Polylateralism in Sustainable Development Diplomacy
- A Case Study of the Embassy of the Netherlands and the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan

Charlotte J.H.B. de Harder
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Abstract
The rise of global challenges, such as climate change, is pushing global governance to evolve. In result thereof, the traditionally state-centric diplomatic sphere is experiencing an increasing number of non-state actors entering the arena. Geoffrey Wiseman (1999) describes this phenomenon as the shift from traditionally bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to polylateral diplomacy. This study looks at how non-state actors can be fitted in frontline diplomacy in relation to sustainable development. By means of a qualitative, inductive case study of the Dutch embassy in the Philippines, it looks at how state actors perceive this non-state actor inclusion by means of data triangulation: a document analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant-observation. In particular, it zooms in on a specific example of multi-stakeholder partnership, which Sustainable Development Goals 17.16 and 17.17 hail as a tool for sustainability: the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan. Through the theoretical lenses of collaborative governance and the function-sensitive approach, this thesis concludes that the functions non-state actors can fulfil in the diplomatic activities of global governance vary depending on the three contingencies of time, trust and interdependence.

Keywords: Sustainable development, multi-stakeholder partnership, polylateral diplomacy, frontline diplomacy, The Netherlands, The Philippines

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Popular Summary:
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1. Introduction

“There may have been easier times for studying diplomacy, but there never have been better or more interesting ones.”

(Paul Sharp 2011)

At a time of continuous globalisation, faced with increasingly complex and interrelated issues, contemporary diplomacy needs to evolve in order to accommodate the need for integrated solutions. Whereas the traditional concept of diplomacy under International Relations theory originally came into existence as a means of “instituting and maintaining peace among states” (Moghaddam 2017, p. 191), the rise of cross-border and global challenges such as climate change, global health and inequality caused by international human activity pushes for a diplomacy which goes far beyond that of war and peace. Sustainable development diplomacy is one of the more contemporary forms of diplomacy where the growing collaboration between the public and private spheres is gradually coming to fruition. Just as with the much older concept of domestic public goods and services (i.e. national education, healthcare, security), the responsibility for the relatively new concept of global public goods (i.e. water, air, global health) and challenges also lies increasingly within the grey area of the traditional public-private divide. This shift can partially be linked to the process of privatisation of public goods and services, yet there are signs of a growing awareness of the benefits of a holistic approach to wicked problems as well (Commonwealth of Australia 2007, Birdsal & Diofasi 2015, Head & Alford 2015, Kaul et al. 2003, Spies 2019). Where previously solely actors on a state level were deemed to be relevant in the diplomatic process, either bilaterally or multilaterally, today’s cross-border issues such as climate change, poverty and infectious diseases affecting a continuously growing global population see a rising integration of non-state actors in the diplomatic sphere. Geoffrey Wiseman (1999, as cited in Spies 2019) devised the term ‘polylateral diplomacy’ for this most recent evolution of diplomacy: the de facto manner of diplomacy exercised by non-state actors on national, international, transnational and global levels parallel to or in collaboration with traditional diplomacy’s state actors. This new phase of diplomatic interactions and shared responsibility has turned the contemporary diplomatic arena into a dynamic, pluralistic and complex one (Collet 2015, Cooper & Cornut 2018, Spies 2019, Wiseman 1999).

A well-known example of sustainable development diplomacy performed polylaterally at a large scale is that of the setting of Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the years preceding 2015, also known as the final year of the Millennium Development Goals, 193 countries in collaboration with countless NGOs, CSOs, think-tanks, scientists and private sector organisations together established the most participatory process in the history of the United Nations. The 17 goals that resulted from this participatory feat address and integrate the economic, social as well as environmental cornerstones of sustainable development and aim to be truly inclusive, also in their implementation. ‘Sub’-Sustainable Development Goal 17.16 calls specifically for the implementation of an interdisciplinary and polylateral approach to tackling sustainability issues. They are referred to as Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs), which consist of both state (SAs) and non-state actors (NSAs), and are expected to “mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievements of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries” (Caballero 2016, Esser 2017, UN SDGs no date).

In the midst of the 2015-2030 trajectory of the Sustainable Development Goals, this thesis studies polylateral sustainable development diplomacy in ‘the field’ or ‘frontline’ in order to gain a better understanding of the process of their implementation in the international arena (Cooper & Cornut 2018). More explicitly, and certainly differing from the more studied process of the establishment of the SDGs, this thesis looks at the involvement of non-state actors at this so-called diplomatic frontline whilst governments attempt to implement the aim of the SDGs in their foreign affairs. Frontline diplomacy, which entails all diplomatic activity taking place abroad at an embassy, permanent representation or consulate, allows for relationships between the public and private sectors of two countries to develop and intensify. As will be explored further in this thesis, the inclusion of non-state actors in frontline diplomatic practice can prove instrumental in the implementation of overarching frameworks such as
Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. This thesis seeks to understand how state actors perceive non-state actors when they collaborate within the field of frontline diplomacy as a way of approaching complex global issues. Understanding this dynamic is important as state actors both depend on the input of non-state actors in their diplomatic endeavours, especially in relation to sustainable development, but are also the ones having the final say in which non-state actor gets involved and how. Moreover, the direct access to government representatives that non-state actors have when collaborating over the entire course of frontline diplomatic activities creates an entirely different dynamic than when they only take on a consultative status in the beginning stages of international climate negotiations (Brühl 2010). In order to explore this dynamic, this thesis uses the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Manila, the Philippines as an illustrative case study through the theoretical lens of collaborative governance. Holding many similarities with both Wiseman’s polylateralism as well as one of the Dutch government’s guiding principles, the Dutch ‘poldermodel’ (which is based on multi-stakeholder participation and consultation), collaborative governance theory offers a clear, analytical framework for this thesis (Ansell & Gash 2007, Emerson, Nabatchi & Kirk 2011, Gollagher & Hartz-Karp 2013).

