



Special report

# Towards a global development strategy

A foundation for the future

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# Towards a global development strategy



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**L**ess Pretension, More Ambition, a report written by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), has succeeded in shaking up the aid debate. It has reiterated the urgency of thoroughly rethinking development policies. Over the past two months, more than 100 people contributed to the blog about the WRR report hosted by *The Broker*. Indeed, rapidly changing international relations, global crises, growing insights into what works and what doesn't, and political, social and cultural turmoil in donor countries, make it necessary to fundamentally overhaul the traditional aid paradigm.

In this 24-page special report, *The Broker* summarizes the debate so far and simultaneously provides a springboard for further and more in-depth discussion, which will take place online on *The Broker's* blog in the coming months.

The WRR team kicks off this special report by outlining their main recommendations. The subsequent discussion is divided into four sections. First, 'Getting the basics right', explains general principles: the motives, goals, definitions, scale and concepts of development that determine how a policy is shaped. Second, 'Going global', explores one of the main pillars of the report, global development. It is precisely because global development requires the most scrutiny that it is given prominence over another pillar, the need for 'diagnostics' and a more 'country-specific approach' discussed in the third section, 'Identifying obstacles'. Finally, 'Building a new structure' examines the consequences of all this for the 'development architecture', i.e. the new set of governmental and other organizational institutions that will be needed to manage new realities.

This is obviously an arbitrary classification. The report tackles so many issues that there is essentially something for everyone. Not surprisingly, the responses were varied and often contradictory. Above all, we have tried to create a 'synthesis', a common ground upon which to build a new development strategy that will usher in a new phase of the debate and produce real alternatives.

Occasionally there were fundamental disagreements as well. Sometimes a constructive debate needs clear opposition, as it gives people something to choose from. We hope this will spark a constructive follow-up debate that will lead to the emergence of a new development architecture in the Netherlands.

We would like to set the bar even higher. The WRR calls for the formulation of a Dutch 'globalization agenda', an 'analysis of Dutch interests at a global level, and a strategy to safeguard global public goods'. If the interests of the poor and the excluded are seen as a global public good, then we could not agree more.

Traditional poverty reduction should be embedded in a much more comprehensive global policy.

Although only a limited number of blog posts deal with these issues at a global level, the vague contours of a new policy area are beginning to emerge, which the WRR calls 'global development'. This means a policy that focuses on global public goods, global governance and policy coherence – supranational factors that create an enabling environment and remove constraints for development and emancipation. Some advocate combining this with worldwide (and Dutch national) environmental policies and suggest that global *sustainable* development be used as an umbrella concept. Others look at violence and conflict, and prefer policies that focus on global human security.

This is not to say that global development should entirely replace aid at the local level. On the contrary, endogenous development is the explicit aim. And it is also at this level that context-specific analysis – diagnostics, as the WRR calls it – should lead to more strategic policy making. The biggest challenge might be how to consolidate these two different perspectives – the global and the local – into one coherent, effective analytical and policy framework.

We hope to welcome in the next round of debating the views of those who until now have refrained from participating: the economists, political scientists, international relations academics, sociologists involved in transnational networks or global social movements, climate philosophers, experts in the field of ICT and web 2.0, 'new wars' or urbanization, as well as defence and energy specialists – in other words, all of those who in light of their specific expertise should be contributing to new perspectives on global development.

We hope that everyone will join us again for a constructive follow-up debate on *The Broker* website, where you can find longer versions of the sections in this special report containing extensive quotes and links to the relevant texts.

See you there.

**Frans Bieckmann**, editor in chief of *The Broker*, compiled the discussion sections of this special report. He and Ellen Lammers coordinated the online debate that is summarized in the following pages. Special thanks go to Annemarie van de Vijzel.

# Aid for development can be better

In its report *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, the WRR recognizes that aid can make only a limited contribution to development. A shift of emphasis is needed towards development and growth, with more focus on global and regional issues.

There is no lack of sweeping statements about development aid. Some people claim that aid only helps bolster corrupt regimes, while others persistently believe that we can eliminate poverty from the world with just a few trillion dollars. Driven by an agitated media, development aid finds itself at the centre of a wide-ranging debate. And that is a good thing.

At least, it is a good thing that there is a debate – development aid has been a closed book for too long. The people of the Netherlands have trusted their government to ensure, in a civilized way, that the world's poor share in our prosperity. Nearly half of them make private donations to help achieve this, on top of the money they have already contributed through their taxes. Yet the question of how best to promote development has been met with silence. The poignancy of alleviating need has always appealed much more to people's imagination than the tough question of how aid can best be delivered.

By **Pieter van Lieshout**, member of the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), **Monique Kremer** and **Robert Went**, members of the WRR scientific staff. The WRR is currently working on a follow-up publication in English, which will include their reflections on the current debate and which will appear later this year.

It is time for the debate to move into a new phase: from sweeping statements to the question of what is and is not sensible, and how it should be organized. And that is what the WRR is aiming to achieve with its report *Less Pretension, More Ambition: Development Aid that Makes a Difference*. The title sums up the essence of the report in a nutshell. The importance of development aid is overestimated by both its supporters and its critics. Aid can make, at most, a limited contribution to development, and then only under specific conditions. That calls for modesty. Yet, in an increasingly interdependent world, helping countries that lag behind to catch up is both crucial and in our own interest. That calls for ambition.

Let it be clear from the start that there is no need for wholesale pessimism. Poverty has been halved in the past 30 years. In 1981, half of the world's population lived below the poverty line, now that is a quarter. Life expectancy has increased by ten years in the same period. These are reasons to rejoice, but not especially about development aid, which only made a small contribution to these successes. Three-quarters of those lifted out of poverty live in China, and that has been achieved virtually without external aid. Most Asian countries have developed and become prosperous, but those in sub-Saharan Africa have fallen way

behind. In 2010, as in 1981, half of the people living in the region still live below the poverty line but, because the population has grown, that means a lot more poor people in absolute terms.

Why has Africa not followed the path taken by Asia? There are several reasons. Unlike India or Indonesia, for example, Africa was divided up into largely artificial countries. The continent was robbed of its own social elites by the colonial powers, but the colonial era was too short for them to be built up again. African economies now rely heavily on natural resources, making them dependent on fluctuating prices on global markets. The continent is also thinly populated, so that constructing and maintaining infrastructure is relatively expensive. In many areas, soils are depleted. Finally, the emergence of Asian countries as producers of cheap, mass-produced goods only makes it more difficult for African countries to find a niche for themselves on the global stage. Together, all of these factors make development in Africa a difficult task for the countries concerned, and for donors.

What can be done about this? The WRR proposes a future-oriented development policy that to some extent mirrors recent plans for reform in the UK, Canada and the Scandinavian countries. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also called for similar changes in January 2010. The WRR's proposals can be summarized under three



headings: development, a country-specific approach and a broader perspective. We look at each of these concepts in the following.

#### **Development and self-reliance**

First and foremost, we need to revisit the *objective* of aid. Since the 1990s, it has been narrowed down to poverty reduction, especially in the sense of caring for the poor. That is an understandable response to the hard, macroeconomic adjustment strategies of the 1980s, but has led in practice to aid primarily taking the form of social care. Like most other donors, the Netherlands spends more than three-quarters of its aid on social sectors such as education and healthcare, while agriculture, infrastructure and economic activity have been pushed into the background. The focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has reinforced this process.

Offering care to people may be noble, but does not in itself lead to self-sufficient countries or improve the prospects for future generations. Creating opportunities for development and economic growth should once again be the main objective of aid, rather than subsidizing social sectors by default. Development once again needs to adopt a broader perspective. Until the advent of neoliberalism in the late 1970s, there was a consensus – from W.W. Rostow on the right to the dependency theorists on the

left – that transforming the productive sectors was crucial for development. In the 1950s and 1960s, other dimensions of development were added (by the UN and Amartya Sen, among others), and a lot more attention was devoted to institutions. But attempts to translate those insights into development practice have been woefully inadequate.

Development can be defined as a conscious acceleration of the process of modernization, involving synchronized transitions of economy, government, the political system and society. Modernization as it occurred in the West from the nineteenth century led to the creation of

- a well-developed and productive economic system embedded in international trade relations;
- a government apparatus capable of providing (or facilitating the provision of) essential services such as education, healthcare, shelter and security;
- a political system that guarantees collective decision-making processes allowing citizens to feel connected to >



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the outcomes of those processes and to each other; and

- a society that is sufficiently open and offers the space to pursue diverse individual and collective development ambitions.

