigrid Kaag. (Rijksoverheid, 2018) In line with the Minister's prevention agenda, the focus of development policy is shifting to fragile countries in the vicinity of Europe: the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (Ibid).

The most recent document, the note from the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament for the years 2018-19 on international cooperation indicates human rights, nature, environment and fair opportunities for everyone as they key outlets of development. It emphasises the country's commitment for sustainable growth and development, though still embedded in financial terms by emphasising a role of "a future-proof multilateral trade and investment system" (Government of the Netherlands, 2019).

The Aid for Trade agenda adopted by the Dutch government could be considered as the Netherlands following both international course on engaging private sector in development cooperation and its "merchant" credo. However, there is an increasing desire to demonstrate the effectiveness of the government in both development cooperation and engagement of the Dutch private sector, in particular in water. This appears to be caused by multiple national and subnational discourses. Firstly, it is the international obsession with efficiency, effectiveness and measurable results, which public institutions are found to be inefficient at, unlike, supposedly, the private sector. Secondly, it is the internal pressure on the Cabinet from the electorate to be successful and to "have something for ourselves". Thirdly, it is the history and pride of managing water. The Dutch see their experience as a way for the Netherlands to earn money, gain power, diplomatic weight and achieve actual progress in development of partner countries, since most of the development issues are complex and widely influenced by water security.

To continue the discussion on the role of water in the Dutch development cooperation, the next section will study the water sector as a particular case to explore how the gordian knot of Dutch development policy intertwined with water, Dutch identity and neoliberalisation of development aid.

## 1.2. Nature of the problem

The recent trend in the Dutch foreign policy and development aid, which is also a return to the priorities of the 1960s, is the greater engagement of the top economic sector – water governance. The choice of water is not random: The Kingdom of the Netherlands has been mastering water and making delta its home for the last 900 years. Historically, Dutch identity is closely intertwined with water: through keeping memory of flood-related disasters, trading expertise in poldering, delta management and unique water governance schemes of "waterschap-pen" (Dutch: "water boards"). The King Willem Alexander, back in 1997 when still being a crown Prince, emphasised his plan for the role of water management:

Water is such a fantastic element. It is a vital necessity of life, it means health, it means environment, it means transport. It can mean a battle against the water or a fight for more water. It can mean all kinds of things and there are countless options open. And above all, it is so very typically Dutch. (Wassink, 2013)

Simon Richter (2019) claims that there is something behind the Dutch water policy which makes the idea of making water a signature Dutch industry so attractive. It is almost subconscious, embedded in the culture, like the history of living with the water, national pride and memories of the Golden Age. Water is

even linked to the rise of democracy in the Netherlands: farmers, artisans and merchants living on the dikes, polders and in cities would make sure their livelihoods were safe by seeking compromise in managing the water. This led to the creation of water boards – “first democratic <...> stakeholder organisations consisting of elected representatives from local farming communities” in 13<sup>th</sup> century (Kuks, 2005, p. 155).

Water has been a key historical, geopolitical and geographical determinant of the Dutch society, and its role in development cooperation has been increasing throughout time. In 2011, in the letter “To the Top, the company policy in action(s)” by the Minister of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, water was recommended as one of the top economic sectors in the Netherlands together with chemistry, food & agriculture, logistics, etc. (Rijksoverheid, 2011). The rationale behind this was to turn the challenges that water presented in the age of climate change into a “very attractive, steadily growing international market” by promoting the Dutch expertise in water management (Top Team Water, 2011, p. 4).

After the establishment of water as one of the top economic sectors, it was incorporated in foreign policy: in 2011 in the Focus letter on Development Cooperation, the water sector was presented as one of the four “spearheads” of the development cooperation policy along with promoting global stability and security, fostering human rights and the rule of law (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011, p. 1). Objectives for making water governance a spearhead sector was backed by extensive knowledge of the river basin planning, cross-border water management, sustainable irrigation, drainage and water waste treatment technologies. Dutch water programmes involve cross-ministry work and engage the private sector, providing the essential elements for poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth (Ibid, pp. 6-7). As stated in the evaluation on the major water challenges by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), the reason for the water sector becoming one of the top sectors for development is two-fold. Firstly, due to urgency of water scarcity and sanitation problem and, secondly, the expertise of the Dutch and their duty to contribute to solving these problems (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017, p. 13).

The second milestone was set in 2012 in the Letter “Water for Development” by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister with the establishment of the Water Support Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (MI&E). The key areas for development projects drawn in the Letter were the efficient use of water in agriculture, improved watershed management and safe deltas in Bangladesh, Benin, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique and Vietnam. This framework became known as “Water Mondiaal” (Dutch: “water globally”) (Ibid, p. 14). In other partner countries, projects under the Water for Development Programme were aimed to provide general consultation from the Dutch water sector to proliferate its expertise and influence (Ibid, p. 16). In the implementation of the water programmes, an explicit link was made with the Dutch water sector through (inter)departmental efforts, national programs, public authorities, knowledge institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector, including drinking water companies and water boards.

In 2016 an interdepartmental policy letter “Converging Streams – International Water Ambition” brought together the projects undertaken by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economic Affairs and Infrastructure and Environment. This policy aimed to address the water challenges faced by the Dutch state as well as

other European and developing countries (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2016). In uniting their efforts in increasing water safety and security for the urban deltas nationwide and around the world, the Ministry of Economic Affairs proposed the International Water Ambition (IWA) Programme. The IWA is built on three pillars: first, the Netherlands as a “Centre of Excellence where knowledge, solution orientation, coordination capacity, water diplomacy and leadership come together” (Ibid, p. 5). Second, successful promotion of integrated approaches to water safety with “...a need of usable propositions that are easy to communicate and that can be picked up as a 'package'” (Ibid, p. 8). Third, the contribution of the foreign parties and the Netherlands to increase local realisation power. In line with the self-interest approach, there is an apparent value of this Programme for the Netherlands. Apart from creating economic value for the country through enhancing the earning opportunities and prospects of trade, the Netherlands improves its image as an innovative partner and gains geopolitical importance as a water state (Ibid, p. 11). Hence, the Netherlands considers climate change to be nothing less than an opportunity. The problem with this approach, according to Richter (2018), is in the fact that the Dutch themselves are very vulnerable to the effects of climate change, while at the same time they need to project an image of success in order to get power and prestige internationally. Given the “Dutch dilemma” faced by the Government of the Netherlands, the enormous efforts it makes to coordinate complex system of the water management deserves a closer attention, especially given the fact that it has been barely researched (Ibid). The elaborate construction of the image of the water nation and branding of water governance is channelled through the safe delta approach, more famously formulated as the “Dutch Delta Approach” (DDA). Since 2010, the DDA was utilised by the Dutch government to promote the national projects on climate robustness and strategic delta management against flooding, but it soon became an international label, which allowed the Netherlands to share knowledge about delta planning as well as underlying vision of solidarity, flexibility and sustainability (Minkman, et al., 2019, p. 1).

The deltaic countries face risks of climate change mainly due to floods, and the Netherlands claims to have found a distinct long-term planning and management system to combat these risks. Thus, the DDA has managed to bring together such hot topics as climate change, water and food security, while at the same time emphasising the proliferation of the Dutch in these areas. This explains why the extensive experience of the Netherlands in the sphere of water management a recurrent topic in the Dutch development policies.

The latest policy document in the sphere of water governance is the Netherlands International Water Ambition (NIWA) – this year’s update on the “Converging Streams” of 2016. The new policy is significantly shorter comparing to the IWA, it has updated the objectives in accordance with the SDGs and focused more on the role of water in agriculture, food security and climate change mitigation. The NIWA document links water to 9 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 6, 2, 11, 13, 5, 14, 15, 16 and 17).<sup>1</sup> “The Dutch knowledge and skills in water man-

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<sup>1</sup> SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13 – Climate Action, SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 14 – Life Below Water, SDG 15 – Life on Land, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals.

agement, delta technology, water technology, maritime technology and food/irrigation technology form the basis for this commitment.” (Ministry of Water and Infrastructure, 2019, p. 4).

