

International
Institute of
Social Studies

The Rise of Global Hydro-hubs in times of Climate Crisis

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Make it happen.



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At the end of the hour you will know more about:

- Branding hydro-hubs
- Dangers of seeing water as mostly “markets”
- Ways to manage hydro-hubs so that they deliver both social and economic benefits



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House-rules and set-up

- No chat in the first 15 minutes please
- Lecture for 30 minutes and discussion for 30 minutes



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Outline

- **Introduction**
- **Why?** Triangle dilemma
- **What?** A hydro-hub in NL
- **How?** The rise of hydro-hubs and NL strategies
- **So what?** Why care about hydro-hubs
- Summary of contributions
- Discussion



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Introduction: Water is Life

- SDGs 6, 13 and 14 directly address water;
- All others are related indirectly
- Global climate change makes water governance a matter of life or death

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Water: a Public or an Economic Good?

- Water in SDGs is key to **Global Public Goods**
 - resilience to climate change
 - sustainable supplies of clean water
 - food security, global peace, justice

BUT...

Water is also an **Economic Good**

- it costs money to collect, clean and deliver water
- it costs money to build dams and dikes to protect against floods
- it will cost more as water gets **scarcer** and less predictable

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Water Expertise as Commodity and Diplomacy

Source: Ekbladh, D. (2002: 366)

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Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the world

Source: Ekbladh, D. (2002: 354; original from 1959 Milwaukee Journal)

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US Global Water Strategy (2017)

“The Strategy aims to reduce disease and save lives, eradicate poverty, and promote sustainable economic growth, increase food and energy security, build peace and security, and open up international markets to U.S. technologies and approaches...”



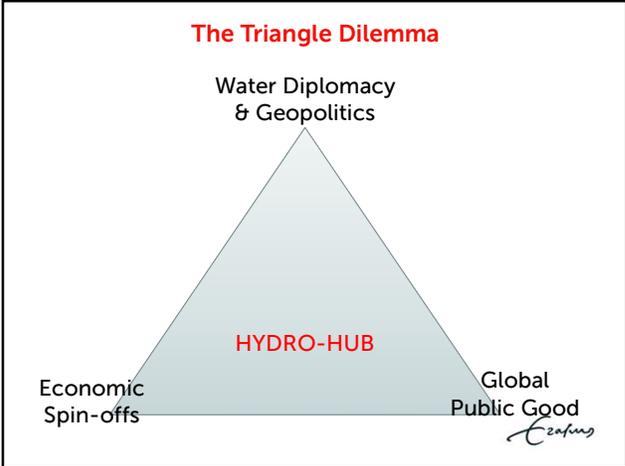
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United Kingdom Flood Partnership (2017)

“The commercial market for the export of flood resilience services is incredible – worth billions of pounds (...). Everyone has been paddling their own boat but now is the time to come together and compete with the Dutch on an international level”.



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What makes a HYDRO-HUB?

- Distinct identity (difference from the rest of the world, e.g. the "Dutch Delta Approach", the "Singapore Model")
- Proven as a role model for others
- Strong narrative involving *plot, villain, hero, resolution*
- A link to national identity
- *Naturalizing and Universalizing Expertise*



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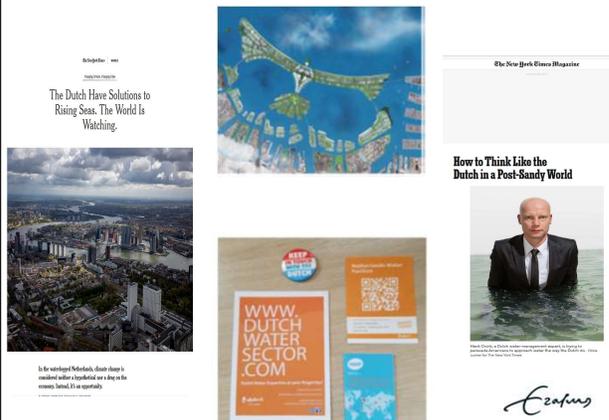
The Netherlands as a Global Hydro-Hub

In 2016 The Netherlands exported **8,1 billion USD** worth of water technology and knowledge;

Aid budget for water in 2006-2016 was **871 million EUR**, most of which (59%) administered by the embassies in partner countries;




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Dutch Water Sector on an International Adventure

- "Dutch Delta Approach" (e.g. Vietnam, Mozambique, Bangladesh)
- Dutch Water Authorities (working in dozens of countries around the world through "Blue Deal")
- Water Diplomacy in transboundary basins (2011)
- Dutch Water Companies ("Green Deal Partnerships")
- International Water Ambition (2016)
- Netherlands International Water Ambition (2019)

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BRANDING HYDRO-HUBS

- Telling stories (within and without)
- Universalising expertise
- **Creating demand**
- **Making demand look natural**
- Communicate via media, International Organisations, conferences, events etc.
- Work closely with the World Bank and United Nations
- Engage in knowledge production (universities, research)



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The Dutch excellence in water as a discourse

"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" (King Willem-Alexander Oranje in 1997, cited in (Wassink, 2013).