It is important to see this description of development as a template or guideline, rather than an exact institutional blueprint. A productive economy, for example, does not necessarily mean large-scale industrial production, a responsive government does not have to be a representative democracy, and an open society does not always mean that freedom of expression takes precedence, or that group interests are not recognized. The exact manner in which these different dimensions take shape is determined by history and deliberation, and that can occur in any of a number of different ways. Nor does the above description say how the development process develops in detail. There is very little chance that

development paths in the South will follow exactly the same course as the West did in the nineteenth century.

Approaching development in this way also places the donors' task in a different light. Donors may, on the basis of humanitarian considerations, choose to spend all or part of their financial resources on improving the living standards of people in developing countries. But, where possible, the focus must lie on making countries and people self-reliant, even if that means devoting more attention to the middle classes, economic growth and other activities that are less easily captured in mediagenic pictures.

#### **Specific and diagnostic approaches**

At present, the Netherlands has adopted a 'confetti' strategy: it is active in many areas, but why, where and for what purpose often remain unclear, as do the possible long-term effects. For the future, we need well-reasoned country

strategies. Ready-to-go recipes or 'big answers' – from import substitution through the Washington consensus to good governance and democracy – never fit exactly. Today's development aid is insufficiently country-specific or focused on context. Institutional reforms instigated by donors are usually based on a 'best practice' model, which assumes that it is possible to derive in advance a unique set of suitable institutional arrangements from a practice that has been successful in one context, and then apply them elsewhere. This takes no account of the complex realities of specific countries, and soon results in a demoralizing list of adjustments, all of which are important. The development paths of the rich countries and six decades of development policy teach us that there are no replicable examples or generally applicable recipes for development. To assume that there are can all too easily have undesirable consequences.

Professional assistance with development can be compared with the way good doctors help their patients. It starts with an expert diagnosis, with a trained eye, to establish where in a country or region the worst pain is being experienced, and what is causing it. The second step is to decide on the most effective means of alleviating it. A 'diagnostic' approach thus means determining as precisely as possible where the greatest barriers to development lie. They may be in the economic sphere (for example, too limited credit opportunities for companies, or inadequate infrastructure), in the government or state apparatus (e.g. a lack of security or ineffective rule of law), or within society as a whole (insufficient people with the right qualifications, or a lack of trust).

The next step is to determine which of these binding constraints is the most important and needs to be addressed first. This is not a purely technical exercise, since it will inevitably touch on established positions, power relations and conflicts of interest. Whatever remedy is eventually chosen will be the result of a political process. But this working method does make it possible to identify specific obstacles to



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development, and to tackle problems in the right order (sequencing), rather than to see everything as equally relevant or urgent and needing to be addressed in the same way.

To make a real difference, in-depth investments are required. Donors must know their business, be prepared for the long haul, and know how to play the game according to the local rules. They also need a broad perspective. If you want to improve agriculture you need to know not only about farming techniques, but also about buying fertilizer, European import conditions, opportunities for marketing a variety of crops, and how to organize local farmers into cooperatives that suit them.

It is also important to ensure that aid does not have an overly disruptive impact locally because everyone focuses on the donors. For too long, we have been so concerned with whether aid has been effective that we have forgotten that it can also be harmful or counterproductive. Each country requires a tailor-made, specific approach. In some countries, general budget support will be most appropriate, while elsewhere it may be more sensible to invest in local insurance systems or to build up middle classes. What is certainly not helpful is the annual pressure to spend aid funds. Money would be better provided in the form of funds that can be utilized according to need.

Development aid that makes a difference calls for a professional organization. That implies, unlike the current situation in the Netherlands, having an organization in which expertise takes precedence over job rotation. That can best be achieved by establishing local implementing organizations in a limited number of developing countries, which we could give the collective name NLaid. Such a structure, with country branches forming an organizational unit, would make it possible to build up a thorough knowledge of the recipient country and establish long-term relationships, while leaving space to mobilize the right

expertise from the Netherlands or elsewhere. This structure would also promote a programme-based method of working. A variety of actors would need to be involved in the process, including ministries, civil society organizations and companies. It would also entail the Netherlands concentrating on a limited number of countries (a maximum of ten) and profiling itself in themes or sectors where it has special expertise. Norway has agreed a ten-year 'Oil for Development' programme with a number of countries. The Netherlands could conclude cooperation agreements with a small group of countries on themes such as agriculture, water or civil society.

A focused, professional organization would enable us to design development aid as a learning system. If we invest seriously in a limited number of countries and sectors, we can set up a knowledge infrastructure around that in which the staff involved and Dutch and international knowledge institutes can participate. The Netherlands currently spends only a fraction of its development budget on knowledge



Promoting development means devoting more attention to managing cross-border interdependencies and realizing global development opportunities.

development, especially when compared to other countries (e.g. the UK) or sectors (like healthcare and education). A significant portion – 6% of the development budget is not a high figure – of the total budget should therefore also be made available for systematic research and development.

In line with this, it would be the task of the Netherlands to promote the decentralization of knowledge development, i.e. developing countries should be enabled to create their own knowledge infrastructure. The West currently has a quasi-monopoly in this respect. That might be justifiable if knowledge on development were carved in stone, but that is not the case. Global

variation and selection are required. The best way to do this would be to set up three or four knowledge banks around the world, which gather knowledge on development and introduce ideas for policy that both learn from and compete with one another. At least one of these should be based in Africa, another in Asia. It would also seem logical to work towards a type of European 'World Bank', bringing together European tools for knowledge, loans, subsidies and policy.

### A broader perspective

In a limited number of countries such a concentrated approach may have added value, but the greatest development benefit can be achieved by adopting a broader perspective. Development is increasingly interconnected with broader global and regional issues. That means that we must ask what impact the extensive areas of national and European policy that do not belong to the classical domain of development are having on developing countries. Stability and security, terms of trade that facilitate development, an honest fiscal system that does not tempt companies to evade paying taxes in developing countries, less strict intellectual property rights for poor countries, more opportunities to

exchange knowledge, and a more properly thought-out migration policy can all ultimately be of greater significance to a country's development than classical aid provided *in situ*. Promoting development therefore means, in addition to more focus and professionalization, devoting more attention to managing cross-border interdependencies and realizing global development opportunities.

This new world calls for innovative ways of ensuring coherence between different policy instruments. Current coordination mechanisms, global or national, are inadequate. In the Netherlands, the coordination mechanisms of the existing



administrative model for addressing trade, migration, financial stability, climate, food, energy, knowledge, security and development issues from a coherent perspective are lodged too much at the operational and not enough at the political-strategic level.

At the global level, more intensive attention to coherence policy and international public goods calls for investment in innovative forms of funding and regulation, as well as new forms of global governance. The UN offers many worthwhile ideas, but is weak organizationally and in implementation. All manner of associated structures and consultation mechanisms have emerged – the latest being the G20 which, since the financial crisis, has replaced the G7 as the global coordinating body. In fields like climate, fisheries, trade and healthcare there are often separate mechanisms which are only loosely affiliated to the UN system, and for migration and financial stability they exist only to a limited extent or are not very effective. New forms and structures will have to be developed, with roles not only for existing international organizations and national states, but also for companies and civil society organizations.

It is not easy to give shape to a broad, development-oriented policy. The Netherlands lacks a globalization agenda, an analysis of Dutch interests at the global level, and a strategy to safeguard global public goods. Other Western countries are also still in the dark in these areas. One thing, however, is clear: we have to think beyond the Millennium Development Goals. It would show suitable ambition also to take the next step and question the importance of the 0.7% of national income set aside for development aid. Such a standard suits an isolated system of aid, but development in an increasingly interdependent world depends more and more on other flows (FDI, remittances, migration) and issues. It will be more interesting and more appropriate in this new reality to attempt to formulate a new measure that includes not only aid, but also efforts with regard to international

regulations and public goods relevant to development policy. That would also lead to a much more fruitful debate than the eternal question of whether our budget for development aid should be more or less than 0.7 or 0.8%. Furthermore, the portfolio of the current Minister for Development Cooperation should be upgraded to managing NLAID and formulating a Dutch globalization agenda

that considers a number of global problems in context and develops a Dutch perspective on them.