There are three pillars of the NIWA updated from the previous document with relation to the SDG agenda – local realisation of power; integrated approach to water safety and water security and deployment of the Netherlands as a Centre of Excellence. The main objectives of the NIWA are “to increase water security and water safety in the world of humans, plants and animals, and to optimize the Dutch contribution to this and the Dutch earning capacity” (Ibid, p.5). The indicators for the latter are to improve water reputation of the Netherlands transparent on the basis of reputation surveys and increase the Dutch revenue derived from the Water Sector Export Index (Ibid). Thus, the Netherlands International Water Ambition agenda manifests water not only as a source of challenges in the age of climate change, but also as the solution to these challenges, as well as a strategic tool for the Netherlands to gain political weight and increase the earning capacity of the Dutch water sector.

This paragraph gave an overview of the recent policy documents that guaranteed instalment of water management as a top spearhead for development cooperation and established a possible reason for the increased involvement of private sector in development assistance. The following paragraphs list research questions and objectives (1.3.) and provide a chapter outline of the paper (1.4).

### **1.3. Research objective and questions**

This research paper will problematise neoliberalisation of the Dutch development cooperation, which uses market logic in providing global public goods such as water in accordance with the issues posed by climate change. And, at the same time, it will problematise how the instalment of water as a key development spearhead in the Dutch development policy, the heritage of water and the fact that it is perceived as a part of the Dutch national identity is affecting the direction current development policy is heading.

The research aims to understand neoliberalism in the Dutch foreign policy in the case of water and the implications of “deep marketisation” for the Dutch water sector, Dutch government relationships with the partner countries and outcomes of the projects.

The main research question is *“How is the Dutch water cooperation shaped by neoliberalism within the Dutch foreign policy?”* It embodies the following subsequent questions:

- How is neoliberalism in form of “deep marketisation” manifested in the major trends in the Dutch development cooperation?
- How does water governance perpetuate the further neoliberalisation of the Dutch foreign policy?
- What are the implications of water governance as a top economic sector in the Dutch development cooperation for the Dutch businesses and relationships with the partner countries?

### **1.4. Chapter outline**

This research paper consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature review, Methodological choices, “Deep marketisation” of the Dutch development co-

operation in the field of water, Conclusion, List of abbreviations, List of references and appendixes. Chapter two will give an overview of the current academic debates on development, aid effectiveness and neoliberalism. Chapter three will follow the researcher's data collection process and account for the methodological choices made in the paper. Chapter four will attempt to establish relationship between neoliberalism as a theoretical concept and the major trends in the Dutch development cooperation in the field of water governance. Conclusion will summarise the data findings and indicate their implication on the Dutch development cooperation, report whether the objectives of the research were achieved and map out the opportunities for further research required in this field.

## Chapter 2. Literature review

This Chapter will provide an overview of the key concepts pertaining to this research paper, such as development and effectiveness of aid and will address major debates on these topics. In addition, the chapter will discuss the concept of neoliberalism from the perspectives of different scholars and determine under which framework the concept will be applied in this research paper.

### 2.1. Understanding development

Development as a concept has received immense attention in the academic literature, policy and practice for the last 80 years. However, it appears to be somewhat of a “rogue” concept due to its complex nature and multiplicity of interpretations. The following framework problematises understanding of development through the prism of neoliberalism and the approaches to measure it.

Dealing with development cooperation and development policy, one has to have a clear understanding of this phenomenon. Allen & Thomas (2000) determine three dimensions of development: immanent development – a historical process of transition from traditional to modern society; intentional development – a project of bringing change and development as a vision – ideas of development as progress.

In the academic literature, development is almost always defined as immanent or intentional, and is linked to the ideas of modernisation, i.e.

creation of a well-developed and productive economic system embedded in international trade relations, a government apparatus that is able to provide or help provide essential services in the fields of education, healthcare, housing, and security, a political system that ensures collective decision-making processes resulting in citizens feeling connected to the outcome and each other, and a society which is sufficiently open and offers space for various individual and collective ambitions. (Lieshout, et al., 2010, p. 49)

Discussing development, it is necessary to separate it from growth. Economic growth, though linked to income distribution and development, is not a goal in itself. For decades, economic growth has been associated with the World Bank researchers’ thesis “trade is good for growth and growth is good for the poor” (Dollar & Kraay, 2004). However, there is now little evidence to believe that the “trickle down” effect works in practice, so the international organisations have been working towards defining fair and inclusive conditions for growth (Lieshout, et al., 2010, pp. 164-165). The Dutch policy document “A World to Gain” mentions “sustainable, inclusive growth” as one of its key goals but does not define what it is (Government of the Netherlands, 2013).

Development in the modern understanding of the word began with the process of decolonisation and Harry Truman’s inaugural speech in 1949. He made an emphasis on using scientific knowledge and technology to bring improvement to conditions of the people living in poverty (Truman, 1949). This is when the terms “developing” or “underdeveloped” appears in the discourse, as well as the “third world countries”, the first world being Northern America, Western Europe and Australia and the second world – the Soviet Union and other countries of the communist camp.



The key idea for fostering development in the former colonies was creating conditions for economic growth through the structural adjustment of the state. Leading development economist W. W. Rostow introduced five types of economies: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption (1960). Rostow based this approach on the history of development of the United Kingdom, however, he failed to determine which conditions are necessary for the transition from one stage to another. (Lieshout, et al., 2010, pp. 120-121)

The dependency theory arose in the late 1960s – early 1970s as a critic to Rostow's stages theory and one-sided economic view on development in general. The key representatives of the "dependency school" in Latin America – Cardoso, Furtado, Dos Santos – defined dependency as a "historical condition which shapes a certain structure of the world economy such that it favours some countries to the detriment of others and limits the development possibilities of the subordinate economies" (Dos Santos, 1971, p. 226). Frank (1996) defied common understanding that development occurs in a linear stage and the underdeveloped countries just need time to get there. He argued that developed countries, through their past economic and social history, gave rise to the underdevelopment.

A major discursive shift in development followed in 1972 with the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm. It brought attention to the environmental dimension of development, which was not considered by the "dependistas" and modernists. The 1987 report "Our Common Future", also known as the Brundtland Report, defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainable development consists of two dimensions: meeting the needs of the world while matching the environment's capacity to meet today's and future demands. The Brundtland report chose to concentrate on the former, because poverty was seen as the main cause and effect of global environmental problems:

If large parts of the developing world are to avert economic, social and environmental catastrophes, it is essential that global economic growth be revitalised. In practical terms, this means more rapid economic growth in both industrial and developing countries, free market access for the products of developing countries, lower interest rates, greater technological transfer, and significantly larger capital flows, both concessional and commercial (Ibid, p. 89)

Since then, the structural adjustment programmes dominated international development policy. The Washington Consensus, which is commonly associated with a series of state and economy reforms, shifted its focus from public to private regulation of development and sustainability.

The 1990-s brought social dimension of development: the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995 prioritised education and healthcare as the key steps for poverty reduction (UN, 1995). In 1996 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published the document "Shaping the 21st Century" with the goals to improve economic well-being of the poor, bring social development and ensure environmental sustainability by 2015 (OECD, 1996).

Along with poverty, a key narrative that arose in the development discourse was human development. The human capabilities approach views development in a set of freedoms (capabilities): political freedom, freedom of opportunity and

freedom from lack of freedom (Sen, 1999). The concept was developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The list of human capabilities is described – but not limited to – as human life, bodily health and integrity, senses, imagination, thought and emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and control over one’s environment (Nussbaum, 2011, pp. 33-34). The framework, suggested by Sen, Nussbaum, Fukada-Parr, Robyens, Alkire and Mahbub ul Haq, is used as an alternative evaluation tool for development as opposed to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Human Development Reports (HDRs) and the Human Development Index (HDI) are challenging one-sided modern understanding of development (Harcourt, 2018).