During my internship at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Manila, the Philippines (June-November 2018), I noticed that the Sustainable Development Goals appear as a red thread through reports, policies and projects, alongside the goal of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ‘modernise’ their diplomatic approach by, among other things, diversifying the diplomatic service and representation (Collet, 2015; The Netherlands – Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014). The matter of ‘sustainable development’ in a country such as the Philippines, which as an island nation becomes increasingly affected by climate-related events and is simultaneously experiencing a boom in population growth, especially in Metro Manila, is highly relevant. Similarly to the Netherlands, the country is highly vulnerable to a rise in sea levels, creating an opportunity for the sharing of knowledge (i.e. in terms of water management). However, in terms of economic development, they are in different positions of the so-called ‘developed-developing’ scale. This makes their polylateral diplomatic collaboration on sustainable development an interesting research topic in light of the SDGs’ attempt to overcome what the Millennium Development Goals had not managed: to bridge the Global North-South divide (Woodbridge 2015). Moreover, this thesis puts particular emphasis on one of the embassy’s major projects: the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan (MBSDMP), which could be considered a good example of an SDG 17.16 Multi-Stakeholder Partnership. The MBSDMP is a polylateral project (or MSP) between the Netherlands and the Philippines focused entirely on the sustainable development of the Manila Bay. This project is conducted as a joint effort between (the Embassy of) the Kingdom of the Netherlands in collaboration with the Dutch Expert Team (DET) of research institute Deltares, and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) of the Republic of the Philippines in collaboration with the appointed Local Consulting Firm (LCF) comprised of Orient Integrated Development Consultants, Inc. (OIDCI) as the lead firm, Tractebel, Inc. (TRACT) and the University of the Philippines Los Baños Foundation, Inc. (UPLBFI). (MBSDMP 2018, Pernía 2018)

This thesis argues that indeed, state-centric diplomacy may be in decline, however, this does not mean that frontline diplomacy, with its resident embassies and ambassadors on a bilateral basis is becoming obsolete. Rather, this work asserts that frontline diplomacy can be essential in this new phase of diplomatic polylateralism, in light of the complexity and longevity of the wicked problems we face today. Projects such as that of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan take months (or even years) to be negotiated and agreed upon, subsequently, another couple of years to implement, and another few years to be monitored and adjusted where necessary. Coming to an agreement as comprehensive as the SDGs is one thing. Rolling out the necessary measures to achieve the goals of such an agreement is another. Hence, this thesis argues for the need of ground diplomatic staff to be present and to accompany such complex endeavours. Yet, in order to do this, frontline diplomacy will have to evolve. Like British diplomat Carne Ross (2009) argues, the traditional diplomatic function of communicator and negotiator with other governments will remain relevant, but it is no longer sufficient. Therefore, in this increasingly globalised society, diplomats and embassies will have to collaborate with non-state actors if they want to grasp what is going on around them, and how the issues that arise can be tackled. Non-state actor involvement in diplomatic processes, particularly in relation to sustainable development, is now undeniable. This thesis argues that non-state actors are crucial to the evolutionary success of such frontline polylateral diplomatic conduct. How exactly NSAs fit into the diplomatic
process and particularly, *how state actors view this increased inclusion as well as NSAs roles or functions will be explored further in this thesis*. In order to avoid bias and offer plurality in perspective, the practical workings of polylateral sustainable development diplomacy on the frontline will be analysed by means of triangulation: the research makes use of data obtained through participatory observation as well as semi-structured interviews with embassy employees and non-state actors involved in their polylateral sustainable development diplomatic efforts, complemented by an analysis of existing documentation.

### 1.1 Research Problem and Questions

To a certain extent, the idea of wicked problems and how to solve them (complex issues, complex solutions) sounds logical, and Geoffrey Wiseman’s polylateralism seems an equally natural evolution of diplomatic relations to deal with today’s wicked problems. But Paul Sharp (2011, p. 719) describes it well when considering the true complexity of such diplomatic conduct:

> “How are what Geoffrey Wiseman has called “polylateral” diplomatic relations to be conducted where some actors are more enterprise than polity, some stand in vertical rather than horizontal relationship to one another, and all have identities that strengthen and weaken by issue and context?”

As will become clear in later sections of this thesis, much of the research on non-state actor involvement in global governance and diplomatic endeavours has been conducted with a focus on either the specific characteristics and expertise of non-state actors, or the strategies they employ. However, as polylateral endeavours tend to be state-led or require top-down, governmental endowment in order to achieve so-called validated outcomes, non-state actor involvement in global governance is heavily dependent on the state actor. Taking this into consideration, this thesis contributes to current research by gaining an insight in the state actor’s perspective of non-state actor involvement and the potential roles they can fulfil within such processes. In doing so, it hopes to help illuminate this modern-day dilemma, which may be part of the larger ‘sustainability’ solution. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, its research is built on the below, narrowed down principal research question:

**Principal research question**

*How do state actors perceive of the role of non-state actors in frontline diplomacy, particularly in relation to sustainable development?*

By narrowing down the field of research from the global diplomatic arena to frontline diplomacy, it hopes to add something new to the existing research on polylateral diplomacy, which has until now mainly focused on international climate change negotiations, such as the annual occurrence of COPs. Through the use of a case study on the Dutch embassy in the Philippines, and particularly by including an example of what SDG 17.16 calls a Multi-Stakeholder Partnership, it aims to offer some insight in the rollout of such projects and the dynamic between state and non-state actors in such polylateral settings. The following two sub-questions are meant to guide the case study of the Dutch embassy and provide answers used to make generalisations for the main research question stated above.

**Sub-questions**

1) From the perspective of the Dutch embassy in the Philippines, how is the concept of the Dutch ‘poldermodel’ or collaborative governance integrated in daily diplomatic practice and policy making in relation to sustainable development?
2) *How do Dutch embassy employees view the respective roles of state and non-state actors in polylateral diplomatic endeavours (such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan) and how does this translate into practice?*

In answering the above research questions, this thesis works under the assumptions that, firstly, non-state actors are indispensable in the field of sustainable development diplomacy, and secondly, that they can influence both the diplomatic process and agenda setting, depending on their role in the process.
2. Background

Some scholars say that modern diplomacy, in its Westphalian or state-centric form (which is exclusively practiced by foreign services and ministries) seems to be in decline. This thesis argues from the point of view that, rather than being in decline, diplomacy is in a state of evolution. Its development, catalysed by the ongoing processes of globalisation, makes it more effective due to its integral and holistic capacity. However, as authors such as Holmes and Simon Rofe (2016) and Spies (2019a) point out, for whatever definition one may ascribe to diplomacy as a concept, its nature in terms of strategy or mission remains unchanged: dialogue, negotiation and representation are the three specifically diplomatic forms of communication that underpin all diplomatic activity. Or, in the words of Alan James (1993, p. 100), finely highlighting the intricacies of civilised human behaviour and representation:

Any group of persons, whether real or notional, can only behave and be envisaged as a collectivity if its members are able to communicate with each other.

This chapter aims to provide the reader with a solid understanding of the key concepts supporting this thesis. Firstly, a concise historical background is laid out on how the evolution of diplomatic practice led to its most recent, polylateral form, which is the overarching concept of this work. The subsequent section consists of a literature review of the most recent research on the topics of diplomatic theory in relation to polylateral sustainable development diplomacy, followed by a narrower focus on frontline diplomacy and non-state actors as participants. Penultimately, background information to help ‘set the setting’ of the specific case study of the Dutch embassy in the Philippines with a focus on the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan is outlined. The closing section summarises the focus of this thesis and how it aims to add to existing research.