Giving priority to development, creating real added value by providing targeted and professional aid in those countries where it is still necessary and possible, and meanwhile bringing about a shift of emphasis by reasoning less from a

country perspective and more from global and regional tasks – and all in the awareness that the Netherlands can only make a small difference – that means exchanging our pretensions for ambitions. ♡



General principles for a new development policy

# Getting the basics right

The energetic online debate about the motives, definitions and perceptions of development is a starting point for reformulating development policies.



Skyscraper ecosystem

The pictures on this and subsequent pages are images of winning designs of the 2010 Skyscraper Competition organized by eVolo Magazine ([www.evolo.us](http://www.evolo.us)). This annual event recognizes 'out of the box' ideas that redefine skyscraper design.

The WRR report focuses a great deal of attention on the motives, goals and principles underlying development policy. And rightly so, because any policy theory has to start with a clear description of its policy goal, addressing why that goal needs to be achieved, for whom and on whose behalf. These fundamental questions will largely determine the ultimate ins and outs of a policy, the 'what' and the 'how'.

## Motives

The WRR distinguishes between two types of motive for aid that can, in principle, co-exist: moral motives and self-interest. Each of these motives implies a different interpretation of what aid should do or look like.

A number of contributors to the WRR blog state that both moral

emancipation. [Eric Smaling](#) opposes the idea that there 'first has to be growth before anything can be shared. It's one of the choices available, but one that abandons solidarity and that's something I feel very strongly about'.

There is a certain degree of confusion in the debate about the motives, development perceptions and goals of giving aid. At a deeper level, however, it seems there is consensus on the need for a more structural approach. What the WRR presents as modern moral trends (the capabilities and rights approaches, and alternative globalism) are described by others as alternative development visions or goals.

The WRR describes the current goal of development policy – poverty reduction – in fairly negative terms, namely as 'care for the poor' and

 Both moral motives and collective self-interest should be the driving forces: moral motives should safeguard the interests of the weakest.

motives and self-interest play a role in today's aid industry. However, the WRR's recommendation that collective self-interest should prevail over moral motives has provoked criticism from various quarters.

[Henk Jochensen](#), for example, suggests that normative choices are needed, while [Allert van den Ham](#) believes it is essential to support the weakest, which means promoting democratization and

providing services to alleviate distress. In the WRR's view, a more structural approach is needed that promotes self-reliance and 'opportunities for development and economic growth', so that countries can take into their own hands the task of helping the poor.

Many contributors express considerable resistance to the WRR's narrow definition of modern poverty reduction and the related portrayal of

Dutch development policy as subsidizing ‘palliative’ measures that scarcely contribute to productivity. Some argue that current development policy applies a much broader definition of poverty than the WRR suggests. As [Paul Hoebink](#) notes, ‘the WRR seems to have overlooked the fact ... that nowadays a broad, “multidimensional” definition of poverty is being embraced’.



A multidimensional definition of poverty should be a guiding principle that covers material poverty, (human) security, and social, economic, cultural and political participation.

[Maarten Brouwer](#) writes that donors and developing countries had already agreed in 1999 ‘on an interpretation of the term poverty reduction, based on five different dimensions: social, economic, cultural, political and security-related. All these dimensions of poverty relate to the degree to which individuals are free to develop in that dimension. If all these dimensions are taken at face value, what more is then needed to promote self-reliance?’

### Economic focus

Another, related criticism concerns the goals of development, and in particular

the WRR’s one-sided focus on increasing productivity for the sake of economic growth. At first reading, the report indeed seems to be set on counteracting what it sees as the donors’ excessive emphasis on the social sectors. But the WRR also says that it helps to ‘reason in terms of an economic sector, a political system, a government apparatus and social fabric, although these four

elements can only be differentiated from each other to a limited degree’. In other words, the WRR does acknowledge that the economic component must be part of a broad, integrated approach.

If the WRR is only seeking to re-establish the balance and the relative weight of economic productivity within the dynamics of a broader social, political, economic and governance framework, then something approaching a broad consensus would appear to be possible.

Opinions do differ, however, as to whether this is already happening in practice.

### Interventionism or social change

A parallel discussion on the blog concerns the desired approach to aid. Do we need a more technical or interventionist approach to aid? Or do we need an approach that views development as a complex series of social processes of change, in which



Instead of a more technical and interventionist top-down approach, development policies should shift their focus to catalyzing endogenous development processes by removing obstacles and enhancing an enabling environment. Strategic analysis can help determine exactly how to achieve this in specific contexts.

top-down intervention makes less sense? Many contributors criticize the WRR for adhering to this more interventionist stance.

[Laurent Umans](#) writes that the ‘report mobilizes a classic image of donors and

recipients’. [Francine Mestrum](#) emphasizes the endogenous nature of development and advocates more ‘focus on what poor countries can do themselves’. She adds that ‘the first condition for a successful development policy clearly has to be a national development programme. Expertise has to come from within. It is not in Western countries that one can decide what good development is and what it is not.’

[Rob D. van den Berg](#) points out that the report largely ignores the debate on ‘catalysing development’ that took place at the beginning of this century. ‘Many experts argued that aid should in fact have a catalytic role, providing a spark that would initiate home-grown developments, rather than be directly responsible for economic growth and poverty reduction.’

Even if the WRR doesn’t refer to this debate explicitly, its ultimate goal seems to be the same. For [Seth Kaplan](#), ‘the one key element that should drive all change is that aid should work towards making “countries and peoples self-sufficient”’. This ties together many of the report’s recommendations’. He advocates capacity building and suggests that the ‘best way to do this is to focus on key “nodes” that promise to have multiplier effects across institutions’. These nodes are similar to [Van den Berg’s](#) catalysts, or the drivers of change referred to by the WRR. Or, in the words of [Tom van der Lee](#), ‘Development (or modernization) is a political process, a struggle for emancipation, much more than a mechanical solution for a technical

problem ... This fits in with the WRR’s very recognizable recommendation that aid must, above all, contribute to self-reliance. We interpret this not only in an economic, but also in a political and social sense, because we base our

### The political economy of aid

Some contributors ([Hoebink](#), [Visser](#), [Meertens](#), [Beerends](#), [Willems](#)) draw attention to the ‘political economy of aid’ ([Gunning](#)) and ask why apparently logical solutions are not included in policy. After all, people have been arguing for decades in favour of more self-reliance and other sound proposals made by the WRR. The WRR report is part of a long critical tradition within development theory that has even permeated deeply into practice and policy but then primarily as rhetoric (the WRR is right on this point).

[Jan Willem Gunning](#) points out that ‘the report ... does not ask the obvious question: Why would reform succeed now if strong vested interests have successfully blocked it so often in the past?’

thinking on a broad concept of prosperity.'

If there is indeed such a consensus, the important thing now is to broaden the debate about how to develop the diagnostics so that the strategic catalyst role can be used as effectively as possible.

### Scale

Scale is another fundamental issue. Is the state the basic unit of analysis and policy making, or should other dimensions also be considered as a starting point? If so, should policy making be on a global scale or a human, individual scale? Should it be implemented on a micro or a macro level? Or a combination of the two, depending on the context? **Louk Box** writes, 'As a government advisory council, the WRR is rather donor- and state-centred'.

And **Louis Emmerij** writes, 'of course you need a macro framework, and increasingly a global framework, within which you can flesh out national and regional policy details in a consistent manner'.

 **Scale is important. If the state is used as a starting point, it leads to different policy options and strategic choices than if a global scale is used as the basic unit of analysis.**

A final aspect of scale that underlies much of the debate is the question of whether countries or indeed people (and their social ties) should be taken as the point of departure for policy. **Jan Gruiters** believes that 'recognizing that the state perspective is insufficient and needs to be supplemented by the human perspective is important not only for reasons of security, but equally so for development'.

For some contributors, development should not focus on the progress of countries but of individuals – human development, in other words, or human security. **Leon Willems** believes that 'a secure and dignified life for all people' should be the central aim of a development policy. **Anneke Wensing** comments that overall the WRR report



*A vertical prison*

is 'shockingly gender blind'. Further, in her opinion, the WRR report 'ignored the role of people – both men and women – in the development process, even though economic growth and development are created by people, by


men and women, each of whom contributes in their own way to development and therefore creates the conditions for development to take place in'.

### Modernization

Lastly, opinions are divided on the WRR's definition of development as 'a conscious acceleration of the process of modernization'. First and foremost, there is criticism of the use of the term 'modernization', which the critics see as a fundamentally Western concept.

More fundamental criticism of the WRR's definition of modernization, which has major potential consequences for further policy interpretation, relates again to the scale at which the issues in question are addressed.