A development policy that actually used the human capabilities approach is the document called “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, best known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Seventeen SDGs were signed at the UN Summit in New York in 2015 and were considered to be a breakthrough as, in addition to eradicating poverty and hunger, they concentrated on social dimensions of human development. For example, “healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages” (SDG 3), “inclusive equitable quality education and <...> lifelong learning opportunities for all” (SDG 4), gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls (SDG 5) (UN, 2015). The SDGs, however, did not escape criticism because some of the goals are prioritising economic growth. For example, the SDG 8 aims to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth with the evaluation criteria being annual growth rate of the real GDP per capita (Goal 8.1.1), while the SDG 17 has an objective to provide access for all least developed countries to the free market in accordance with the World Trade Organization decisions (Goal 17.12).

With the rise of alternative understanding of development, modern Western thinking began to be challenged by epistemologies from the South. “South” here is not only a geographic concept, but rather an alias for the people that have “systematically suffered the injustices, dominations and oppressions caused by colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy” (Santos, 2016, p. 18). With the end of the colonial regime, coloniality of knowledge did not stop; it kept reproducing colonial discourses by domination of the universal Western epistemologies. Boaventura de Santos called this concept the “abyssal thinking”. It is characterised by creating divisions between something acknowledged as being real, developed and civilised and something that is being understood as fiction or superstition and, therefore, becomes non-existent, undeveloped and barbaric (Santos, 2007, p. 45). To stop the abyssal thinking from reproducing itself, the researchers need to adopt new ways of thinking by learning from the global South (Ibid, p. 67). Unlike the Western economic model, the epistemologies from the South – such as *buen vivir* in Latin America, Ecological Swaraj in India and African *ubuntu* – are based on experimentation, respect, diversity, plurality of knowledge and perspectives (Kothari, et al., 2014, p. 363).

Nevertheless, the conventional understanding of development continues to thrive on all levels: from the academia and media to the international organisations and aid agencies. The term of such deep historical, political and ideological weight is often being reduced to the technocratic coefficients of the economic growth rate and foreign trade investment ratio.

The following paragraph is going to review how the concept of development aid has reflected the contested nature of development, how it changed throughout the time and what are the major debates in terms of its effectiveness.

## 2.2. Debating development aid

Foreign aid, throughout the centuries of its existence, has transformed from a way of the rich countries supporting their interests in the colonies to fostering economic and human development and appears to be just as disputed as the concept of development itself. The European states gave money to their colonies in the 19th century, and by the 1920s and '30s aid was regularly paid by Germany, the Great Britain, France and the United States to build infrastructure in the poorer countries. Helmut Fuhrer, former Director of the Development Co-operation Directorate from 1975 to 1993, names the chronological beginning of the development aid with the establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the Financial Conference at Bretton Woods in 1944 (Fuhrer, 1994, p. 4), while the term Official Development Assistance (ODA) was first introduced by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1969 (Ibid, p. 21).

Conceptionally, the evolvement of foreign aid in many ways mirrors the history of development reviewed in the previous paragraph. For a long time, development assistance was dominated by the instrumental approach. It was believed that developed countries are providing loans for newly independent countries through the multilateral organisations like the UN, the WB and the IMF in order for them to improve the infrastructure and enhance the economy to later be able to cope on their own (Lieshout, et al., 2010, p. 105). The focus of aid shifted later from the instrumental assistance to the structural adjustment and private sector development. These policies are known under the term “Washington Consensus” (WC), which is commonly associated with a series of state and economy reforms. They can be summarised in a set of ten policies, among which are macroeconomic stabilisation, deregulation, harmonisation, trade liberalisation and privatisation, etc. (Williamson, 1990). These principles were used as a blueprint solution for the developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and later in Post-Communist space throughout the 1980s – 1990s. In some countries, improvement in aid effectiveness helped a number of cases become the “success stories.” However, the research has revealed that the counties which benefited from the reforms the most, for example, so-called “Japanese miracle” had a strong state apparatus with well-functioning bureaucracy. This type of state was called the “developmental state” by a neo-Weberian Peter Evans (Evans, 1996). The failures of the Washington Consensus were first publicly pointed out by the World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz at the UN University World Institute for Development Economics Research in 1998. He criticised the IMF and the WB for going with the same policy packages to different countries without taking the local context into account. In addition, he emphasised that a strong state is required to make the markets work: “The choice is not whether the state should or should not be involved. Instead, it is often a matter of how it gets involved” (Stiglitz, 1998, p. 25).

As a result of critique, a new approach – Post-Washington Consensus – emerged in April 1998 in Santiago. It included the list of policy priorities: “good governance”, attention to large market failures and enforced role of the government in macroeconomics, infrastructure, public health, education, technology and environment.

At that same time, there has been a development framework shift to poverty reduction the World Bank started the Poverty Reduction Strategy Program

(PSRP) in 1999, and in 2000 at the UN Millennium Summit a target to half the world's poverty level by the year 2015 was indicated in the Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2000). The Monterrey Consensus of 2002 took a step further in creating a framework for the global development cooperation through increasing financial aid and improving trade conditions. It recognised that it is both developing and developed countries' responsibility to tackle the poverty issue (UN, 2002). In 2005, the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness established a monitoring mechanism for the more effective aid coordination in a form of the non-bind principles: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, results and mutual accountability. This definition of effectiveness has framed a new era in foreign aid, which continues up to the present day.

As introduced by Nilima Gulrajani (2011), nowadays there are two major sides to the debate on aid effectiveness. Some believe that official assistance is ineffective and has harmed the poor countries throughout the years by creating dependency, encouraging corruption, and often worsening poverty (Easterly, 2007). According to William Easterly, there is little that could be done to improve the effectiveness of aid as it inherently prevents the countries from taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the global economy and free markets (Easterly, 2006)

It's worthy to mention that there is no overall consent on the future of aid among its opponents. While Easterly believes in substituting the aid system by market-based policies that can provide access to the capital and trade, Dambisa Moyo provides a non-Western perspective on aid and believes that aid will always be unproductive and harmful, therefore the only thing one can strive for is the "death" of aid (Moyo, 2009, p. 74).

Of course, opponents of aid do not deny that it has had some successes, but most of them believe that aid is ineffective in one way or another due to the long history of heavy bureaucratisation of the development agencies (Gulrajani, 2011, pp. 5-8). This radical view on aid is balanced out by the well-spread opinion that the results of foreign aid could be improved through some sort of reform: introducing an institutional approach (Serra & Stiglitz, 2008), focusing on socio-economic dimensions of poverty (Sachs, 2005) or more joint and fundamental change (Lishout, 2010; Spitz, et al., 2013). The most overwhelming, however, is a belief that aid could be improved through adopting private sector techniques. Gulrajani call it managerialism and defines it as a set of ideas that the better administrative practices of aid apparatus can effectively improve the economic and social issues. The difference between technocracy and managerialism lies in the fact that managerialism adopts the corporate practices rather than bureaucratic and promotes the insertion of business logic in the public sector (Gulrajani, 2011, p. 12).

And while the truth is, as always, somewhere in between two radical positions, there is a need to go beyond the econometric understanding of poverty and development (Bourguignon & Sundberg, 2007). The spread of performance measurement systems, obsession with monitoring and evaluation in aid is alarming. The following paragraph is going to juxtapose the debate on aid effectiveness against neoliberalism, unpack the concept and adopt a theoretical lens for the research.

### 2.3. The many faces of neoliberalism

This paragraph has received its name due to the fact that there are multiple interpretations of neoliberalism as an ideology, political movement, set of policies and practices and a way of market organisation (Edwards, et al., 2012), as well as the phases of its development throughout the history. Cahill (2012) generally divides the phenomenon into two categories: neoliberalism as a doctrine of ideas and neoliberalism as a practice, and it appears logical to review the ideas of neoliberalism first.

The term “neoliberalism” was first used in the 1930s by the German economist Alexander Roestow to describe new ideas which sought to find a political economy which would prioritise the market movement rather than the state direction for it (Gamble, p. 21). Despite the fact that neoliberalism is often associated with the classical liberalism, they are definitely not to be confused or used interchangeably. There are two major ideas of neoliberalism that echo the dominant strands of ideas of the classical liberalism of the nineteenth century (Ibid). The first is the “laissez-faire” (French “let do”) – a belief that the best way to organise the economic system is to allow the markets operate free from the governmental regulation. Second, role for the state in this situation is facilitating the growth of the free market as much as possible.