2.1 On Polylateral Sustainable Development Diplomacy

The following section examines the concept of polylateral sustainable development diplomacy through dissection, gradually narrowing it down. First of all, the history of diplomacy will be looked at, followed by a section focused on the evolution it has been undergoing for the last three decades. Ultimately, it looks at the concept of sustainable development diplomacy.

2.1.1 A History of Diplomacy as a Practical Concept

Where diplomacy has traditionally been about the peaceful conduct of bilateral relations between states, the Peace Conference in Paris marked the beginning of the age of high-level multilateral diplomacy. Diplomats now had to comprehend a much vaster range of complex topics, varying from warfare, international economic relations to transport and communications. Growingly, multilateralism took precedence over bilateralism, and international organisations and frameworks under which states now conducted their international relations have gradually become the norm, rather than the exception (Black 2010, Hamilton and Langhorne 1995, Kappeler 1998, Langhorne 1998, Sharp 1998).

Although this revolutionary phase of diplomacy in the early twentieth century can be seen as a deepening or enrichment of diplomacy as a practice, its effectiveness during that period is questioned by a number of authors. Noting that bad policy, and not bad diplomacy, was at the root of the First World War, Paul Sharp (1998) for one still marks the (albeit wrongly) perceived failure of diplomacy to prevent the First World War as the prelude to diplomacy’s second defeat of the twentieth century: the League of Nations’ inability to prevent the Second World War. In the years following the end of the Second World War, authors such as Géraud (1945), Butterfield (1966), Sofer (1988) and Riordan (2003) made mentions of a ‘new diplomacy’, but Leira (2016) points out how these were merely gradual changes, comparable to a natural evolution of means, methods and content of diplomacy, rather than the revolutionary leap made earlier in the century. In this slow pace of change, one recognises Spies’ (2019) essential diplomatic skills of dialogue, negotiation and representation which constitute it as a “growth-concept”, evolving out of communication and deliberation rather than rash decisions based on warfare (Leira 2016:36).
It is not until the post-Cold War period that literature finally starts to appraise diplomacy, and its societal relevance, consistently again (Leira 2016; Sharp 1998). A steady development of multilateral international relations, paired with the processes of globalisation and the technological advances which catalysed them, caused not only a myriad of complex, global issues, but also a new openness of information surrounding them. With an ever more informed and connected global society emerging, global political issues, which were previously only focused on inter-state conflicts, suddenly became everybody’s business. This possibly even more profound transformation saw non-state actors (i.e. NGOs, CSOs, private companies etc.) enter ‘traditional’ diplomacy for the first time in great numbers, attempting to tackle matters which concerned not just nation states, but our entire global society (including, but not exclusively, trade, global health, the environment, pollution, and poverty) (Constantinou & Sharp 2016; Kappeler 1998; Sharp 1998). Famous examples of such early high NSA involvement include the 1997 Seattle WTO protests and the strong involvement of NGOs in devising the 1997 Ottawa Treaty, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty (Short 1999). The growing involvement of experts, citizens groups and NGOs in post-Cold War’s multilateralism of negotiations with a larger number of issues and more complex agendas of conferences pushed multilateral diplomacy to a new stage of evolution (Petrovsky 1998). This evolved form of diplomacy, which this thesis primarily builds on, is referred to as polylateral diplomacy. The term was first coined by Geoffrey Wiseman in 1999 (p.41) as a way of describing this third level of diplomacy regarding state-non-state relations:

The conduct of relations between official entities and at least one unofficial, non-state entity in which there is a reasonable expectation of systematic relationships, involving some form of reporting, communication, negotiation, and representation, but not involving mutual recognition as sovereign, equivalent entities.

In this context, the post-Cold War period birthed a myriad of diplomatic variations, upon which the following section will briefly elaborate upon in relation to the topic of this thesis: non-state actors in polylateral sustainable development diplomacy. Catalytic diplomacy (as conceived by Brian Hocking in 1999) and multistakeholder diplomacy (Kurbalija & Katrandijev 2006) are both other terms which refer to this public-private interplay as well. For the sake of consistency and clarity, Wiseman’s term ‘polylateral diplomacy’ is deemed to be a better descriptor for this thesis, as it indicates the departure from state-centred bilateral and multilateral diplomacy in its diversity of actors, yet, shows the organic, etymological progression from the latter two terms. To cover every aspect of polylateral sustainable development diplomacy in a literature review, an exploration of the debate on diplomatic decline versus its transformation is conducted before delving into the roots of polylateralism and sustainable development diplomacy, and their entangled descendants.

2.1.2 On The (Ir)Relevance of Frontline Diplomacy

Brian Hocking’s (1997/1998; 1999) research points out two long-standing, opposing themes in the historical debate on diplomacy: ‘newness’ and ‘decline’. ‘The end of diplomacy’ was an important topic during the nineties, illustrated nicely with the 1996 address of the Canadian deputy minister of foreign affairs regarding the query, titled ‘Must diplomacy always be on the endangered species list?’ (Cooper 1997-1998, p. 174; Kjellén 2008). Due to the surge in modern technological developments and cost pressures as well as the presence of overarching political institutions managing large parts of the global political system such as the European Union and United Nation, the need for bilateral diplomacy, especially that of the resident ambassador and embassy (also known as frontline diplomacy), has been said to have become of increasing irrelevance (Bratberg 2007; Gallaga 2013). With today’s global challenges in mind, former British diplomat Carne Ross (2009) pushes that debate further by stating that conventional embassies and their ambassadors are ill-suited to address them. He notes how, in his years of diplomatic practice in the 1990s and early 2000s, “the methods of conventional diplomacy seemed almost deliberately constructed to separate the diplomat from reality – and also from the people diplomats claim to represent.” (Ross 2009, online) He continues his account, criticising the bubble of diplomat-to-diplomat conversations, whilst he questions the so-called raison d’état (traditional diplomatic motivation based purely on national interest). When national borders have started to blur, and negotiations and decision-making increasingly takes place at the supranational levels of the EU and UN, does the current political system indeed then still need frontline diplomacy?
Whereas former diplomat Ross holds that conventional diplomatic practice is ill-suited to the extent of becoming obsolete, Cerny (2010) posits that it is undergoing a transformation: a course of reasoning deemed more convincing in the context of this thesis. He underlines this rationale by pointing out how contemporary states are undergoing a fundamental transformation, shifting from the old ‘raison d’État’ to what he calls a “growing hegemony of ‘raison du Monde’”. (Cerny 2010, p. 5) Although Cerny relates his point mainly to a state’s political and economic competitiveness on the global market, his point is equally as applicable to global matters of a social and environmental scope. Due to the processes of globalisation, the sovereign nation-state can no longer solely focus on the common good or public interest within its own borders. The transnational nature of the challenges our contemporary society faces has created a responsibility far beyond that field of governance. ‘Global commons’, which can refer to essential resources, spaces and concerns beyond national jurisdictions, such as climate change, global health and biodiversity conservation have become more prominent due to our increasing globalisation (Ranganathan 2016), and the question is raised whether bilateral systems and/or frontline diplomacy are up to the challenge. In conversations with Dutch embassy staff, the point of view arose that embassies remain relevant in the face of global challenges, even in an age of multilateralism, for they “serve as nodes for interaction between parties that do not normally converse with one another” (Punzalan 2019). As senior policy officer Punzalan (2019) points out, “supranational institutions may perform best in bringing together different states to work on common problems, but embassies remain the primary bridge between the nationals of one country and another.” Beerends (2019), deputy-head of mission, hereupon asserts that diplomacy, and what it ultimately achieves, is hard to grasp, which may indeed make it seem superfluous to some. Yet, he believes that structural interaction between two governments, where human interactions are the deciding factor as to how deep this relationship will run, helps with solving issues of a global and interrelated scale.