Anyone who takes the Earth as a basic unit of analysis (and policy) and not the nation state, may end up with entirely different priorities. **René Grotenhuis** remarks that 'modernity as a development project of the Western world (Europe, North America, Japan) is reaching its ecological and economic limits. It is clear that the linear extension of that modernity is not feasible. We therefore need two things that can both be characterized as development: a thorough reform of the Western model in the direction of sustainability (social and ecological) and the involvement of developing countries in sustainable globalization.'

In a second contribution, **Grotenhuis** proposes defining an 'overarching goal' that links together the WRR's three goals. 'Poverty reduction, economic growth and contribution to global public goods are not convincing as goals. They could also be seen as intervention strategies, actions taken to realize something on a higher level.' In other words, they can be seen essentially as instruments, resources for achieving a different goal. As far as **Grotenhuis** is concerned, that overarching goal is sustainable global development. 

## Alternative political projects

# Going global

**Our increasingly interdependent world requires development policies that acknowledge the global context and address a new reality where a variety of actors as well as the state play a role.**

**W**hile “international cooperation” suits the era in which states maintained sovereign external relations with one another, the term “global development” expresses the fact that, more and more frequently, national policy also has consequences in other countries ... and that development takes place in a global context in which various actors operate’ (WRR).

If there is one element of the WRR report that has received almost unanimous praise, it is its emphasis on the global context in which development policy has to be positioned. This ‘broader perspective’ – one of the three pillars of the report – is certainly the most promising. It is based on the new reality in which policy has to be shaped: a rapidly globalizing and increasingly interdependent world. Such an observation is hardly new, but it has implications for development policy (or rather, for the role the Netherlands can or should play in addressing urgent global issues, including poverty and exclusion). So far, little effort has been made to think through these policy implications systematically, let alone to attempt to tailor the current institutional and societal architecture of aid accordingly.

## (Unit of) analysis

Alongside the praise for the WRR’s global analysis, there have been dissenting views of three kinds. The

first set of criticisms focuses on the omission of one particular angle or another in the analysis. Second, there is wide agreement that the global analysis has not been consistently applied in the policy recommendations. The third set of criticisms relate to the core of the report’s analysis.

One explanation for the disconnect between the analysis and recommendations is that the WRR, despite its awareness of global relationships, does not take the global arena as its basic unit of analysis. It sees development as something that takes place at the national level, with global trends providing the context, and presenting either obstacles to or opportunities for development.

**Janne Nijman:** ‘There is a conceptual discrepancy between the initial analysis of a changing global context and the state-oriented policy recommendations that are put forward at the end. The increasingly modest role of the state – one actor among many – can stimulate the emergence of global governance innovations.’

One of the consequences of the WRR’s ‘national’ rather than ‘global’ view in its policy recommendations is that certain groups of people, who have been excluded worldwide, remain below the radar. If a global analysis had been predominant, for example, the development focus of the WRR could have led to different policy choices,

writes **René Grotenhuis:** ‘Considering the emphasis the report puts on development, it’s difficult to understand why it focuses almost exclusively on Africa. South Asia and Latin America seem to completely fall by the wayside. The millions of farmers in India’s



**Global development should supplant international cooperation**

countryside and slums, not to mention their fellow sufferers in the rest of Asia and Central America, are equally excluded from society’.

A number of contributors feel that the WRR paid insufficient attention to the roles of new actors and new organizational forms (apart from states and their international cooperation) in the global arena (towns and cities, networks, global movements). **Janne Nijman:** ‘Without exploring the “global network” dimension, an analysis of how our global society works and how its problems may be solved remains inadequate’. At the same time, a more global view would probably have led the authors to argue for (economic or other) interventions in and through global ‘value chains’, or via transnational networks of businesses, migrants, NGOs, etc.

In other words, the fact that the WRR’s analysis is primarily oriented



Double stuffed skyscraper

towards the nation state has meant that several elements of global reality have been omitted. Important issues such as global and regional geopolitics are ignored, while the competition for scarce raw materials and energy is referred to only in passing. They are not embedded in the core of the analysis.

Jan Gruiters, Leon Willems and Ben Schennink believe that the analysis of ‘the security issue’ (as the Council calls it) is inadequate. Jan Gruiters admits that there is a lot of discussion about the concept of ‘fragile’ or ‘failing states’, but that still covers some 50 countries with more than one billion people, where internal and regional dynamics are determined to a great extent by (armed) conflicts. Leon Willems: ‘The issue of human security is one of the more striking omissions in the WRR’s formulation of common goods. It should have been mentioned in a drastically changed world facing international terrorism and its counter measures.’ Ben Schennink: ‘What’s striking about the analysis of the ‘security issue’, as the WRR calls it, is that it primarily links responsibility for it to UN peacekeeping operations, using Iraq and Afghanistan to exemplify security-related difficulties and opportunities. These are strange examples when it comes to the issue of how we can contribute to finding solutions for conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa.’


### Disembedded globalization

The WRR has done an impressive job of summarizing many of the ongoing discussions and controversies in the field of development policy. When it comes to presenting a global vision, the WRR takes an extra step and presents a clear normative position. It argues in favour of the ‘socialization of globalization’, and relates this to the concept of ‘disembedded globalization’. Here, the WRR draws an analogy with the work of historian and economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi, who argued in *The Great Transformation* (1944), that ‘the economic liberalism of the 1920s with its belief in a self-regulating market mechanism had led to the elimination of all interventionist policies which interfered with the freedom of the markets’, and had ‘disembedded the economy from society’. The ensuing increase in

Although free markets are often misperceived as natural, sovereign, self-contained, and self-regulating, a market economy cannot exist independently of the society and rules in which it is located. ... We now find ourselves in a transnational phase in which global markets have become more and more disembedded ... due to new technologies and liberalization, privatization and deregulation from societies and nation states.’

It is striking that none of the contributors to the online debate explicitly responded to this vision of embedded globalization.

This is unfortunate. The concept deserves to be debated because it could effectively serve as a guiding concept for the design of future global development policies. The notion of disembedded globalization implies that worldwide (economic) relations must be seen as

 There are more relevant actors than just states in the new global reality: cities, networks, movements, business, NGOs, value chains, diaspora.

inequality, instability and insecurity resulted in the recession of the 1930s and the rise of fascism. For Polanyi, ‘the notion of embeddedness underlines the fact that economic activity is created and shaped by political decisions, social conventions, and shared norms and understandings.

forming a system or a global society, one within which important balances have been disturbed. It also offers solutions for restoring the balance.

### Global public goods

Apart from disembedded globalization, other political projects are also



conceivable. Perhaps the most significant criticism of the WRR's global analysis is the fact that it establishes no conceptual link with one of today's most important, and widely discussed, global public goods: the climate, or rather, the global environment. This missing relationship is partly due to the WRR's decision to take the nation state as its point of departure for analysis, and not the world, or the 'Earth system'. Doing the latter would, according to René Grotenhuis, clarify the limits of modernization. 'In the report, the WRR accepts "accelerated modernization" as the goal of development cooperation. But it does not question this starting



Global public goods must enter the equation; strategic choices for specific goods must be made.

point. ... Bringing global goods into the debate should have caused the WRR to reflect on this modernization theory as the overarching goal of development cooperation.'

The increasing pressure on the environment, and on supplies of raw materials, is being aggravated by population growth and ageing, several contributors argue. [Herman Mulder](#) also misses the 'necessity and the enormous potential of the green economy'. For [Roger van Boxtel](#) and [Willem Ferwerda](#), 'the ultimate global public good', the planet and its ecosystems, should have an integral place in the economy. [Hans Opschoor](#) claims that the policies and architectures to deal with global public goods can best be approached 'by looking at global change and global challenges through the lens of sustainable development'.

[Francine Mestrum](#) also applies it to Western countries: 'This is not just about taking care of our environment; it concerns the need for another development paradigm in our own countries. Today's huge inequalities cannot be bridged in a sustainable way if we do not see development as a

global concern, and that better policies are needed in the North and in the South.'

[Leon Willems](#) (and implicitly supported by others such as [Jan Gruiters](#), [Ben Schennink](#) and [Willemijn Verkoren](#)) focuses on human security in national and global contexts. Willems proposes to change the current central paradigm of global development – poverty reduction – into 'a new value-oriented approach that should cater for the complexities of international relations. The primary goal should be to enable a secure and dignified life for all people, enshrined in the international charter of human rights and freedoms. These form the cornerstones for global security and sustainable livelihoods. ... Fragility of states, vulnerability of people and lack of human security are the dividing and defining problems of our time, they need ardent and hard debate to define new theories of civic change.'