In the 1970s and 1980s, neoliberalism gained popularity as an alternative to economic development in Sweden, Germany and Japan. Given success of Thatcher’s monetarism in the UK and “Reaganomics” in the US, neoliberalism became globally promoted the IMF and the WB in 1990s (Ibid, p. 31).

According to Gamble, neoliberalism, like any other ideology, is not set in stone and encompasses several versions: minimalist – free market view – and maximalist – with social understanding of the state and market embeddedness. These versions have different aspects to them and may contradict each other, which may be the reason for uneven spread of neoliberalism in the political spaces and different outcomes of the neoliberal projects (Ibid, p. 34).

In terms of practices, neoliberalism is often associated with the set of the policies introduced by the World Bank in the 1980-90s also known as the Washington Consensus. For the key theoretician of the Washington Consensus – John Williamson (1990) – neoliberalism is a set of principles which could be summarised as the free market approach: e.g. fiscal discipline, public expenditure prioritising the areas with high economic returns, promotion of foreign direct investment, etc. After the failure of the Washington Consensus, many authors including Williamson, Stiglitz and Rodrik criticised neoliberalism and suggested a new set of principles which became known as the Post-Washington Consensus, or the “Augmented Washington Consensus” (Rodrik, 2002). But the PWC proved to be a continued promotion of the trade liberalisation, tariff reduction and the liberalisation of non-trade barriers to entry and was substituted by different frameworks in the 2000s, such as the poverty reduction programmes.

Some scholars separate neoliberalism as a phenomenon and neoliberalisation as a process. For Brenner, Peck and Theodore (2010) neoliberalism is not a fixed entity but the process moving in the time and space. Neoliberalism is thus a “project of imposing market disciplinary regulatory forms” (Brenner, et al., 2010, p. 183) through the ideological doctrine and, at the same time, neoliberalism is a “tendential process of institutional transformation” most commonly associated with policy packages (Ibid). The reason for such an ambivalent interpretation of neoliberalism, according to the authors, is the fact that neoliberalism around the

world happened in the diverse waves of neoliberalisation across the uneven institutional context from the 1970s to 2000s. Brenner, Peck & Theodore come up with the term “variegated neoliberalism” to account for the different elements of the phenomenon: a) uneven development of neoliberalisation, i.e. spread of marketisation and commodification, and b) neoliberalisation of regulatory uneven development, i.e. market-oriented reshaping of strategies within regional and national contexts (Ibid, pp. 210-215).

Toby Carroll takes the concept of the variegated neoliberalism and situates it in the context of the later capitalism and variegated market state, which he and Jarvis (2014) call the “deep marketisation”. In foreign aid, it is characterised by the increased financialisation of development cooperation, prioritising market-based finance initiatives and attracting foreign direct investment. Development is now aimed at fostering small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and is marked by the increased interest of the global North in “emerging markets” (Carroll, 2017, p. 107). The role of the state, however much it has grown since the early neoliberalism, is being downplayed through the rise of the public-private partnerships (PPP) – an iconic example of marrying public resources with the private sector efficiency.

Thus, deep marketisation is in many ways a new phase of neoliberalism in the development policy. A new feature outlined by Carroll is that most of the world’s countries are now so integrated into the world market, that there no space for them to move towards development in its alternative understanding. Thus, marketisation simply does not allow the states to pursue the non-neoliberal agenda in their development cooperation policy (Carroll, 2017, pp. 107-108).

In the Netherlands, this has definitely been the case: a chronological study of the role of the private sector in the Dutch aid history by Agnieszka Kazimierczuk has revealed a backlash of the outcomes which engagement of private sector has to deal with, such as tax evasion, insufficient knowledge of infrastructure and lack of the universal evaluation framework for the business’ impact on development. These challenges undermine the efforts of creating inclusive growth in developing countries and reveal the need for a different development agenda for the Netherlands and Western countries in general (Kazimierczuk, p. 42). The paper is the beginning of a discussion on neoliberalism in the Dutch development agenda that debates whether it is sustainable to continue to follow this path.

To sum up, there is an extensive body of work on development and foreign aid done both internationally and by the Dutch. However, it is crucial to understand the development cooperation policy of the Netherlands from the position of modern neoliberalism in the form of marketisation. It will help to determine what role water governance plays in it and discover the implications of water governance as a top economic sector in Dutch development cooperation for the Dutch businesses and relationships with partner countries. The following chapter will give an overview of ontological, epistemological and methodological position of the research in order to address the objectives it has set out to achieve.

## Chapter 3. Methodological choices

Based on the theoretical framework selected above, the following Chapter will discuss the research methodology selected to better fit the overall theoretical perspective of the study as well as the challenges and limitations the author has faced throughout the research.

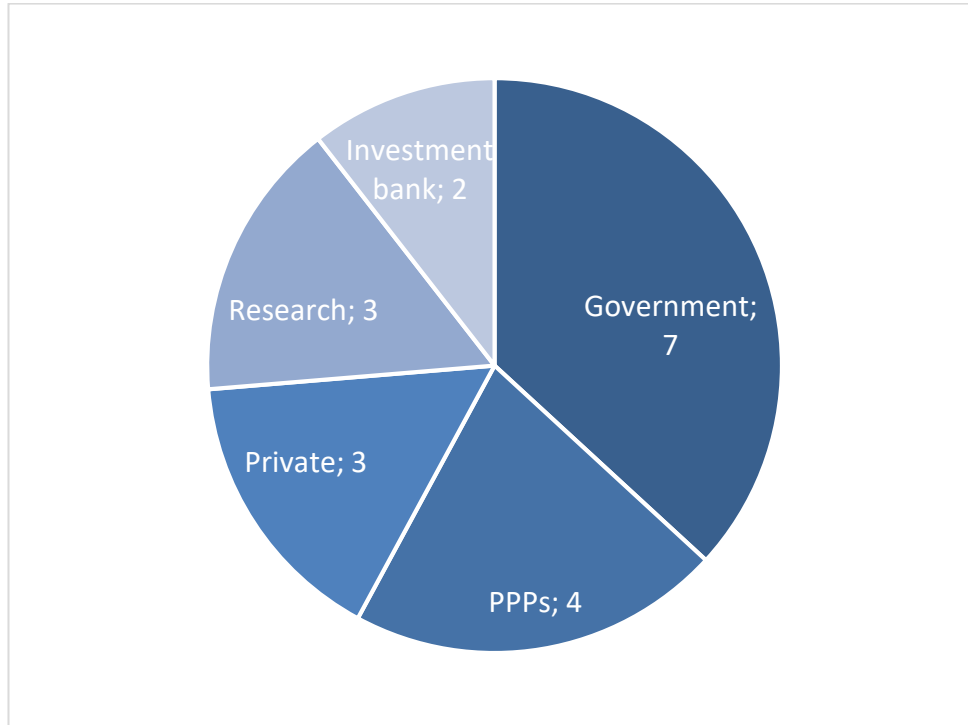
### 3.1. Research methodology and methods

The paper adopts a constructivist paradigm with the focus on showing multiple perspectives through providing quotes while acknowledging inherent subjectivity and bias of both the respondents and the researcher. To fit the ontological and epistemological positions, qualitative methodology has been adopted for this paper. The choice of the qualitative approach is determined by the fact that there is a gap in the research on relations between water sector as a top economic and development sector and Dutch aid, so the study is of exploratory nature. However, since there is an assumption in place based on the background research of the problem, deductive logic applies to the study. Hence, the research techniques for this paper are qualitative interview for the primary data collection in combination with textual/document analysis for the secondary data.

The advantage of the qualitative research technique is that it has provided an opportunity to talk to the stakeholders related closely to the topic of the Dutch development policy in water: researchers, practitioners and government officials. The research acknowledges the important role of individuals that are forming development policy in the Netherlands in the sphere of water, translating it into practice and engaging with people in the recipient countries (Hasan, 2019). By adopting the constructivist logic, the paper resolves the structure-agency problem as the “mutual constitutiveness of structure and agency at the point of time” (Adler, 1992, p. 320). While acknowledging the role of human agency in the development cooperation, constructivism accepts the agents’ dependency on the social institutions, which, in return, were conceived by humans. Thus, to ground it in the topic of the research, there is mutual dependency between neoliberalism as ideas and material practice of the structures and individual agents socially constructing these structures.