Simultaneously with the occurrence of the debate on diplomatic relevance, the involvement of non-state actors (NSAs) in diplomacy has become a recurring theme. Scholars started focusing on the revival of diplomacy, or ‘diplomacy 2.0’, as Leira (2016) put it, rather than the aforementioned ‘diplomatic decline’ (Cooper 1997-1998). Track two diplomacy (track one diplomacy being ‘traditional’ diplomacy as conducted by governments); unofficial diplomacy; alternate, unconventional or para-diplomacy; and citizen or civil diplomacy are all terms which refer to the conduct of ‘diplomacy’ by actors other than sovereign states. These forms can occur separate or parallel to that of ‘official’ diplomacy, on domestic, transnational, international and global levels, and are performed by a vast range of actors (including, but not exclusively, political parties, businesses, think tanks, artists, human rights or environmental activists, religious groups, and trade unions). The confluence of two separate diplomatic processes with the same aim is also referred to as multitrack diplomacy (Spies 2019), however, contrary to Wiseman’s polylateral diplomacy, this does not need to involve both state and non-state actors. Composite, or “hyphen-diplomacy” describes another (or overlapping) part of the diplomatic evolution, highlighting not only the entry of new actors in the diplomatic arena, but also the variety in arenas, topics and forms of interaction overall (Leira 2016, p. 36). One can think of sports diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy, human rights or environmental diplomacy for example. However, the ‘hyphenated diplomacy’ this particular thesis focuses on specifically is that of sustainable development diplomacy, due to its universal relevance in the face of today’s transnational global challenges.

This thesis works thus from the point of view that, especially when faced with transnational challenges and an accompanying, growing sense of shared responsibility, frontline diplomacy can play a crucial role in achieving sustainable development. Supranational organisations are indeed pivotal in gathering the international society to jointly agree and come up with frameworks such as Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, but diplomacy conducted on the frontlines is then instrumental in their implementation. Frontline diplomacy, defined by Cooper & Cornut (2018, p. 300) as “the craft of diplomats either posted abroad in embassies, consulates, and permanent representations or operating through other types of activity beyond headquarters”, allows for long-term investment in the relationship between two countries. Especially in Global North-South relations, where countries may not cross each other’s path as easily as e.g. so-called ‘EU neighbours’ may do, frontline diplomacy is an invaluable tool in establishing that North-South collaboration necessary for sustainable development. Diplomats, according to Cooper & Cornut (2019, p. 300), are “first and foremost concerned with the management of frontlines between different political entities”, but in the era of globalisation also with making and
maintaining economic, social and environmental connections between the two. Even so, frontline diplomats in International Relations theory are often perceived to have only a marginal role in international decision-making, but Sharp and Wiseman (2007) argue the opposite. They stress that frontline diplomats constitute and express the nature of our international society, rather than simply passing on its message. States cooperate and communicate with foreign governments and non-state actors such as NGOs, civil society, multilateral organisations and so on through their frontline diplomats, and in doing so, create what we name international relations. In this type of ongoing collaboration and conversation, in contrast with the inflexible nature of climate negotiations in regard to non-state actor involvement, non-state actors have direct access to government representatives, either before such international climate negotiations, or during their implementation, potentially increasing their influence. In the words of Cooper & Cornut (2019, p. 302) and Sending, Pouliot & Neumann (2015): “Diplomacy is the making of international politics and it is often ostensibly mundane phenomena which makes the world go round”. Therefore, studying the workings of frontline diplomacy, and the way that non-state actors are perceived in this process, can add to a greater understanding of it, which in turn may offer possibilities for its optimisation in practice.

2.1.3 On Sustainable Development Diplomacy

Over the span of the last few decades, a large part of humanity seems to finally agree that an irresponsible use of earth’s resources is negatively affecting both the environment and our own societies. Overall, humanity is making a slow transition from a paradigm of limitless growth to one pregnant with the terms ‘green’ and ‘sustainable development’ (Dryzek, 2013; Vallero, 2005), the latter being the theoretical foundation on which a large part of this thesis is based. Definitions of the concept of sustainable development, much like that of diplomacy, are numerous and found in varying gradations of ‘green’, or human vs. environmental centrism. However, the definition that is most widely referred to must be that of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (1987), also commonly known as the Brundtland report:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Brundtland report then goes further in defining two key concepts. Firstly, it mentions the concept of ‘needs’, referring to the essential needs of all, and in particular those of the world’s poor, in both developed and developing countries. Secondly, the report states the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation, which links to the Club of Rome’s concept of ‘limits to growth’: our global resources, or commons, are finite, and development as we know it in its unlimited, neoliberal form cannot be sustained (Dryzek 2013; Meadows et al. 1972). Additionally, to complete the picture and to steer away from its often anthropocentric nature, the author of this thesis would like to add the limitations of the planet as our natural environment, also referred to as the planetary boundaries (Rockström et al. 2009), particularly in light of the rapid decline in biodiversity and the change in climate since the publication of the report in 1987 (Baker 2016; Dryzek 2013).