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"Dutch Delta Approach" Traveling the World

Visual summary, Shahnoor Hasan "What makes the Dutch Approach travel or not?"

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Example: Dutch Water Authorities or waterschappen

- Established in the 13th century and functioned uninterrupted even since;
- Management of water defences such as dikes, navigable waterways, and purification of wastewater;
- All residents of the Netherlands contribute to water authorities via tax and voting at the elections;

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Dutch Water Authorities in Cali, Colombia

- DWAs "De Dommel" and "Aan en Maas" working together with Arcadis and Royal Haskoning DHV in Cali, Colombia;
- DWAs have been advising on governance and "multi-stakeholder management" processes – the Dutch "polder-model";
- Informal houses were removed along the river Cauca causing a scandal in the Colombian and later Dutch media;
- *Los Holandeses* used as an excuse by corrupt elites.

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Wide-spread criticism of Dutch water policy

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Change of Direction?

IOB evaluation <...> 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 (Netherlands MFA Official 2019)

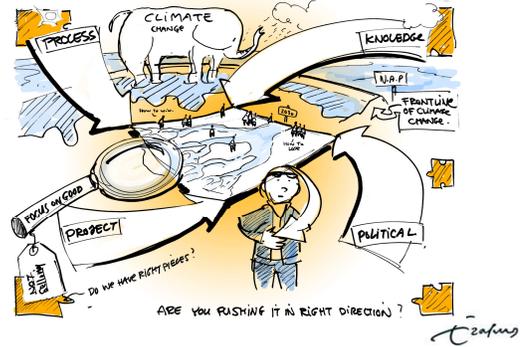


Netherlands International Water Aspirations (NIWA)

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Balancing Global Development and Economic Spin-offs



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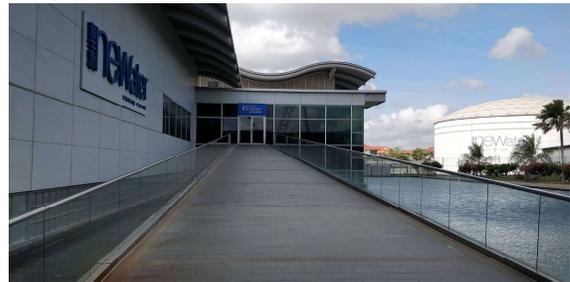
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NEWater Visitor's Centre in Singapore



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Singapore as a Hydro-Hub

- City branding
- Collaborative work
- Focused on urban water security under scarcity
- Goal: attract investment and help SG water companies to export technology and expertise
- Not very aggressive communication



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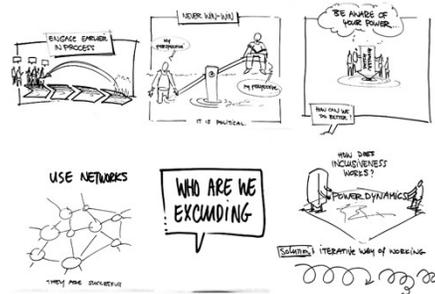
Implications of scramble for global water markets

- A new form of state supported capitalism in the struggle for new markets that involves savvy branding
- Imposed policies and solution may have negative consequences in the contexts where they are applied (e.g. Cali)
- Universal solutions ignore local context (IOB review)
- Universal solutions encourage "techno-speak" that means little to those dealing with water on the ground
- Tensions between the needs of hydro-hubs to make profits and the needs of clients to solve local governance issues

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What can be done differently?



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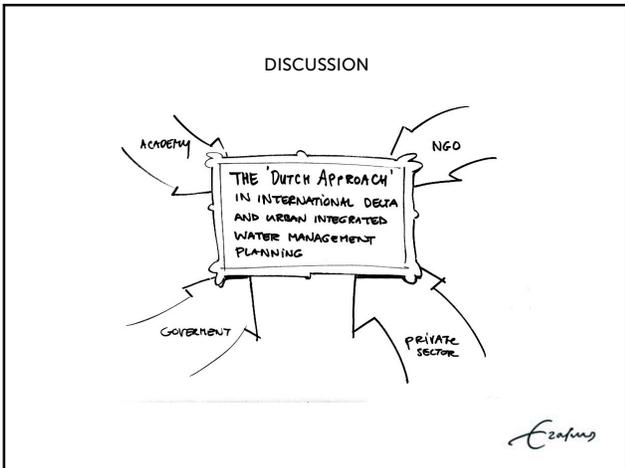


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- Hydro-hubs matter (city branding vs. nation branding); large profits and competition
- Different modes for a hydro-hub; trial and error
- Hydro-hubs present the triangle dilemma as a win-win-win; in reality choices have to be made
- International Organisations and global water discourse is/are not neutral and hydro-hubs make use of that
- Branding is key, but maintaining a brand is hard work
- Keep aid & trade separate or look at projects in clusters



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