As part of the fieldwork, a series of interviews were conducted with the government employees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), water board De Dommel and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Vietnam. The employees engaged in non- or supra-state Dutch development projects in the water sector – Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP) and Deltares – were also interviewed. To represent the sample from the private companies’ side, the researcher has also met with several of the Royal HaskoningDHV (RHDHV) employees (see Figure 1 for the numbers breakdown). The targeted interviewees were selected through networking at the study visits by the author, snowballing and reaching out directly to the representatives of the institutions. Details on the data collection and analysis will be discussed further in paragraph 3.2.

Figure 1. Breakdown of the interview participants



The secondary data has been accessed through the bibliographies, publications in the peer-reviewed journals, conference papers and proceedings, Dutch government publications, evaluation documents from the IOB, the WB, the OECD and the UN agencies on development aid as well as the articles from the Dutch and international periodicals. The textual data analysis has been applied for comparison, categorising and conceptualising of the findings (Hennink, et al., 2011, pp. 233-257). While most of the information is available in English, some of the documents such as the Dutch Parliament letters and proceedings are exclusively in Dutch and were translated by the author.

The documents selected for the analysis represent the key turning points in the Dutch foreign policy and development cooperation in water. Firstly, it is “The World to Gain” (2013) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, according to the media and scholars, started a paradigm shift in development aid by introducing the Aid for Trade agenda. And, secondly, a significant document in the sphere of water governance is an updated letter issued by the Ministry of Water and Infrastructure in 2019 – the Netherlands International Water Ambition. The NIWA presents a particular interest due to the manifestation of increasing the Dutch earning capacity in the sphere of development cooperation in the water sector as one of its policy objectives.

### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured qualitative interview technique was employed during the data collection stage of the research. While this method is a complex and prone to researcher’s subjectivities, it allowed to study the research problem in depth as the respondents were able to give more insights to questions posed to them. Semi-structured interview method provided a middle ground between very wide open-ended questions and very narrow structured interview questions. It gave an opportunity for the interviewer to come with the predetermined questions,



however, there was a space to ask follow-up questions during the interviews in order to clarify the details. The list of the questions is attached in Appendix 1. The interviews were performed mostly in one-on-one conversations either face-to-face in the places of the participants' choosing, or online though Skype or telephone calls. The major advantage of the one-on-one conversation is the ability to avoid distractions and engage in in-depth conversation. On the negative side, interviewing one-on-one requires more sessions for the data collection, which is time consuming, therefore, in three cases (interviews 6-7, 12-13 and 14-15) the researcher was interviewing two people in one session in order to save time for both the researcher and respondents.

Audio recording was selected as a method for the data collection in contrast to note taking. The positive side of audio recording is that, unlike note taking, it allowed the researcher to concentrate solely on the discussions with the interviewees to establish rapport. In addition, audio recordings provided an opportunity to revisit conversations and obtain precise quotes. However, there are negative points, e.g. time-consuming transcribing, which also requires skill and practice. Secondly, in 3 cases (interviews 12, 13 and 19) the participants refused to have the conversations recorded because they were not willing to be quoted precisely. In this case notetaking was used with the permission of the interviewees. Lastly, digital audio recording may be risky as the file may be lost or corrupted due to the technical issues. A way to tackle this was bringing a backup device, performing a test recording prior to the interviews and backing up the files in a protected cloud folder.

Upon conducting the field work, the audio recordings of the 19 interviews were transcribed and the data analysed closely<sup>2</sup>. The researcher went through each interview individually and highlighted all information deemed necessary for the data analysis, which was later moved into one database. The database was further analysed and coded based on the pre-set categories that were aligned with the research question and subquestions. Aligning the codes to the questions ensured that the data remained relevant to the research purpose.

### **3.3. Positionality and ethical considerations**

The study adheres to the ethical research principles, i.e. informed consent, self-determination, minimisation of harm, anonymity and confidentiality (Hennik et al., p. 63). To make sure these principles are followed, the researcher tried to reach the interviewees through the person who they were familiar with – the ISS professors – and ensured participants that no personal information is released without their permission. The informed consent forms were used to obtain written permissions from the interviewees to use data collected during the meetings (see the sample form attached in Appendix 2). The forms also stated that the respondents were not promised to be given any reward and were not incentivised in any other way, so their participation was completely voluntary. Most of the interviewees were willing to sign the forms apart from interviewees 12, 13 and 19, who, as mentioned above, did not permit audio recording. In addition,

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<sup>2</sup> Apart from the 3 interviews for which the respondents refused to have a conversation recorded. In these cases, notes from the discussion were used.

in case of interviewees 10 and 18 the consent forms were not signed but the recordings clearly indicate explicit permission to use the anonymised data. All filled in forms are available at request.

The advantages of keeping the participants' confidentiality included the fact that the researcher had an opportunity to ask in-depth questions and expect sincere answers from the respondents. Three interviewees (3, 14 and 18) have requested to share the transcript of the interview to make sure their words were captured in a precise way.

Amongst the respondents that were interviewed, the researcher had had previous contact only with three, while most were met for the first time. Despite meeting the interviewees for the first time, the researcher managed to establish rapport by keeping the conversations friendly and creating a setting which put the interviewees at ease. In addition, due to the fact that the interviewer and the respondents were passionate about the topic of the research, the interviewees were more inclined to share the detailed information. Thus, the personality and interests of the researcher have played a positive role in the data collection. Nevertheless, there are challenges linked to the process of data collection and analysis, as well as inherent limitations of the research, which will be closely reviewed in the next paragraph.

### **3.4. Challenges and limitations**

Academic research, especially in the sphere of development, is prone to challenges and limitations due to the complex nature of the concepts of development and the differences in its interpretations. The topic of this paper engages with several contested notions such as development, aid and neoliberalism. Approaching research on the topic of the Dutch international water cooperation, one has to acknowledge the internal bias of both the researcher and the interviewees as people living in the Netherlands. Having lived in the country, they have built certain perceptions of the Dutch foreign policy, opinions on the development aid and the Dutch national identity. Most of the individuals that had agreed to be interviewed were open to the comments, while some were quick to defend their opinion and acted displeased with the interviewer criticising the policies of the Dutch government. There is a reason to believe that there could be a place for an "interviewer effect" from the side of the respondents, particularly those working for the government of the Netherlands. They could have been inclined to give an overall more positive feedback due to their affiliation with the government. To limit this bias, the research extended the number of interviews conducted to 19 and tried to diversify the background of the respondents.

Among the limitations to this research is the personality of the researcher: apart from inherent biases that one should be aware of, a certain set of skills required from a researcher during the data collection, e.g. being an active listener, knowledge of the interview probes, tactfulness and politeness to establish rapport.

One of the challenges for the study was the fact that Dutch is not the first foreign language of the author, so there has been hurdles in understanding oral speech, transcribing or translating documents. To combat the risks, English was used to communicate with the interviewees with switching to Dutch if it was necessary for some. In addition, there were constraints in scheduling the meetings during

the summer holidays, therefore the field work lasted for more than a month (see Appendix 3) with the last interview being conducted on September 24.

The discussions with the interviewees allowed to believe that there is unspoken understanding among the Dutch development practitioners that the focus countries for water cooperation have been changed to the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region to accommodate the rising concern with the immigrants in the Netherlands and in Europe in general. Due to the limited time, there were no opportunities to conduct any follow-up interviews. Based on the fact that the data is limited and inconsistent, no adamant conclusion could be made in regard to these findings. However, the topic possesses a potential for the further research in the area of the Dutch development policy as a strategic instrument.

## Chapter 4. “Deep marketisation” of the Dutch development cooperation in the field of water

The objective for this Chapter is to report the findings from the field research on discover how neoliberalism as “deep marketisation” is manifested in Dutch development cooperation. The Chapter also discusses how water governance perpetuates the broader neoliberalisation of the Dutch foreign policy. In addition, it reveals the implications of water governance as the top economic sector in the Dutch development cooperation for the Dutch businesses and relationships with the partner countries.