Consequently, the current focus on sustainable development has opened up debates surrounding what then constitutes as development, sustainability and social progress, as well as our relationship with the environment, both in the so-called Global North as well as the Global South. There seems to be little consensus as to what sustainable development entails, and even less agreement on what the way toward a sustainable future could be (Baker 2016). What seems to be agreed upon, however, is that the matter of sustainable development is multi-faceted and complex. It aims to promote a harmonious and sustainable coexistence of the social, economic as well as environmental aspects of our existence, also known as the three dimensions of sustainable development. By encompassing all three dimensions, sustainable development inevitably results in the recognition of their interrelated and interdisciplinary nature (Baker 2016; Ekins 2000; Kjellén 2008).
The complexity and interdisciplinary nature of sustainability can be linked to Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber’s (1973) concept of wicked problems, which are problems that are difficult or impossible to solve for a number of reasons. No simple solutions are available. Tackling complex matters of sustainability, such as climate change, hunger and inequality, require therefore problem-solving approaches which involve a plurality of actors, resources and areas of expertise (Kjellén 2008, Pryshlakivsky & Searcy 2012). This type of interdisciplinary and holistic approach is paramount to sustainable development, and its diplomatic practice.

Kjellén (2008, p. 31) proffers that the, what he names, first “elements of a new diplomacy” for sustainable development first started to emerge in the 1970s, when the topic of the environment first entered the political agenda on a large scale with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as an important driver to many of the main environmental issues, such as desertification, biodiversity and the climate. In his work, based on decades in high-level diplomatic negotiations, often of an environmental nature, he argues that sustainable development diplomacy showcases an additional set of features, adding onto those of traditional diplomacy, which justify the classification of it being ‘a new diplomacy’. The structure of these special features has been identified, with a distinction between a set of fundamental parameters and a set of specific elements. These focus on the “existence of absolute limits/threats”, the “need for a broad vision” and the “primacy of the long term”, further characterised by the “emergence of new international actors”, the recognition of the “impact of civil society and non-governmental organizations” as well as the “role of science and research”. (Kjellén 2008, p. 39)

There is a noticeable similarity (or overlap) with Wiseman’s polylateral diplomacy here, in the sense that, due to its dealing with larger issues surpassing those of bilateral or multilateral security threats such as climate change (referred to by Kjellén as absolute limits/threats), this ‘new diplomacy’ entails the involvement of new international actors, including those of a non-state nature. Therefore, I argue that, due to its complex and interdisciplinary nature, sustainable development diplomacy by default is of a polylateral nature. Kjellén (2008, p. 41) points out how both instructions and negotiations within sustainable development need to recognise an “extremely complex reality, which involves a reasonable understanding of the forces that are at play in global change as well as the many social and economic consequences of action to promote sustainability at the global level.” He continues, in line with the criticism of traditional diplomacy by former British diplomat Carne Ross (2009) found in the previous section, by respectfully questioning the fact whether traditional negotiators, who are more often than not educated in similar fields, hold an adequate toolbox to deal with these issues of a complex nature. After all, not many negotiators are academically educated in, for example, the natural sciences, which for matters regarding the environment could be considered quite essential. Kjellén hence makes the case for both the education of negotiators, in order to train them to hold a broader view in which sustainability issues can be placed, as well as the inclusion of non-state actors who can add onto the expertise required to deal with matters of a complex and interdisciplinary nature. Both the negotiation and planning process of, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) themselves, seem to showcase the shift away from the traditional ‘one-problem, one-discipline’ way of governmental conduct and towards a more holistic and interdisciplinary way of governance. These trends are showing a clear recognition of the benefits of interdisciplinary governance approaches. But then the question still ensues: how exactly do non-state actors fit within these processes of new sustainable development diplomacy?

2.2 On the Role of Non-State Actors in Global Governance

The literature on the emergence of non-state actors in global governance offers two different explanations for this phenomenon. The first stance argues that the inclusion of non-state actors is a result of globalisation and the complex issues that have come with it. Transnational issues are too complex to be handled by either governments or intergovernmental organisations alone: hence the demand for non-state actors to be included in the process of problem-solving (Brühl 2010, Keohane and Nye 2000). The second stance points at internal factors which have contributed to the inclusion of non-state actors in global governance. According to Frantz & Martens (2006), the ‘professionalisation’ of non-state organisations’ personnel and internal structures has added to their validity, resulting in their inclusion in global governance (Brühl 2010). Most likely, one will have reinforced the other, and vice versa,
leaving us with the following question: how can non-state actors be included, now that they are undeniably involved?

There has been a considerable amount of research done on the strategies of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in international negotiations as important non-state actors. As Rietig (2016) outlines: it has been established that NGOs take part in international negotiations on a large scale; they attempt to influence the outcome of these negotiations according to their own objectives, and that they, to an extent, matter in global governance. Yet, there is less material to be found on the when and how NGOs make their contributions to more effective and democratic global governance, nor is there a lot of information available as to when state actors take into account these contributions as prerequisites for influencing negotiations on an international level. Authors like Brühl (2010) and Albin (1999) have researched the particular standing of NGOs in negotiations, but there is not much research to be found on the role of civil society as a whole. Therefore, this thesis investigates a more inclusive definition of non-state actors (thus, not solely NGOs, but also CSOs, private companies, think tanks, research institutes and such), particularly at their role in frontline cooperation. As said before, it looks in particular at the diplomatic activities of the embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Philippines, in order to see whether any conclusions can be drawn about their participation in the wider field of frontline sustainable development diplomacy. These findings may in turn lead to the optimisation of these polylateral processes.

Due to a largely NGO-focused body of literature, much of the research reviewed here relates to this specific type of non-state actor. However, the author of this thesis argues that much of the concepts of this literature can be deemed applicable to the participation of the larger part of civil society as well. This is based on the perception that, although non-state actors may have differing interests and motivations, they do have a set of characteristics in common. All non-state actors, be it for-profit or not-for-profit, cannot represent anyone other than their own organisation and interest groups. All non-state actors are relatively new to the diplomatic arena. All non-state actors are still finding their ‘spot’ in this arena, and particularly, are trying to figure out how to do this in the most effective way. These points set them aside as a group from state actors, the traditionally predominant diplomatic contenders, who act not on behalf of narrower interests, but on behalf of their respective nations. Therefore, literature on the role of NGOs in diplomatic processes will be considered as partially generalisable for the sum of civil society’s role in diplomatic processes. Yet, as only few studies analyse NGOs and business groups together, the limitations as to how far such conclusions can be generalised need to be acknowledged (Downie 2016). This thesis intends to add to that smaller part of academic research which analyses the entirety of civil society’s role in diplomatic processes. In summary, this thesis hopes to add to the research done on how non-state actors fit (and thus, paid attention to by state actors) in diplomacy related to sustainable development (encompassing negotiations and diplomatic processes of an environmental, sustainable and/or a climate change-related nature). By looking at how the role of non-state actors is perceived academically in this literature review, as well as in practice through the conduct of interviews with key informants of the case study and participatory observation, this thesis hopes to provide pointers for such effective conduct of MSPs and other polylateral frontline diplomatic activities aimed at sustainable development.