### A global development policy

What are the practical implications of the WRR's analysis of the global situation and the contributors' comments on this? How should future development policy be shaped? The WRR doesn't beat around the bush. It states that the current policy instruments (and aid architecture) are insufficient, a view that is widely endorsed. It is now time to create a more detailed 'globalization agenda' that includes a global (sustainable) development strategy based on a clear vision and coherent policies related to global governance and global civil society.

### Global governance

In the case of global public goods and the standard mechanisms of international diplomatic cooperation – the UN and the multilateral institutions – the focus should be on renewing and reforming global governance.

There is broad agreement that some effort is urgently needed in this field. In the near future, we will need global taxes, global social policies, more global

democracy and global institutions. But at the same time, existing international structures will come under increasing pressure as a result of bureaucratic constraints (the UN), delegitimization (the World Bank, the IMF) or political differences (climate, the WTO).

The emergence of a multipolar world order – as countries such as China, India and Brazil are now demanding their share of power, the G20 has replaced the G8 – shows that we are in the midst of a dramatic and thus uncertain process of transition. That uncertainty has been increased by the recent global financial and economic crises, which governments believe they can survive using conventional national approaches.

The debate has not yet generated any new, coherent visions of global governance, although a number of contributors have expressed specific ideas. In the field of conflict and international law, for example, [Jan Gruiters](#) argues in favour of focusing on the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), whereby the international community and states are obliged to disregard the sovereignty of nation states where there have been serious violations of human rights.

[Janne Nijman](#) suggests that 'global or "transnational" networks should become the arenas in which different actors work together to achieve development and/or to solve global problems. These actors are considered to be not (only) states, but also, especially, NGOs, local governments and civil society organizations in both developed and developing countries. The role of governments of developed countries should be to stimulate and facilitate these global networks.'

### Policy coherence

The WRR believes that greater efforts are needed to improve the coherence of policies for development. In contrast with 'global public goods' – where the collective interest in principle applies to anyone in the world – coherence assumes, by definition, contradictory interests. For countries such as the

Netherlands, national/domestic interests – of particular groups in society, of companies, or of the country as a whole – are often in conflict with those of developing countries, of poor groups in those countries, or of the environment. In this context, it is essential that these interests – of states, of groups and the environment – are assessed on their individual merits, since they imply very different policies, different political coalitions, different solutions, different choices and different dividing lines.

Policy coherence is the ultimate political theme: power relations at the national and international level determine whose interests prevail. Various commentators believe that the WRR is not sufficiently explicit about this ‘political’ aspect. [Peter Heintze](#): ‘The WRR seems to have overlooked a fundamental political aspect, namely conflicts of interests that stand in the way of development’. [David Sogge](#) points to the hypocrisy of Dutch (and other) coherence policies, which should be much more explicit about what the obstacles for development donor countries themselves erase: ‘Aid is dwarfed by other forces and flows, such as capital flight’.

### Global social movements

In its report the WRR calls for the reinforcement of the role of NGOs as watchdogs critically following

Several ‘political projects’ can frame a global development strategy:

- The current neoliberal paradigm seems obsolete.
- Embedded globalization: let politics, global civil society and shared norms shape economic decision making.
- Sustainable globalization: the planet and its ecosystems should have an integral place in the economy, in both the North and the South.
- Global human security: a secure and dignified life for all people should be at the core of national and global policies.

government policies. Some contributors go even further and call for a (global) movement. [Hans Beerends](#): ‘Unfortunately, the Council doesn’t address the issue of what kind of political pressure is needed to push through its proposed changes ... for



Water purification skyscraper

example, by supporting the population in its efforts to create social emancipation, consciousness-raising and a fighting spirit.’

For many NGOs, the task of watchdog proposed by the WRR is similar to the lobbying activities in which they are already engaged. Many of these activities take place behind the scenes, and are usually half-hearted because, as the WRR observes, they present NGOs with a serious dilemma:

they are keeping an eye on the same governments they depend on for funding. That restriction, whether or not they have chosen it for themselves, means that these organizations cannot grow into (catalysts of) social movements in the Netherlands itself.

Some are reorganizing themselves to become part of global movements, but they have not yet really shown their teeth in the Netherlands itself.

Anyone who takes a single united world as a starting point and, for example, the need for a fundamentally different economic system based on sustainability and justice – will also have to organize people in the Netherlands and force changes to be made in the West.

[Tom van der Lee](#) also wants to focus on ‘fair governance at global level’ and on global public goods. This is ‘primarily a matter of democratizing agenda-forming, negotiations and decision making at the international level. To address the problem of the democratic deficit and the lack of representativeness, there is an urgent need for a stronger, non-governmental global movement.’ He also points out that the various levels must not be seen in isolation. ‘It is important that the national and international levels are linked. The WRR rightly emphasizes the importance of finding a proper balance between public goods at various levels (global, regional and national).’

eVolo / R. Rahdian, E. Setiawan, A.D.Shanti, L. Chrisnantiyo



Sky table

eVolo / A. Khusnutdinov

Strategic choices through context analysis

# Identifying obstacles

We need to expand our knowledge and use it in more context-specific analyses. The question is at what scale: national, regional or global?

**T**he WRR is calling not only for a broader and more global approach to development, but also one that is more specific. In other words, there are no blueprints or ‘one size fits all’ solutions, and even best practices have limited use. Therefore, policy must be adapted to the context, keeping in mind that the context is in a constant state of flux.

We need to substantially expand our knowledge if we are to keep a finger on

the pulse of change. This knowledge should be used for the context-specific analyses required to define the circumstances to which development has to adapt itself and to identify obstacles – e.g. binding constraints – and ultimately also opportunities. The WRR refers to this as diagnostics and believes that this should be country- or region-specific. It therefore advocates the establishment of country offices, to be known as NLAID, in order to develop knowledge and

expertise independently of the embassies overseas and ministries in The Hague.

The response to the call for greater expertise has been overwhelmingly positive. Some contributors believe it is not so much a matter of acquiring more knowledge but of organizing, integrating and applying the available expertise more effectively. And interpretations differ about the kind of expertise required. Do we need specialists – people who know a great deal about one

See [www.thebrokeronline.eu](http://www.thebrokeronline.eu) • Maarten **Brouwer** • Jos **Coumans** • Ton **Dietz** • Louis **Emmerij** • Jan Willem **Gunning** • Paul

specific subject or sector – or strategists, who have the experience and political intuition and who can prioritize when the situation requires?

Broadly speaking, there are two trends in the debate, which will be referred to here as first, a more technical or specialist view, and second,



**Be specific. One size does not fit all. Policies must be adapted to context. Context-specific analysis means identifying obstacles and opportunities for development, and choosing which one strategically fits best at a particular time.**

a more integrated and socio-political view. The first concentrates on a more mechanical analysis of development, the key words being technical, interventionist, aid, top-down, supply-driven, social engineering, donor perspective and specialist knowledge. It argues that diagnostics is required to determine which sectors should be supported using which techniques and instruments. This view is most adamant in advocating independent NLAID offices.

The second, socio-political view regards development as a multi-dimensional process, the key words being a broad definition of poverty, development as change, struggle and conflict, complexity, bottom-up, strategic, aid as a catalyst for change, local knowledge production and interdisciplinary knowledge. In this case, diagnostics is regarded primarily as fuel for a political strategy. This view is less enthusiastic about detaching the embassies from NLAID because that would reduce the scope for political and diplomatic activities.

### Dutch strengths

The first view is based on the belief that specialization generates considerable benefits and that Dutch development capacity is strong in some specific areas. The WRR report suggests, for example, that Dutch aid could focus on agriculture, water or civil society because of the country's considerable experience and knowledge in these areas. The

criticism that this would lead to 'supply-driven' aid is perhaps rather simplistic. This depends on the donor architecture, which is intended to facilitate mutual distribution and specialization. For example, this could occur in a European context. If a developing country indicates that it

needs water expertise, this could be acquired from the Netherlands, whereas educational expertise would have to be 'brought in' from elsewhere.

Of course, there is always a risk of aid being supply-driven. Various contributors discuss Dutch specializations, often in connection with the organization or sector with which they are affiliated, or the priorities they advocate. The proposed areas include food, water, sex education/family planning, the legal order, carbon capture and storage, agriculture, urban development, civil society and cooperation with Dutch institutions such as local authorities, hospitals, companies and universities.