### 4.1. New public managerialism

The visibility of development cooperation in the Netherlands has been quite high: since the 1970s there have been debates on increasing the funding of development education to improve public awareness of the development issues (Veen, 2011, pp. 97-98). Aid soon became such a prominent topic in the Dutch society that the political parties started to include foreign policy in their election campaigns (Ibid, p. 107). Around the same time, an independent organ for the evaluation of development projects has been created – the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) – and in 1987 all reports produced by it were made public (IOB, 2019). This resulted in the wide spread of the discussions on aid effectiveness and pushing the government of the Netherlands to improve the development policy.

The internal pressure increased even more with the aftermath of the global economic crisis of the late 2000s. Moving the portfolio for foreign trade, which previously was with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation to the Ministry of Foreign in 2012 was a major improvement for the aid policy, believes the MFA employee. “To some extent, it is a paradigm shift to combine [the mandates] instead of making them work in their own side,” – he said in the interview (Interview 5)<sup>3</sup>.

However, as admitted by another MFA employee, it has been challenging so far to strike the balance between the trade and development, especially given the fact that they sometimes pursue the contradicting goals:

[I]f you work for the economic part [of the Ministry], then the goals are increasing export and developing Dutch private sector – that’s the focus. But if you work here with the IGG, for instance, then you have different goals. And integration isn’t there yet, if you ask me. It’s almost impossible to integrate because the goals are contradicting. (Interview 1)

The major change that “The World to Gain” (2013) policy brought, according to the respondent, was the emphasis on developing the private sector in the Netherlands itself, unlike previous focus on developing the local businesses in the partner countries: “[Y]ou can collaborate with local private sector to develop them, and sometimes they are even being left out. It’s all about the Dutch companies, they are to make money,” (Ibid). The reason for this shift is, according to the source, in major political push for transparency and effectiveness from

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<sup>3</sup> Here and further for the references see Appendix 4.

both the parliamentaries and electorate: “[W]e impress people, and then the politicians are convinced that we have to put money in this, because we are good in this,” (Ibid).

Not all public agents have a critical stance towards the Aid for Trade agenda in the Dutch development cooperation policy. A project manager at the Netherlands Water Partnership sounded understanding and optimistic:

Aid and Trade<sup>4</sup> is an opportunity for the Dutch water sector to actually do something more meaningful and sustainable in the countries in terms of development of certain sectors. I think it’s not perfect but it’s a good shift, maybe it’s a shift that is required, to move towards the trade side away from the aid. (Interview 8)

This quote illustrates one of the key features that the Dutch believe in – or want to believe in – that it is possible to both pursue the agenda of profit for the Dutch companies and deliver development at the same time. That is what the Dutch – and the Netherlands, – based on its recent international water agenda (2019) emphasise as its strength:

We have expertise and private sector, so we make water a development spearhead, or the other way around – we want to do something about the water challenges and then engage the private sector. I think it was a bit of both. (Interview 2)

The key to a coherent development policy, according to one of the interviewees, is a country-specific approach. The 2017 document by the MFA “Investing in Global Prospects” has indicated the group of countries for mainly development aid (the regions include North Africa, Middle East and the horn of Africa) as well as the countries like Vietnam, Colombia and Chile with growing economy and opportunities for investment: “we can use the bigger part of our development cooperation money that we have available to invest in the countries that really need it, and the other countries that can support themselves more, can have a graduation,” (Interview 5). The negative side of such division is the fact that it is based primarily on the basic economic indicators: “The decision to go from simply aid to Aid for Trade in a country is based on the fact that it is a relatively large economy, there is large population, they are achieving quite high economic growth (7-8% a year),” – comments the interviewee from the IOB (Interview 2). In addition, when it comes to the practices, development projects are prone to favour the economic results rather than social:

It’s always hard to get the rights of the poor people incorporated in the plan. That’s something we are striving for, that’s a specific part of all the projects we develop. We want to incorporate the focus on vulnerable people, but it never can be the only focus. You have to try to get the best of the both worlds. (Interview 5)

This tendency is accounted by the fact that quantitative results are easier to report on and evaluate than qualitative, found the report by Ewijk et al. on the Dutch Aid and Trade agenda: while one can count the economic effects, revenues, profits, and number of jobs created, this does not work for the reports on the environment and health. (Ewijk, et al., 2017, p. 28)

Apart from the focus on the effectiveness of the development cooperation, there is both external (from the EU and the OECD) and internal (from within the Cabinet and the voters) pressure on the Dutch government to be transparent:

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<sup>4</sup> Discrepancies in a way the interviewees call it: officially it is Aid for Trade by the OECD, but in the original Dutch government document only expression “Aid and Trade” is common (note that the word “aid” is used 32 times in the document, and the word “trade” – 47 times). The interviewees have used all variations: “aid for trade”, “aid and trade” and “aid from trade”.

there is a need to show that the Dutch are good with the money, however tight it is (Interviews 12&13).

The government of the Netherlands is putting titanic efforts in collaboration between its departments to increase the bandwidth of its development cooperation. It would be hard to overestimate the amount of the joint efforts the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Water & Infrastructure and Economic Relations & Climate spend on constructing, maintaining and managing foreign activities of the Netherlands, especially in terms of water. Being the spearhead for development cooperation, water has become an outlet for the Dutch diplomatic cooperation with the embassies and a governance model advocated by the water boards.

The reason for that, according to the interviewees, is that the Netherlands has the unique historical and legal background which allowed the country to find a recipe to a successful combination of the public and private sectors. For example, the drinking water companies are 100% state-owned, while being governed as businesses, because “by law, it is not possible for a private person to own a share of a water company,” – explained the employee at one of the drinking companies (Interview 16).

“[T]here are parts of the public demand you have to organise sufficiently, and the private sector can organise it much more sufficiently,” – said a water governance advisor at the Royal Haskoning HDV with experience of working both for the government and the private sector:

Those kind of questions of executions are more a speciality of the private sector. That's why in the world there are a lot of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). <...> If you look at water safety or drinking water or wastewater treatment, for example, – those water issues are primarily public. You can range a lot of public interests, but we know for sure that the government not always is well-organised for execution, maintenance or finance. (Interview 11)

This high rise of the number of the PPPs is another way the focus on effectiveness of the public management expresses itself. Another typical trait characteristic for the modern development cooperation is the culture of reporting and evaluation. The employee at the Court of Audit of the Netherlands also highlighted that there is more attention on reporting that the Dutch businesses getting the profits:

[It] helps if you can show that our companies also benefit from it. It is not that it did not happen before, but it has been made more visible that our companies also benefit from it and now they are trying. I do not know if there is more money going into this, but it is being put more in the spotlight, <...>it is now getting more publicity. (Interview 3)

The Dutch development policy in the sphere of water represents in itself the belief that development could be instigated through engaging developing countries in trade and attraction of long-term investment. Neoliberalisation of international development cooperation puts efficiency and effectiveness of aid above equity thus perpetuating the increasing need for reporting quantitative, measurable results. And the “deep marketisation” of the Dutch foreign cooperation is characterised by adopting market tools such as branding in the Dutch government's policies on water management and development assistance. This will be discussed in detail in the next paragraph.

## 4.2. Branding of the Dutch water expertise

Research and fieldwork have revealed that the Dutch international development cooperation is very complex in practice with many stakeholders involved, both from the government and not: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the RVO, water boards, the NWP, engineering companies and research institutes. As one of the key stakeholders in the development cooperation, the Dutch government is actively engaged in constructing the public discourse on aid by controlling the visibility of the certain aspects of the foreign policy (Veen, 2011, p. 78). For example, it appears to be that the amount of the work put into managing the development cooperation is not deserving attention, on the contrary, it is presented to be almost effortless, as if it comes naturally. The reason for that, as suggested by two of the interviewees is to demonstrate how successful the Dutch are and to level down some of the mishaps that they had in the projects. It is all “about portraying success and keep transferring it to different countries,” – says a researcher at IHE Delft Institute for Water Education (Interview 4). “[It]’s all about their success stories, it’s all about a great demand, it’s all about not talking about the efforts of the Dutch officials,” – she continues (Ibid). The reason for this is, according to a Professor at the University of Pennsylvania (UP), is that “the Dutch need the world to believe that they are *the* water experts and that, as sea water levels rise and more and more coastal cities become threatened by rising waters, they have to turn to the Dutch,” (Interview 10).