2.2.1 Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships – The Answer to Everything?

Public-private partnerships are increasingly put forward as an effective way to realise objectives in sustainable development policy (Beisheim 2012), calling for the entry of non-state actors in the arena of international negotiations, governance and diplomacy. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations General Assembly 2015), published in September 2015, explicitly mentions them in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.16:

“Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources to support the achievement of sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries”
and SDG 17.17:

“Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships”.

Yet, it fails to explain how these partnerships should look like or work, let alone what role both state and non-state actors are expected to have. This thesis, rather than looking at the more commonly researched area of non-state actor inclusion in treaty or climate negotiations (e.g. Albin 1999, Betsill & Corell 2001, Rietig 2016), is looking at the inclusion of non-state actors in the activities of embassies (also called frontline diplomacy) with a focus on sustainable development. Partly and more specifically, through the example of one of the Dutch embassy’s larger projects, the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan, it is looking at the type of partnership mentioned in SDG 17.16: Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships or MSPs which pool the competences and resources of state and non-state actors aiming for the provision of common goods. 17.16 calls for MSPs to “mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievements of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”. The expectations of such MSPs are high: as the title of the 2030 Agenda clearly states, Transforming Our World is the aim. Furthermore, MSPs are supposed to be wholly inclusive and are expected to be held accountable for their actions (Schäferhoff, Campe & Kaan 2009, Beisheim & Ellersiek 2017). By including everyone who is affected by a wicked problem of a scale of that of i.e. climate change, one can only imagine the complexity, duration and number of participants of such collaborative processes. Aguirre Valencia (2006) argues that one will have a larger chance of successful polylateral collaboration if all stakeholders establish a common goal, which sounds logical, but also easier said than done. These MSPs are relatively new, and as was stated previously, there is no tested recipe for success, making this thesis highly relevant in this era of high expectations and even higher stakes.

2.2.2 On Strategy, Legitimacy and Functions

Rietig (2016) ascribes three different roles to non-state actors, these being activists, lobbyists and/or experts. She then differentiates between NGO demands as macro- and microdemands, which arguably can be applicable to the wider spectrum of non-state actors as well. Macro demands can be viewed as the demand for governments to subscribe to overarching objectives such as the Paris Agreement or broader concept such as climate justice. Micro demands, which are more applicable to this thesis’ case study, are “aspects of particular interests to some NGOs[, other non-state actors] or countries that rarely enter the wider public mainstream.” (Rietig 2016, p. 272) Examples of such micro demands are the design for policies on the measurement and verification of emissions or specific projects such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan. Lobbyist and/or expert type non-state actors (hereafter referred to as NSAs) are generally in a better position than the activist type NSA, as they are often in direct contact with like-minded government representatives (lobbyists) or are seen as the required pair of specialised eyes on a particular aspect of a sustainability problem (experts), as was pointed out by Bo Kjellén (2008). A further factor, according to Rietig, is whether the objectives of an NGO (or NSA) are aligned with that of the government they are targeting, or not. Activist approaches such as demonstrations and persistent lobbying are more often used as means of public pressure when objectives are not aligned. Information-based lobbying strategies are most often seen when NSAs have direct access to government representatives and have the opportunity to engage in polylateral processes (such as MSPs) where they can work directly with other negotiators, providing resources in the form of information, knowledge and advice and where they have the possibility to directly communicate their demands (Gough & Shackley 2001, Rietig 2016, Vormedal 2008). Rietig (2016, p. 282) points out how environmental lobbyists at climate negotiations such as the annual Conference of the Parties (COP) negotiations hardly gain access to governmental lobbyists, with one of the interviewed NSA lobbyists stating: “The high-level delegates are very cold and block every contact. They are not approachable and do want to be left alone. They do not even want to engage in a dialogue about the issue with us.” According to Rietig (2016), this happens because, firstly, the countries’ positions have already been determined prior to the negotiations, and secondly, because environmental NGOs do not have the same financial bargaining power as businesses or other partners in future climate agreement implementations.
Much of scholarly research surrounding international environmental negotiations has focused on the non-state actors’ role in these processes, particularly in the setting of the European Union (EU), as it plays a critical role in global environmental politics (Downie 2016). However, Downie (2016) and Risse-Kappen (1995) argue that non-state actors either exploit Putnam’s (1988) ‘two-level’ game by working through both the domestic polity and international arena of powerful states to influence the political outcomes related to their respective causes, or they work transnationally across state boundaries to pressure states “from above” and “below”. The inflexible aspect of climate negotiations contrasts the possibilities of non-state actor involvement in frontline diplomatic activities, such as previously mentioned multi-stakeholder partnerships. Having direct access to government representatives by being involved in frontline diplomatic activities gives NSAs the opportunity to exercise influence either ahead of international climate negotiations, or contrarily, in the aftermath of such climate negotiations in the implementation phase of climate agreements (i.e. MSPs). Yet, as Brühl (2010) points out, while NGOs (and other non-state actors) are often part of the beginning of negotiations (or planning phases of MSPs) in the process of problem identification, they are usually excluded from the later, more detailed stages relating to technical and financial transfers. More often than not, state actors are the ones taking the final decisions, which limits non-state actor influence. However, although much of the literature on polylateral diplomacy claims that the inclusion of non-state actors in global governance can add to the political legitimacy of such endeavours, and actively calls for the increase of civil society’s influence on public decision-making, the matter of political participation may not immediately translate into political legitimacy.

The ‘transmission belt’ model is deemed the most popular theoretical view of civil society in global governance. It portrays civil society as the transmission belt between the people and their government (or, in ‘transmission belt terminology’: “between the public space and the empowered space”) which, through transmitting the view of the people to the empowered space, is seen as a means of legitimizing political decision as they directly or indirectly influence the decision-making process (Albareda 2018, Bückstränd 2011, Dryzek 2013, Erman 2017, p. 135, Kuyper 2016, Nanz & Steffek 2004). Yet, several studies have pointed out the fundamental flaws in civil society’s representative roles (e.g. Binderkrantz 2009, Halpin 2006 and Jordan & Maloney 2007, as also found in Albareda 2018), as many organisations do not manage to include their membership base in deciding the course of the organisation’s political agenda. Albareda’s (2018) paper shows that only one out of three CSOs (on the EU level) manages to effectively function as a transmission belt, as they both invest in member representation in their internal structure and simultaneously have the required access to government representatives in order to gain an influential role in the policy-making process (Brühl 2010).