A number of people question this specialization by area. [Niels Röling](#) and [Paul Hassing](#) seriously doubt whether Dutch agricultural knowledge is up to



**Expertise can be specialist, directed at a specific subject or sector, or generalist, generated by strategists with a broad knowledge base.**

par. 'Agricultural development is based on a lot of local knowledge and technology', says [Hassing](#). 'The Netherlands does not have a great deal to offer in this field'. [Röling](#) adds that in his experience 'agricultural experts view development too frequently in terms of technological development, which makes them blind to the impact of global markets and trade and to institutional innovation as a condition for technological innovation.'

### Quadruple transition

The WRR's emphasis on economic growth and productivity has come under a great deal of criticism, as has its disregard of civil society. The question is whether the WRR really believes that economic growth and increased productivity should receive such sweeping emphasis. As the Council itself has repeatedly maintained, it intentionally emphasized certain issues.

The emphasis on economic growth, for example, could be interpreted as an attempt to restore the balance which had shifted too far towards supporting 'palliative' measures and direct poverty reduction. After all, as the WRR itself makes clear, it is impossible to make such general statements about the importance of economic growth because each context requires different priorities.

The WRR seems to be advocating a concept of development with a 'quadruple transition of economy, government, politics and society'. It also states that the 'situation in the developing country' has to be the starting point of the analysis. Political, economic and social diagnostics must be conducted to allow a more integrated analysis of broader processes and help determine strategy. It cites examples from other countries, such as the 'drivers of change' approach used by the UK Department for

International Development (DfID). This is an indication that the WRR also believes in reinforcing the role of development policy as a catalyst for change.

It is worth examining this approach in more detail. Development is a dynamic and complex process of interrelated factors; analysis must lead to strategic choices that will have the greatest structural impact. Some contributors appear to agree with such >

a broad, comprehensive approach. This is evident, for example, in their criticism of the WRR's narrow definition of poverty.

After arguing that a broad concept of poverty is now essentially synonymous in development policy with the self-reliance advocated by the WRR, [Maarten](#)

administration, the struggle is about inclusiveness, and in the relationship between administration and economy the issue is the demarcation and organization of public and private spaces. Between administration and politics it is about processes of accountability and transparency, and between politics and

development that emerges from the WRR report demonstrates that the role of civil society organizations as a factor in development has certainly not been played out. The WRR sees development as an outcome of four domains: "an economic domain, a political system, the government apparatus, and a social fabric". These four domains interact and continually affect each other. It is clear that civil society, and the organizations active in it, play a vital role in creating the social fabric of society. It therefore also has the potential to give direction to the three other domains of economy, politics and government.'



The trend advocating specialist expertise entails a more mechanical analysis of development, using aid for social engineering and technical assistance, and it supports independent NLAID offices. It also advocates using Dutch specializations, e.g. agriculture, water or civil society.

[Brouwer](#) goes on to say that 'the WRR then defines development as an accelerated modernization of relations between economy, administration, politics and society. ... All kinds of battlegrounds can be identified in this network of relations ... For example, between economy and politics there is the untangling of political and economic power. Between society and

society it is democratization. Citizens are involved in all these struggles, whether they work for government bodies or companies, or are active in political or social movements. They are the ones who [should] try to get to grips with the processes of change.'

[Tom van der Lee](#) confirms the interactivity between the different domains. 'The holistic thinking about

### Scale: global, regional or national?

Diagnostics must facilitate more strategic operations. It must identify weak spots and binding constraints. [Frits van der Wal](#) argues that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is already using a 'bottleneck approach'.

### Palliative measures, or a vibrant civil society?

In its report, the WRR seems to have started making a diagnosis. Many of the contributors focus on specific choices made by the Council in the process. In its analysis, the WRR places considerable emphasis on the need to strengthen the productive sector in developing countries. This, together with the plea to focus more attention on the agricultural sector, is a view that is widely endorsed ([Coumans](#), [Willems](#)).

The report also states that investments in social sectors do not generate self-reliance or economic productivity. This reasoning – and the treatment of civil society in general – has been widely criticized. Examples of these criticisms include:

- Many contributors disagree with the WRR statement that supporting social sectors will not strengthen productivity ([Kleinrensink](#), [Gunning](#), [Ruben](#), [Emmerij](#), [Hoebink](#), [Verkoren](#), [Smaling](#), [Wensing](#)).
- Some feel that concepts such as 'pro-poor growth' or 'inclusive growth' are missing

from the report ([Hoebink](#), [Raghuram](#), [Nusselder](#)).

- Others state that redistribution is needed in addition to growth ([Dietz](#), [Monteiro](#), [Smaling](#), [Verhallen](#)).
- Some contend that the WRR seems keen to return to outdated concepts ([Box](#)) or even to the trickle-down approach ([Verhallen](#), [Visser](#), [Kleinrensink](#)).

Besides focusing on economic growth, the WRR also stresses the role of the state. This has been welcomed as a way of curbing the unbridled market forces of recent decades.

- Several contributors argue that the report could have highlighted ways to curb these forces ([Dietz](#), [Nijman](#)). In particular, they feel that its emphasis on the state has pushed civil society off the radar ([Schulpen](#), [Voorhoeve](#)), or presented it as a caricature.
- They reject the WRR's depiction of current NGO practice, which is already in line with many of the Council's recommendations ([Schulpen](#)).

- NGOs are not only service providers, but also play an important role in promoting democratization and accountability ([Monteiro](#)).
- The WRR's criticism of 'NGO-ization' is endorsed ([Hassing](#), [Monteiro](#)), but despite the fact that some NGOs have already taken steps to prevent NGO-ization, the WRR does not seem to recognize this ([Monteiro](#)).
- In the Netherlands, insufficient attention is devoted to social, cultural and religious factors ([Grotenhuis](#)), informal institutions ([Verkoren](#)), civic-driven change ([Box](#), [Gruiters](#)) and NGOs and civil society (including consumers, citizens and migrants) ([Schulpen](#), [Monteiro](#), [Lubbers](#)). Many applaud the WRR recommendation to reinforce the NGOs' watchdog role vis-à-vis the Dutch government ([Gruiters](#)).

For more extensive quotes on this issue, see [www.thebrokeronline.eu](http://www.thebrokeronline.eu)



The more generalist view regards development as a multidimensional process of change that requires strategic analysis to determine where to intervene and at which moment and level. Local knowledge production is key, as well as interdisciplinary approaches. Complex models can be used to identify catalysts or change agents.

Attempts to identify binding constraints often focus purely on national analyses, and no systematic link is made with international and global influences. Corruption, for example, is a major obstacle to development, but has both national and international ramifications when elites channel their money abroad, for example, or multinationals pay bribes. And there are many more relevant policy coherence issues. Therefore diagnostics conducted primarily at a national level will miss a great deal more than it would if it were to factor in regional and global factors. The WRR distinguishes between those two scales, and links its appeal for more professionalization and expertise particularly to operations in developing countries. That is why NLAID offices and country strategies are needed.

In a separate argument, the WRR points out that global factors are becoming increasingly important. The link between those two scales – the national and regional on the one hand, and the global on the other – does not feature in the WRR’s diagnostics. The



It is crucial to identify binding constraints. These obstacles to development are national, but also global. Therefore a conceptual and organizational link between local and global research and expertise needs to be established.

question is therefore whether the country strategies – or rather regional strategies, since geopolitical intervention and cross-border networks with neighbouring countries very much determine the situation in many countries – should not also incorporate international factors and influences from the outset.

According to **Shobha Raghuram**, ‘the report is confused about a final call on the dialectic between region- and country-specific and global analyses of

development aid flows. ... I believe more work needs to be done on this issue of the universal and the particular.’

This scale issue – i.e. which geographical dimensions should be included as standard in a context analysis – is the subject of a number of contributions. **Ton Dietz** argues that ‘if Africa is to become the core area for Dutch bilateral aid, the country level is not the adequate level of scale in many cases’. He quotes WRR research leader Peter van Lieshout, who says that the focus can also be on ‘hubs’, metropolises or economic core regions. If you do adopt this view, then it raises the question of how to prevent the marginalization of a large part of the rest of the country, as is the case in many developing countries?

A key argument for including both global and national factors in the analysis has already been given in the section ‘Going global’ (page 12), while modernization and economic growth on a national scale are perfectly logical objectives, they imply the global depletion of natural resources and raw materials. A global approach therefore

imposes different requirements on developing countries.

