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Making waves

Reimagining policy transfer in the context of development cooperation

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born and grown up in the capital city Dhaka, Shahnoor had little connection with the environment and people in the delta in Bangladesh before embarking on her PhD research. She was more curious to understand the environment in general: how it functions and how it can be managed. For her undergraduate studies, she chose to follow her interest towards the environment and graduated with a BSc degree in Environmental Studies from North South University in 2007. In 2009, Shahnoor obtained her MSc degree in Environment Management (magna cum laude with specialization in water quality assessment) from Independent University, Bangladesh. For her MSc thesis, she studied the prevalence of persistent organic pollutants and pesticide residues in seasonal waters of rural Bangladesh.

Continuing with her career development, Shahnoor worked as a lecturer during 2010-2013 at her alma mater - the School of Environmental Science and Management in the Independent University, Bangladesh. She later joined the Centre for Sustainable Development, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh as a senior lecturer on environmental management. At ULAB, she conceptualized, mobilized funds for and led research programs on urban rainwater harvesting and on bioaccumulation of chromium in food chain. Simultaneously, she led a project that aimed to inspire her colleagues and students to value, adapt with and practice sustainable production and consumption. The project activities entailed research on water and energy consumption; establishing public-private partnerships with the university for sustainable energy and water use; solid waste and paper recycling; and bringing in behavioural change in the wider university community of students, academics, and administrative staff. In the course of dissemination and the societal and classroom communication of her research outcomes on food safety, Shahnoor became curious to understand and navigate the science-policy interface in research.

Her curiosity drove her to undertake a PhD research on delta planning in the Netherlands in 2015. Because of her PhD research outcomes, Shahnoor has become a part of a growing body of researchers who calls for the Government of the Netherlands to rethink how to exchange Dutch water and delta knowledge and expertise. In doing the doctoral research, much of her research interests shifted from water quality, food safety and behavioural change to interdisciplinary science and research with a focus on policymaking and planning for water resources, politics of knowledge production, and global governance of development cooperation. At the end of her PhD research, Shahnoor became involved in a Dutch government funded research project where she and the project members have worked on to promote and support a bottom-up planning approach in implementation of the Mekong Delta Plan in Vietnam.

Journal publication

Publications directly linked to this thesis

Hasan, S., Evers, J., Verzijl, A., and Zwarteveen, M. (under review by the WIREs Water). Deltas in dialogue: imagining policy transfer as a symmetrical conversation.

Shahnoor Hasan planned, collected and analysed data from field research for this article. Jaap Evers and Margreet Zwarteveen supervised the work and contributed to the data analyses. Shahnoor Hasan drafted the manuscript. Jaap Evers, Andres Verzijl and Margreet Zwarteveen critically revised the article for onward submission to the journal.

Hasan, S., Evers, J., and Zwarteveen, M. (under review by the Water Alternatives). The work that goes into policy transfer: Making the Dutch Delta Approach travel.

Shahnoor Hasan planned, collected and analysed data from field research for this article. Jaap Evers and Margreet Zwarteveen supervised the work and contributed to the data analyses. Shahnoor Hasan drafted the manuscript. Jaap Evers and Margreet Zwarteveen critically revised the article for onward submission to the journal.

Hasan, S., Evers, J., and Zwarteveen, M. (2020). The transfer of Dutch Delta Planning expertise to Bangladesh: A process of policy translation. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 104, 161-173.

Shahnoor Hasan planned, collected and analysed data from field research for this article. Jaap Evers and Margreet Zwarteveen supervised the work and contributed to the data analyses. Shahnoor Hasan drafted the manuscript. Jaap Evers and Margreet Zwarteveen critically revised the article for onward submission to the journal and during subsequent revisions.

Hasan, S., Evers, J., Zegwaard, A., and Zwarteveen, M. (2019). Making waves in the Mekong Delta: recognizing the work and the actors behind the transfer of Dutch delta planning expertise. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 62(9), 1583-1602.

Shahnoor Hasan planned, collected and analysed data from field research for this article. Jaap Evers, Arjen Zegwaard and Margreet Zwarteveen supervised the work and contributed to the data analyses. Shahnoor Hasan drafted the manuscript. Jaap Evers and Margreet Zwarteveen critically revised the article for onward submission to the journal and during subsequent revisions.

Other peer-reviewed publication

Evers, J., Douven, W., Van der Stroom, J., Hasan, S., Seijger, C., and Phi, H. L. (2019). A framework to assess the performance of participatory planning tools for strategic delta planning. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 62(9), 1636-1653.

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UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

This thesis explores different ways to conceptualize, think of and discuss policy transfers in international cooperation contexts. It takes issue with conventional analyses of policy transfer in diffusion terms, as these both assume and create hierarchies in knowledge and expertise between the origin and the destination of transfer. Especially in the context of development cooperation, the diffusion narrative also represents transfer as a unilateral process importantly steered by its initiators. The thesis experiments with telling the story of the transfer of the Dutch Delta Approach to Vietnam and Bangladesh differently, as a process of policy translation.

This is a more agnostic way of understanding transfer, one that does not a priori identify with the 'goodness' of transferred policies, nor intends to support the originators of transfers. The thesis shows that understanding transfer-as-translation allows acknowledging its deeply dialogic and relational character. This in turn paves the way for re-imagining policy transfer as a "symmetrical conversation": a conversation in which many knowers are dialoguing and learning to co-develop policies. It also opens up discussion about how to assess the success of policy transfer, and provokes re-thinking of how different knowledges and knowers (should) relate to each other.