Erman (2017) argues that, in what she calls her ‘function-sensitive approach’, political legitimacy is dependent on the different functions within global governance as well as the relationship between these functions, rather than the transmission of a message or view from the private to the public sphere in order to influence political decision-making. Her approach suggests that non-state actors can indeed strengthen political legitimacy, but through performing the following five out of a total of six functions: (1) problem identification, (2) agenda-setting, (3) implementation, (4) enforcement and monitoring, and (5) evaluation. Yet, contrary to the transmission belt model, Erman states non-state actors should not try to influence the sixth function, which entails directly or indirectly affecting the (6) decision-making process in terms of laws and policies. In Erman’s view, rather than legitimising and democratising global governance, it would diminish the legitimacy of such decisions, as non-state actors are non-elected participants. She encourages instead for the ‘transmission belt’ to be placed between the private and public space, by aiming to influence decision-making on a voter’s level, if decisions need to be influenced at all (Erman 2017).

The literature on the role of non-state actors in global governance is thus divided, with a large concentration surrounding the idea of civil society functioning as a transmission belt. On the one hand, you have authors such as Rietig (2016), Nanz & Steffek (2004), Dryzek (2006, 2013), and Putnam (1998) who focus their research on how, when and where non-state actors influence domestic and international law- and policy making and actively promote the idea of non-state actor influence in decision-making processes. On the other hand, Eva Erman (2017) takes a slightly different approach by indeed advocating the inclusion of civil society in global governance, but limits the roles or functions
non-state actors can take on when doing so, with the explicit exclusion of the decision-making role. Either way, the inclusion of non-state actors in global governance (and thus, polylateral sustainable development diplomacy) is seen as a means of increasing resources (knowledge, funds, tools) as well as optimising the democratic and inclusive aspects of complex matters. As Elizabeth Burleson (2010) puts it: “Public participation in international decision-making can sustain trust in governments and strengthen international consensus building.” It can, however, also easily increase tensions and/or complicate things further with such a multitude of intentions and perspectives. How to do this wholly effectively, however, is still in the process of being found out (Albareda 2018, Erman 2017, Gray & Purdy 2018). Hocking (2006, p. 27) refers to this process as the “rules of engagement” between the variety of actors consisting of state, businesses, and NGOs, which are gradually taking shape. These nearly new rules are, he continues, “tenuous and fuzzy. Yet, the success of much contemporary diplomacy, not only in the trade arena, requires that they be developed.” Therefore, researching how the role of non-state actors in diplomacy is perceived can help shed a light on these intricacies.
3. Theoretical Framework

As touched upon in the previous section (see 2.1.1), both the interest in diplomatic practice and in theory have increased in recent years (Murray et al. 2011; Pouliot & Cornut 2015). However, the existence of a diplomatic theoretical framework as such is debatable. More often than not, diplomatic studies have been classified as “the poor child of International Relations (IR) theory”, or merely a practical subfield of it (Pouliot & Cornut 2015, p. 297), intended as a tool for conducting international affairs, rather than one which can explain it. On the other hand, scholars such as Paul Sharp (1999, p. 33) argue the very opposite, stating that diplomacy “provides powerful metaphors not only for understanding what the professional diplomats do, but also for understanding international relations in general” (Cooper et al. 2008; Pouliot & Cornut 2015; Sending et al. 2015). Steiner (2004), however, argues how in no other field of world politics there exists a wider gap than between the practice and theory of diplomacy, an issue which he ascribes to a number of reasons. Firstly, diplomacy is a field of extreme variability, making it difficult to define in empirical generalisations. Harold Nicolson (1919, in Steiner 2004, p.493) reiterates this in writing: “Of all the branches of human endeavour, diplomacy is the most protean”. Secondly, scholars state it is both too unpredictable and too uncertain to pin down. This partly has to do with the cloud of secrecy major parts of diplomatic endeavours have been shrouded in, partly with the human factor weighing in on the outcome of diplomatic negotiations. Lastly, those few scholars that have attempted to theorise diplomacy have failed to provide a solid theoretical foundation, mostly because of the aforementioned factors. Yet, some theoretical models applicable to polylateralism do exist, borrowing from the research field of governance. Therefore, in order to be able to analyse Wiseman’s definition of polylateralism in diplomacy, collaborative governance shall be used as the theoretical framework for this thesis. Aside from being highly applicable to the polylateral aspect of diplomacy, collaborative governance also holds a lot of similarities with the Dutch concept of the ‘poldermodel’. Building on the idea to come out of a crisis in consensus with all stakeholders involved, it can be seen as one of the Dutch government’s guiding principles. Collaborative governance theory focuses on that same aim, involving actors from both the public and private sector, and seems thus capable of guiding research surrounding complex, polylateral endeavours, particularly those resulting from issues related to ‘unsustainability’. As collaborative governance is more theoretically conceptualised and academically established than the Dutch ‘poldermodel’, it is deemed to be a better suited framework for understanding polylateral sustainable development diplomacy.

Due to their often-wicked nature, sustainability issues tend to “involve complex interactions between social, economic, and environmental factors that are often viewed quite differently by disparate stakeholders groups”, a notion very much at the foundation of the Dutch poldermodel (Gollagher & Hart-Karp, 2013, p. 2344). Therefore, ensuring policies, projects and other governmental planning structures include the collaborative and democratic participation from not only the affected state departments and ministries, but also the affected parts of civil society, is deemed an essential element of holistic problem-solving. According to Rawls (1971), collaborative governance is a theoretical approach which not only has the potential to produce more effective policies, it also incorporates the aspect of the basic right of citizens to actively participate in democratic decision-making. (see also Andersson et al., 2018) Combined with collaborative governance, the function-sensitive approach, as already explored in the previous chapter, will help classify the kinds of roles or ‘functions’ non-state actors can have within such collaborative governance processes (Bodin 2017, Erman 2018, Gray & Purdy 2018, Soens 2006).