It would also clarify the consequences of global problems (‘global public bads’) for those countries, as **Hans Opschoor** maintains. ‘They may lead to undesirable volatility and unpredictability in development paths; they may erode the capital basis for economic and social development in many ways; they may also directly affect the sustainability of development achievements. ... The departments, think-tanks, strategic


## Knowledge infrastructure

How, with whom and in what organizational context can we ensure that feasible country or region strategies are generated? How do we connect this to global research? In other words, what knowledge infrastructure is required?

Following is a summary of questions and conclusions (for more detailed information and extensive quotes on the issue, see [thebrokeronline.eu](http://thebrokeronline.eu)):

- Specialize in knowledge in specific areas, such as water, agriculture, the constitutional state and civil society. However, due to the danger of a supply-driven bias, it is better to focus on more global areas.
- Focus on a (North-South) ‘co-production’ of knowledge and on a knowledge infrastructure which has to be ‘disciplinarily diverse and mixed’ and open to ‘dissonant voices and different development paradigms’.
- Enhance the legitimacy of country or region strategies by opening up diagnostic processes; make them public and transparent; include civil societies, migrant diasporas, business communities, NGOs – locally and internationally.
- Set up a knowledge development institute or global issues centre, either in a traditional way (a number of experts doing research) or by ‘brokering’ existing and new knowledge and adopting a network approach.
- Do not separate country strategies from global research: connect the local to the global.
- Collect existing models for strategic (country, regional and global) analysis and determine where the gaps are.

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agencies and what-have-you ... should all have an appropriately profound analytical and policy-developmental empathy and capability way beyond their traditional domains.’ 



Vertical city

Institutional architecture for global development

# Building a new structure

**A new institutional architecture for global development is sorely needed. How can this be done without shifting the focus away from those who need it most, namely the poor and the marginalized?**

In its report the WRR makes a number of proposals for reorganizing Dutch government institutions involved in development and other elements of foreign policy. In particular, the Council proposed to establish NLAID, a new agency with country offices, in response to the need for Dutch development aid to be ‘more country-specific’. Elsewhere, however, the WRR also argued that the Netherlands needs to adopt a ‘broader perspective’ (another pillar of the report), but without recommending a new institutional architecture for global policies, despite the major changes that have taken place in this respect in recent decades.

Before examining the proposed NLAID, it is perhaps appropriate first to look in more detail at the institutional consequences of taking a global view.

Global governance (including new ways of managing global public goods), policy coherence and building up a global civil society are the three arms of what can be described as global development. But what does this mean in practical terms? What new architecture will be needed? Most important, adopting such a global view may mean that the primary focus on the needs of the poor and excluded

may be lost, so how do we avoid throwing the baby out with the bath water?

## Global public goods

In the case of global public goods, what is important is, in principle, the collective (worldwide or regional) interest, which may well conflict with certain short- and long-term interests of certain actors (governments, as well as NGOs, trade unions or businesses). Of course, the global environment is the clearest example of this.

Any detailed strategy must distinguish between the different kinds of public goods. The WRR identifies those ‘from which non-payers also benefit’ (such as climate policy), ‘weakest link’ goods (such as combating infectious diseases) and ‘club’ goods, from which only a select group benefit (such as communication satellites). In the case of global public goods it is necessary to focus on reinforcing the multilateral system – the WRR rightly states that critical reflection is needed – on creating new global mechanisms, such as a ‘socio-economic security council’ and forms of Earth Systems governance, or more ad hoc solutions such as the creation of networks around certain issues.

Global governance should be viewed in a way that better reflects new ideas and practices, writes [Janne Nijman](#): ‘Without exploring the “global network” dimension ... “global governance” becomes too poor a concept. I do not mean inter-state or inter-governmental networks, but non-governmental or hybrid global networks ... in which different actors participate for the unique contribution they can make to an issue, or to (an aspect of) the protection of a global common good. Think, for instance, of a global network around sustainable energy in which energy (distribution) companies participate together with academics, NGOs, perhaps even international and state agencies.’

Several contributors comment on the fact that the WRR pays scant attention to the role of the World Bank and other multilateral bodies, although the WRR does criticize the knowledge monopoly of the World Bank and even proposes setting up regional ‘world banks’ to create more ‘pluriformity’.

The development sector must have a clear vision of the Dutch strategy with regard to the multilateral system. For example, would traditional Dutch Atlanticism – the Netherlands as the bridgehead to the UK and the US – still have the highest priority in a multipolar world? Perhaps in terms of international security, but does the same apply to global development?

And is it not the US – in cahoots with China – that is frustrating far-reaching climate agreements? The WRR notes that the Netherlands is trying its best to acquire a seat at the G20, for example, but ‘in the longer term that approach would seem to be untenable’. Elsewhere, the Council contends that as far as Dutch policy is concerned, the aim is to choose ‘strategic global public goods’ with which to safeguard the development dimension. In this, five elements are of interest: scale (achieving a balance between national, regional and global public goods); the role of the Netherlands as a catalyst; new financing mechanisms; accountability

for choices that are made; and a coordination point where priorities can be established.

### Policy coherence for development

There is a fundamental difference between policies to safeguard global public goods and policy coherence, where the focus is not on the collective interest, but on opposing interests. Here, there are often contradictions within (donor) countries and thus within Europe, as well as between different sectors, population groups and

search of win-win situations, for fear of losing political support.

The WRR has also looked for an official solution, but argues that policy coherence must be implemented at a more ‘political-strategic’ rather than operational level. The Council proposes setting up a ‘bridgehead’ for development coherence within each relevant ministry, ‘with a coordinating role for a strong unit at Foreign Affairs’. But [Willemijn Verkoren](#) fears that this proposal does not go far enough, because too little attention is

 A new institutional architecture is needed to facilitate global development. Global development consists of global governance (including new ways of managing global public goods), policy coherence and building up a global civil society. Country-specific approaches must dovetail with this global approach.

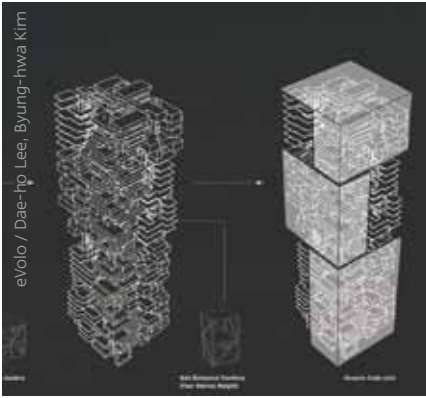
grassroots supporters. The issue of policy coherence is therefore politically highly sensitive. That is also why, despite being a dominant theme and a priority for successive development ministers over the past two decades, it has never really been a success. The approach has always been fairly technical, based on negotiations between civil servants from various ministries in

paid to its political nature. ‘The attempts to create more coherence are impeded by fundamental political conflicts of interest. The report ... provides a number of poignant examples of Dutch interests that are contradictory to development aims: the trade in illegally cut wood, medicines, migration, military export credits and weapons. Another example could be



*Skyscraper on the water*

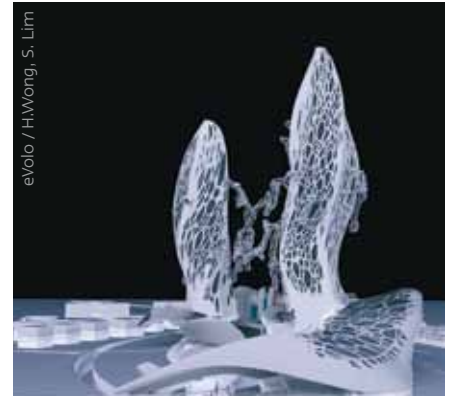




A general box skyscraper



Nestled skyscraper



Structural cell skyscraper

the “fragile states” agenda ... in which the (security) interests of rich countries often take precedence over development priorities. Policy coherence is then treated as a purely technical issue.’

Herman Mulder also thinks that the WRR should have gone further. Noting

**A debate about the Dutch globalization agenda must produce strategic choices that focus on specific global goods and safeguard the interests of the poor and the excluded.**

that the term ‘coherence’ is limited to the public sector, Mulder feels the report ought to have been more ambitious with regard to the world of business. ‘The need and enormous potential of the “green economy” is not referred to. Neither are international standards and values for the international business community... The need for transparency is mentioned only in passing.’