Portraying the Dutch excellency in the sphere of water governance is also very important to be able to explain the “demand-driven cooperation” from the delta countries like Bangladesh in Vietnam (Hasan, et al., 2019). There is a lot of negotiation involved from both of the parties: “Dutch Delta Plan <...> is a lot of work, negotiation, creating interest though lobbying,” believes the interviewee from the IHE Delft (Interview 4).

In fact, according to another respondent, the Dutch may want to get the projects just as badly as they say the partner countries do, “but these big prestigious projects easily glide out of their control, and it becomes difficult for them to maintain their reputation as being water experts if they are associated with failed projects,” (Interview 10).

Interestingly, both of the interviewees that spoke about the way Dutch are working hard on image building and sustaining are not from the Netherlands, which may be accounted either for seeing things from a different, outsider, angle, or overall unwillingness (or inability) of the Dutch to admit this. However, it is impossible not to agree on the Dutch proliferation in the sphere of water: “I don’t think that the Dutch have to apologise for making water their signature, because water is their future, and it would be crazy if they didn’t do that,” – says the Professor of at the UP (Ibid). Perhaps, what has been new in the last 10 years is that now the international water ambition is embedded in the foreign policy with one of the objectives being to increase the Dutch earning capacity (Ministry of Water and Infrastructure, 2019, p. 5).

The Dutch government explicitly tailors its development policy in the sphere of water as an export product: “the government is making the ingredients to bake a cake in order to have a slice of [that] cake,” shared his thoughts a delta advisor from the RHDHV (Interviews 14&15). The Dutch have to be flexible and come up with the packaged solutions to survive in the competitive environment of the international water projects: “It’s important how we pack the package in order to make sure it is selected,” (Ibid). This approach seems problematic not only

because of the fact that it downplays specifics of working in developing countries, including different geographic, historical and political context than in the Netherlands, but also may undermine the effectiveness of the projects (Hasan, 2018). In addition, “assuming or taking the quality of the Dutch delta expertise for granted makes it difficult to appreciate the active efforts that go into representing and making Dutch delta knowledge useful elsewhere,” (Ibid). And while one could expect the blueprint solutions from the consultancy firms or the international organisations, the recent trend for the governments to sell staples is concerning.

All the efforts in Dutch development cooperation are aimed at sustaining the image of the water state and, admittedly, at the first glance, this image is successful. However, the fact that successful water governance and management could be achieved only with the help of the Dutch, is questionable. The next paragraph is going to review the implications of neoliberalism in the Dutch development policy on the Dutch businesses and relations with the recipient countries.

#### **4.3. Implications for the Dutch businesses and relationships with the partner countries**

Another dimension of the Dutch foreign development cooperation policy is, naturally, the recipient side – partner countries that the state is engaging in cooperation with. Being less of a trend and rather a characteristic of the Dutch policy is creation of sustainable, long-term relations with its partners. “[Y]ou constantly think about the need to establish diplomatic friendship,” adds the delta management researcher from the Delft Institute for Water Education (Interview 4). One of the issues that arises in the Netherlands’ relations with the recipient country is desire of the Dutch to insist on using their own experts: “It immediately establishes tension and reinforces opinions that the Dutch are arrogant and prevents a genuinely collaborative process from happening,” – warns an academic engaged in a Dutch water project in Semarang, Indonesia (Interview 10). A solution for this is not only having the experience of working abroad, but also an ability to be humble and ask yourself: “What is happening here, and can I add value with what I know?” – a Delta advisor from the Dutch engineering believes (Interviews 14&15). He also noted that for working in a foreign country it is important to be thorough and adopt the “do no harm” approach. He shared his experience in advising for the local government in Cali, Colombia:

[W]e had written that it was not good to have houses by the dyke, and they destroyed the houses. But they destroyed the houses not because they wanted to save the dyke, but because someone wanted to have access to the dyke. It was a big scandal. I learned from that that we wrote it not carefully enough, we should have been more nuanced, so that they couldn’t have misused it. (Ibid)

Success of the development project is thus often determined by the participation and ownership of the recipient side. According to the interviewees, the partners often feel that they do not own the projects. And for some countries and cultures it is extremely important to translate the ideas – figuratively and literally – into their own language, so they adopt and adapt them better.

Unlike the aid projects, engaging private sector for the short-term work is more beneficial from the trade perspective, believes the MFA employee working at the IOB:

To build a long-term trade relationship in the water sector is very difficult because water is, on the one hand, a public good, and,



on the other hand, Dutch expertise is expensive for these developing countries. (Interview 1)

In addition, it also appears to be costly for Dutch businesses to operate in a foreign country long-term: “if you are not in one of these countries established as a company with local staff, <...> there is no chance to be competitive in those countries.” (Interviews 6&7)

Water is seen as a fundament for the relationships in other sectors as well:

This is what we have been doing for the last 700 years in the Netherlands – we collaborate with all stakeholders, we know how to bring them together, and from that we know how to build other sectors. I think if you use the Dutch water sector in that way, it can provide opportunities. (Interview 1)

But the role of the Dutch government in this case is unclear. An interviewee from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that the initial idea for the MFA was to be a broker between the private sector in the Netherlands and partner country, but “[I]f there really was demand from the [recipient] government side there wouldn’t really be the role for the Dutch government to play a part.”

Despite the hurdles that the Dutch private sector faces abroad in terms of trade, many interviewees sounded optimistic. “If you frame it like knowledge exchange, then it works,” – believes a project officer at the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP) (Interviews 6&7). The key is to treat cooperation with developing country not as one-side relation, but as a collaboration that benefits both parties. In fact, engaging in development projects is beneficial for the Dutch private sector, continues another interviewee from the NWP: “[T]his is a way to propel and show their innovations, which they can bring forward and which can also be applied in different context, and that can bring profit to the company,” (Interview 8). According to him, in this sense the perspectives of aid and trade overlap: “I think there is a two-way flow and as much as aid needs to be trade it is not specifically defined. For example, for networking someone can say that it’s trade, and someone can say that it does nothing.”

To conclude, the Netherlands aspires to create long-term relationships with the partner countries both on the government to government and the business to business levels, which has been stated by the interviewees to have a positive effect on the success of the projects in the sphere of water. Among the reported challenges is making sure that all the stakeholders are involved, securing ownership from the recipient side and staying humble and knowing limitations of the Dutch experts. In addition, water governance sector is becoming an increasingly competitive field:

I think this is a really difficult struggle for us internationally, also in Vietnam. It’s quite difficult to compete with the Japanese, for instance. <...> They are really capable of giving money, for example, to build a bridge, because they know that when the bridge is there, 80% of the cars and motorbikes that pass this bridge, will be Japanese. (Interviews 14&15)

Thus, based on the experience of the respondents, there appears to be a mismatch between the vision of the government for the engagement of the Dutch businesses abroad and the actual opportunities for the private sector in the development projects in the sphere of water. Nevertheless, as the latest Netherlands International Ambition Document has shown, the country is willing to continue using water as its key political, strategic and economic instrument in the foreign policy. Chapter 5 will reiterate how the relationship between the Dutch and water developed and will debate whether continuing the course on the “deep marketisation” is a sustainable way for the Dutch foreign policy.

## Chapter 5. Conclusion

This chapter will summarise the progress of Chapter 4 by matching the findings with the research questions and subquestions, indicating the implication these findings may have on the Dutch development policy in the sphere of water and mapping out the opportunities for further research required in this field.

Understanding the development policy of the Netherlands from the position of modern neoliberalism is crucial in determining the role that water governance plays in the Dutch development cooperation. It also helps discover its impact on how the country's relationship with the recipient countries is forming and the way the private and public sectors operate. The findings revealed that the foreign policy in the Netherlands, in particular in the field of water, is heavily affected by the "deep marketisation" of late capitalism. It represents the belief that development could be instigated through engaging developing countries in trade and attraction of long-term investment, which has an impact on how the country's relationship with the recipient countries is forming and the way that the private and public sectors are operating.

