

# THE DUTCH DELTA APPROACH

**'The Netherlands has organised its water management properly. [...] It is valuable to share this approach with other countries and to inspire the development of their climate adaptation strategies,' according to Wim Kuijken, the Dutch Delta Commissioner working for the International Water Ambition. This 'Dutch Delta Approach' (DDA) advocates adaptive, integrated and long-term delta planning.**

Projects are being initiated worldwide in which DDA is being transferred and adapted to other delta countries as a policy model. Deltares is involved in several of these projects. However, these transfers face challenges in terms of the drafting and implementation of strategic plans for foreign deltas. Ellen Minkman's PhD research focuses on understanding why the process of policy transfer is so challenging and on how these challenges can be addressed. The ultimate aim is to develop an intervention that will help Deltares and other practitioners to transfer the concept of strategic delta planning to other contexts.

The factors affecting the process of policy transfer fall into four categories: transferability (for example, conveying

ability or actor relations), process design (for example, the transfer type or mutual understanding), adoptability (suitability or resources, for instance) and policy adaptation/non-adaptation (imitation or inspiration, for instance). The circumstances and decisions in the early phases of transfer already shape the process towards 'policy routes': a specific type of transfer unfolds and it can be linked to certain challenges and issues with policy adoption later on.

One of these routes is branded policy transfer. The reputation of the policy model is boosted to enhance its export potential. However, such branding might lead to inappropriate transfers in which the branded policy does not match the local context. Branding the DDA led to the launch of numerous projects but we have also seen how adaptation to local contexts is an ad hoc process rather than the result of a sophisticated method. The feedback loop of lessons learned is limited and the 'brand' DDA runs the risk of failing to meet expectations.

Case studies of the implementation of the Dutch Delta Approach in strategic master plans include the Mekong Delta Plan developed for Vietnam and the National Capital Integrated Coastal Defence project in Jakarta, Indonesia. Preliminary

findings demonstrate that a well-designed exchange process is crucial to prevent inappropriate, incomplete or uninformed transfer. So far, we have identified issues related to the compatibility of the proposed strategy with local practice and its feasibility in that context; challenges facing the establishment of a broad domestic support base; and difficulties with creating process ownership among local counterparts.

Ellen Minkman will be working on her PhD from 2016 to 2020 at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and she will be supervised by Arwin van Buuren and Victor Bekkers (Erasmus University Rotterdam). The research is funded by Deltares and the Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS). In the coming years, activities to overcome the challenges will be explored and interventions will be developed for those working with the Dutch Delta Approach abroad. ☺

## Contact:

Ellen Minkman, minkman@essb.eur.nl  
Gerald Jan Ellen, GeraldJan.Ellen@deltares.nl  
t +31 (0)6 5114 1282

## Further reading:

Minkman et al. (2018) Policy transfer routes: an evidence-based conceptual model to explain policy adoption. *Policy Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2018.1451503>