The WRR proposes a practical way to increase coherence, in the form of ‘development impact reports’, similar to environmental impact reports. Several contributors applauded the suggestion that the development impacts of each intended policy measure be assessed and published.

With regard to policy coherence for development, the WRR asserts that what is taking place is ‘a search process, here and elsewhere’. However, coherence has been discussed for decades, so the search process ought to focus on the

question of why it never got off the ground. Perhaps we are now paying the price for the fact that there is only limited political pressure from society, and from development organizations. The public are unfamiliar with the political and socio-economic conflicts of interest that lie behind the term

coherence; instead they have been inundated with information about the Millennium Development Goals, for example, or with campaigns by charities to provide immediate assistance to poor people affected by war or disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti, the Asian tsunami or the conflict in Darfur.

**In contrast with global public goods, Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) means acknowledging opposing interests. This requires a ‘political’ stance: a choice for (and thus against) specific interests.**

Besides improving technical coherence at the official level, stronger social movements are needed in the Netherlands to increase political pressure for real coherence. This would also be in line with the WRR vision that NGOs should function more as government watchdogs.

Extending this line of reasoning, one could argue that since development aid

can act as a catalyst, more investment is needed to broaden political support for coherence.

**A minister for coherence?**

The Council contends that ‘the portfolio of the current minister for development cooperation should be upgraded to a package of tasks with two distinct components: managing NLAID and formulating a Dutch globalization agenda which considers a number of global problems in context and develops a Dutch perspective on them.’ Elsewhere, it proposes that the ‘line ministries take responsibility for international public goods in their own specific field of activity’, with the Ministry of General Affairs (headed by the prime minister) coordinating policy on global public goods, supplemented as necessary with ‘a special advisory

council for global development’ or a ‘newly developed entity’.

There is widespread support for upgrading the post of minister for development cooperation. Various options have been considered. Ton Dietz favours a ‘Council for Global Development, Environment and Security as the coordinator of coherence, directly under the prime

minister and with a minister for global sustainable development as its political head'. It links up several ideas that are circulating about a 'council for policy coherence' – a version of the existing Social and Economic Council (a tripartite consultation body of employers' organizations, trade unions and government-appointed experts) that advises the government on key issues. Such a council would consist of representatives of various ministries and civil society organizations and appointed experts. The secretariat would then not be the responsibility of the minister for global (sustainable) development, since he or she will have to defend independently the interests of the poor on any such council.

Danielle Hirsch and Paul Wolvekamp also favour a 'broadly mandated ministry for international sustainable development that would guarantee policy coherence'. Paul Hassing believes that a 'minister for coherence and development aid' is inevitable in the next Dutch government.

A separate 'broad-based' ministry should cover global (sustainable) development and human security. Other ministries should take care of their own global strategies. A special coherence council should address coherence issues and choose between the different global interests of the various ministries and other actors,



Public debate about development should favour 'difficult' coherence matters over easy charity and emergency aid. NGOs should focus more on building a strong (international) counter force to push for policy coherence for development (PCD).

among which the global development ministry. NLAID or the embassies should be the offshoots of this global development architecture and not separate entities.

Meine Pieter van Dijk talks of 'a minister for globalization issues' who will also have to try to create unity at the European level on trade and environment issues, since such matters are primarily arranged at that

level. Paul Engel also believes that what is at stake is policy coherence at European level. 'Why is the "substantial agenda for change" not extended to the Dutch commitment in Europe?'

Paul Hassing interprets a focus on the role of Europe as a choice for another 'political model': 'The EU

regards the mutual development the public and private sectors are undergoing as equal, with the role of civil society being to keep both sectors focused by drawing attention to democracy, human rights, security and the reliability of services. Is it not time to start promoting this political model rather than drawing the World Bank's attention to the shortcomings of its political stance?'

## NLAID?

In the discussion on NLAID, contributors such as Voorhoeve, Grotenhuis, Dietz and Luyten offer a number of arguments in favour of a new agency:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already lost a great deal of expertise, so this would offer an opportunity to professionalize development policy (Hassing, Coumans, Ukpabi, Holtland).
- The lack of knowledge within the embassies is also recognized by contributors who oppose NLAID (Molenaar).
- Country offices would improve the continuity and depth of knowledge of the local context, as staff would be deployed for longer periods than the four-year career carousel (Holtland).
- Aid would be separated from diplomacy (Coumans, Holtland, Dietz).
- The management of aid would be shifted to the recipient country (Coumans, Holtland).

Other commentators offer a variety of arguments against NLAID:

- Detaching aid from diplomacy might result in the disappearance of political leverage, making it more difficult to pursue a coherent policy, with the result that the Netherlands would speak with two voices (Barry, Berendsen, Hoebink, Hirsch, Wolvekamp).
- Focusing on countries might mean ignoring new realities and global approaches (Nijland, Bruggeman).
- NLAID would create a new bureaucracy (Willems).
- The examples of USAID or DFID are not entirely positive.
- It is doubtful whether NLAID would be able to direct local NGOs and thus partly take over the task of Dutch NGOs (Nijland).

Other comments cannot clearly be categorized as being either for or against NLAID:

- Making sure that global development considerations are given precedence would lead to other choices in relation to NLAID (Rijniers).

- Maybe it would be better to operate country offices together with other donors, or to establish one platform per country (Nienhuys, Opschoor).
- Separate the development (DGIS) and foreign affairs branches of the ministry not in the recipient countries, but in The Hague (Hassing, Smaling).
- The name NLAID would muddy the discussion due to its associations with old-fashioned aid and USAID, for example (Van der Sleen). This may mean that potential benefits might be ignored. Perhaps it would be better to use a different name, such as 'strategic hubs' (Dietz suggests 'hub agencies'), which also opens up the possibility of a policy not strictly aimed at countries: should they be country offices, or is the region a more appropriate scale?
- We should examine the experiences of SNV, which has been working under a variety of guises for four decades (Zevenbergen, Elsen).

## The online debate on the WRR report in figures

Number of participants .....	110
Number of contributions .....	115

### Dutch Debate: Minder pretentie, meer ambitie

	page views
Overview page with three contributions .....	8,970
Individual contributions .....	15,659

### Top-ten most viewed contributions:

Eric Smaling: Help! De hulp helpt. Of niet. ....	295
Ruud Lubbers: Inderdaad tijd het bed op te schudden .....	294
Paul Hoebink: Mooi in de analyse. Minder in de aanbevelingen .....	277
Lau Schulpen: Staand beleid argument geldt voor deel rapport .....	270
Arend Jan Boekestijn: An imminent revolution in Dutch foreign aid .....	269
Joris Voorhoeve: Valuable overview but short on analyzing NGOs .....	261
Mirjam Vossen: Geen Afrikaan te bekennen in WRR rapport .....	248
Jan Willem Gunning: Radical and refreshing .....	245
Manuela Monteiro: What about accountability! .....	227
Tom van der Lee: Rol van civil society organizations .....	222

### International debate: From aid to global justice

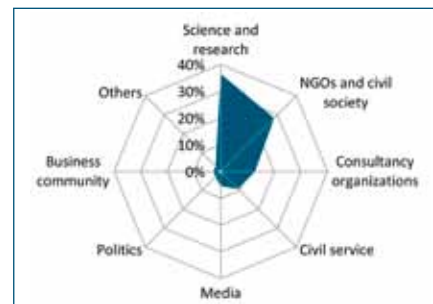
	page views
From aid to global justice – overview page with three contributions .....	1,283
From aid to global justice – individual contributions .....	1,096

### Other WRR content on the website

	page views
WRR event calendar .....	978
Frans Bieckmann: Brief guide to WRR report (in Dutch) .....	716
WRR in the (Dutch) media .....	372
Other content .....	536

## Participants in the debate

**110 contributors: women 22, men 88**



### Science and research:

11 professors, 17 staff of universities and 12 researchers

### NGOs and civil society:

19 directors, 12 staff members

### Consultancy organizations:

16 consultants

### Civil service:

5 active and 5 former or retired civil servants

### Media:

6 journalists

### Politics:

1 Dutch active politician and 3 former politicians

### Business community:

3 representatives from the private sector

# THE BROKER

### The Broker, issue 19, April 2010

The Broker offers knowledge of global development issues. The Broker aims to contribute to evidence-based policy making and action by encouraging exchanges between knowledge producers and development professionals. The Broker will be a reliable source of information for all those concerned with development and globalization, especially in the fields of economics, human security, governance, and science and technology.

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