The author has discovered that, despite undeniably being caused by the institutional characteristics of the variegated market system, the Aid for Trade agenda in the Netherlands was also driven by the unique relationship that the Dutch have developed with water. They believe that water is closely linked to their national identity, "individual democracy" and "merchant" discourse in the foreign policy (Kuks, 2005; Veen, 2011). In the era of climate change and rising urgency for successful water management, it appears to be useful to research how the Dutch managed to form their unique relationship with water and the way they are packaging their knowledge as a product, taking the climate change as nothing less than an opportunity (Richter, 2018).

As the Netherlands aspires to create long-term relationship with the partner countries both on the government to government and the business to business levels, it has been stated by the interviewees to have a positive effect on success of the projects in the sphere of water. Among the reported challenges is making sure that all the stakeholders are involved, securing ownership from the recipient side and staying humble and knowing limitations of the Dutch experts. Based on the experience of the respondents, there appears to be a mismatch between the vision of the government for the engagement of the Dutch businesses abroad and the actual opportunities for the private sector in the development projects in the sphere of water.

The political situation in the Netherlands has changed dramatically since post-global-economic-crisis period. The evaluation by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Dutch water governance projects abroad have made it clear that a good balance must be found in the aid and trade agendas. Especially due to the fact that the trade opportunities in the sector and the appetite for the Dutch companies to invest proved to be small due to the limited commercial opportunities, also because water management is a responsibility of the public sector in many countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

The new international development policy of the Netherlands of 2018 has significantly changed the focus countries for development cooperation from the middle-income countries to the Middles East and North Africa (MENA)

(Rijskoverheid, 2018). As most of the countries of the region have different water challenges than the brand that the Netherlands is promoting, it means that the Dutch government may be forced to search for solutions outside of the neoliberal development paradigm. As the speaker at the seminar “The ‘Dutch Approach’ in international delta and urban integrated water management planning” put it:

Are we selling stuff or are we helping? The IOB evaluation asked the same and recommended to focus on the global good, sharing knowledge and not dressing it up as selling stuff. We will not sell it, it travels because we fund it, not because someone wants our services. Making a choice is important. (RVO, 2019)

The discussions with the interviewees also allowed to believe that there is an unspoken understanding among the Dutch development practitioners that the development cooperation focus has been changed to the MENA region to accommodate the rising concern with the immigrants in the Netherlands and in Europe in general. While the policy document does not explicitly say it, some interviewees claim to have understood the message: “That’s what we don’t want to say, but that’s what it is. <...> The Aid for Trade [is] to combat the refugees. You need to always carefully look through the words,” (Interviews 14&15). While there is little data to support this claim wider, there is a potential for the future research on the topic. It appears that water for the Dutch has become something much bigger than water management, they are using it as a strategic tool to solve issues like economic crisis, immigration and climate change while trying to capitalise on their knowledge at the same time.

While the research mostly concentrates on the Dutch development cooperation, the findings could be extrapolated to the foreign cooperation of other Western countries and the international development framework overall. The embeddedness of neoliberalism as the “deep marketisation” in the international cooperation is so deep that even the critics and opponents of aid and neoliberalism do not understand how the change in the social structure could be achieved. The topic of water in development cooperation and foreign aid has become a more prominent area of interest, especially with the adoption of Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. While both neoliberalism in foreign aid and water management are well-researched themes, there is a need to make the parallel between the two, situate international development cooperation within the neoliberal theoretical framework, analyse its effects and contingencies in order to inspire further interest in the topic, start a dialogue and search for the ways of improvement.

## **Appendix 1. List of tentative questions for interviews**

1. What do you think are the major trends in Dutch development cooperation in the past 10 years? Could you give any examples?
2. How do you think water governance as top sector is being projected on the policy level? What are the recent policies in water governance?
3. How do you think water as top sector is being projected on the practice level? What are the recent projects in water management?
4. Do you think that water governance plays any role in Dutch development cooperation? If so, in what ways? Could you give any examples?
5. From your experience, are there any implications of water governance as a key top sector in Dutch development cooperation? If there are, which ones and for whom? If not, why?
6. From your experience, are there any implications of engagement of Dutch private sector in Dutch development projects on water governance? If there are, which ones and for whom?
7. Do you think there is connection between neoliberal tendencies in development aid in the case of Dutch water governance projects abroad?

## Appendix 2. Informed consent form

<b>Project Title and version</b>	Research Paper “The Role of Water Governance in Dutch Development Cooperation”
<b>Name of Principal Investigator</b>	Kseniia Biriukova
<b>Name of Organisation</b>	International Institute for Social Studies (ISS) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam
<b>Purpose of the Study</b>	You are invited to participate in a research project about the role of water governance in current Dutch development policy. The purpose of the research project is to explore the key documents and discussions of the Dutch development cooperation and water, analyse how aid and water are interrelated, including the analysis of the recent shift of involvement of private sector in development cooperation.
<b>Procedures</b>	You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. You will be asked questions about the relationship between water governance and Dutch development cooperation.
<b>Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts</b>	There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
<b>Potential Benefits</b>	Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating you may better understand the relationship between water governance and Dutch development cooperation.

<b>Sharing the results</b>	The research findings will be shared with you upon request after 13 November 2019.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request.</p> <p>This research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researcher's password-protected computers and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.</p>
<b>Compensation</b>	There is no material compensation for your participation in the research.
<b>Right to Withdraw and Questions</b>	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the researcher Kseniia Biriukova through <a href="mailto:biriukovakseniia@gmail.com">biriukovakseniia@gmail.com</a></p>

<b>Statement of Consent</b>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>I have been given the guarantee that this research project has been reviewed and approved by the ESHCC Ethics Review Committee. For research problems or any other question regarding the re-search project, the Data Protection Officer of Erasmus University, Marlon Domingus, MA (<a href="mailto:fg@eur.nl">fg@eur.nl</a>)</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>	
<b>Audio recording</b> (if applicable)	<p>I consent to have my interview audio recorded</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	
<b>Secondary use</b> (if applicable)	<p>I consent to have the anonymised data be used for secondary analysis</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> no</p>	
<b>Signature and Date</b>	<b>NAME PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</b>
	<b>SIGNATURE</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
	<b>DATE</b>	<b>DATE</b>

### Appendix 3. Research work plan

Activity	From	To
Research paper design seminar	20 May 2019	28 May 2019
Submission of final research paper design	-	4 July 2019
Data collection	21 July 2019	24 September
Data preparation and analysis	21 August 2019	15 August 2019
Writing up findings	1 September 2019	15 September 2019
Submission full draft research paper	-	16 September 2019
Research paper draft seminars	23 September 2019	4 October 2019
Submission of final research paper	-	13 November 2019



## Appendix 4. List of interviewees

1. Employee at IOB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 18 July 2019, The Hague
2. Employee at IOB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 July 2019, The Hague
3. Employee at the Court of Audit, 25 July 2019, The Hague (in Dutch, requested transcript)
4. Delta researcher at IHE Delft, 6 August 2019, Delft
5. Employee at IGG, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13 August 2019, The Hague
6. Employee, NWP, 13 August 2019, The Hague
7. Employee, NWP, 13 August 2019, The Hague
8. Employee, NWP, 14 August 2019, via Skype
9. Employee at Waterschap De Dommel, 15 August 2019, Boxtel
10. Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, 15 August 2019, via Skype
11. Employee at Royal HaskoningDHV, 16 August 2019, Eindhoven (requested transcript)
12. Employee at FMO, 20 August 2019, via Skype (refused to have an audio recording)
13. Employee at FMO, 20 August 2019, via Skype (refused to have an audio recording)
14. Employee at Royal HaskoningDHV, 21 August 2019, Utrecht
15. Employee at Royal HaskoningDHV, 21 August 2019, Utrecht
16. Employee at VEI, 10 September 2019, Utrecht.
17. Employee at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), 13 September 2019, The Hague
18. Employee at Embassy of the Netherlands in Vietnam, via FaceTime, 20 September 2019
19. Employee at Deltares, 24 September 2019, via phone (refused to have an audio recording).

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