3.1 On the Dutch ‘Poldermodel’: Non-State Actor Involvement in Dutch Policy and Governance

Non-state actors (whether business, NGO, CSO or other) were involved in almost all of the embassy’s activities of the case study developed in section 4.6 of the Methodology. The inclusion of all affected stakeholders in decision-making processes (or consensus-based decision-making) is a familiar phenomenon in the Netherlands, which in Dutch is referred to as the ‘poldermodel’ (verb: ‘polderen’) (Keune 2016). The precise origins of the term ‘poldermodel’ are disputed, but one frequently mentioned
instigator for the term is the 1982 tripartite agreement on macro-economic policy between employer’s organisations, labour unions and the Dutch government, also known as the Wassenaar Accord (Jonker 2014). Historically seen, the terms ‘polderen’ or ‘poldermodel’ were inspired by the “need to weld very different social groups together in the country’s running battle against flooding” of the reclaimed low-lying lands called ‘polders’ in the late Middle Ages (Jonker 2014, Keune 2016). After years of stagnant economic growth and unemployment in the early 1980s, the ‘poldermodel’ was named the country’s key to success in terms of the Dutch economy and job market leaping forward in the 1990s, with social and economic reforms fuelled by both the private and the public sector. The model has been both praised as well as criticised over the past decades, and some have even declared it ‘dead’. (Jonker 2014, Keune 2016) Similar to the objections of Eva Erman in the previous chapter, some Dutch political parties deem the ‘poldermodel’ to be undemocratic, as non-state participants have not been elected accordingly. Others, again, claim that its legitimacy is increased exactly because of the participation of civil society. Whether it works or not, the Dutch ‘poldermodel’ has slowly formed part of Dutch national identity for the past decades and still acts as a guiding principle in much of Dutch national and international policy. Either way, with the world’s current focus on holistic problem-solving in the face of the sustainability dilemma, familiarity with this type of governance can work in everyone’s advantage.

3.2 On Collaborative Governance

Participatory forms of public administration, such as the ‘poldermodel’, have sparked ever more interest in recent years, especially in the face of our modern-day environmental problems. The emerging interest in such participatory forms of governance can be understood as a response to the reduced effectiveness of more traditional forms of policy making and implementation, such as managerial, adversarial, rational-technical and other top-down modes of policy making. Researchers such as Ansell & Gash (2008), Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2012) and Gollagher & Hartz-Karp (2013) have referred to the type of governance, which brings together state and non-state actors in public-private partnerships to engage in consensus-oriented decision-making as ‘collaborative governance’.

Seen more broadly, this development can be linked to a general change of focus from bureaucratic to network approaches in the sphere of public administration (O’Leary et al. 2010). The theory of collaborative governance is widely used and interpreted across the academic board. Ansell and Gash’s (2008, p. 544) interpretation of the concept has led to a frequently quoted definition:

A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.

This definition can be broken down into six criteria (Ansell & Gash 2008, p. 544-545):

(1) the forum is initiated by public agencies or institutions, (2) participants in the forum include nonstate actors, (3) participants engage directly in decision making and are not merely “consulted” by public agencies, (4) the forum is formally organized and meets collectively, (5) the forum aims to make decisions by consensus (even if consensus is not achieved in practice), and (6) the focus of collaboration is on public policy or public management.

Bodin (2017, p. 1), in his deliberation on collaborative governance as a response to environmental dilemmas, continues on the concept of collaboration, pointing out how it is put forward as a means by which it is deemed to “(i) enhance the generation of new knowledge through social learning) …. (ii) better integrate important insights from different knowledge systems, and (iii) diffuse knowledge and
best practices among a multitude of actors …” Yet, it also involves balancing this mixture of knowledge, and even more so, the interests of the different actors involved in the practice, with the risk of an imbalance of influence and power obstructing the process to be able to move away from the status quo. The inclusion of opposing coalitions in collaborative governance processes is often suggested to help unlock such governing deadlocks, but prior conflicts have also escalated for that same reason (Bodin 2017, Gray & Purdy 2018).

The notion of what ‘collaboration’ within collaborative governance entails (as well as some of its struggles) is therefore well explained. What exactly is seen as ‘governance’ is expanded upon by Ansell & Gash (2008) in two further layers. Firstly, they refer to the view of Lynn, Heinrich and Hill (2001, p.7, cited in Ansell & Gash, 2008, p. 545), which views governance as “regimes of laws, rules, judicial decisions, and administrative practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable the provision of publicly supported goods and services’. From this, they accept the notion that governance is about rules and laws which apply to the provision of public goods. Secondly, they build upon Stoker’s (1998, p. 17, cited in Ansell & Gash 2008, p. 545) notion of governance, which takes it a step further by claiming that governance refers to the rules and forms that guide collective decision-making – and specifically a form of collective decision-making between state and non-state actors. This stands in stark contrast with Erman’s (2018) claim that non-state actors should be involved in all of the ‘functions’ entailed in global governance, except for that of decision-making. This contrast will be the focal point of this study’s analysis. (Ansell & Gash 2008, p. 545, Bodin 2017, Gray & Purdy 2018)

When considering the application of a collaborative governance approach, Ansell & Gash (2008) emphasise the three contingencies of time, trust, and interdependence. Collaborative governance is undoubtedly a lengthy means of governance, thus excluding environmental or sustainability crises of an immediate nature. Overcoming initial collaborative barriers between stakeholders can be incredibly time-consuming (Bodin 2017) and may not stand in proportion to the dilemma at hand. However, for long term projects, such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan, achieving a well-functioning process of collaborative governance can result in both energy and time savings at the later stages. Moreover, in order for consensus-building and collaborative decision-making to take place, enough time to build the latter two contingencies, trust and interdependence, is of the essence.

3.2.1 Limitations to Collaborative Governance

According to Ansell & Gash (2008), trust is seen as ‘buildable’ in situations where there is a high level of interdependence amongst the various stakeholders, even in situations of conflict. However, trust is not easily increased, and as said before, requires time. Interdependence (between stakeholders and/or issues) is considered indispensable for the desire of stakeholders to participate as well as commit to a meaningful and truly collaborative outcome. Collaborative governance is thus not necessarily the easiest nor the most straight-forward approach to solving unsustainable problems of a wicked nature, but the most inclusive and hence, necessary one. As Bodin (2017) argues, although there is a growing amount of research advocating the effectiveness of polylateral actor engagement (in other words ‘collaborative governance’) in addressing environmental problems, there are also studies showing that these same actors sometimes only engage as a means to advocate their own interests, whilst lacking the readiness to truly contribute to such jointly negotiated solutions to shared problems. Additionally, seen the growing number of actors and interests, it becomes increasingly harder to establish that balance between inclusion and efficiency (Albin & Druckman 2017). By approaching this dilemma through the lens of state actors and investigating how they perceive the role of non-state actors in diplomatic processes, this thesis attempts to shed more light on the workings of such collaborative governance processes.

Although collaborative governance is considered a promising approach to tackle sustainability-related matters, like with any other approach, hurdles and limitations remain. Firstly, Gray & Purdy (2018) point out that the early stages of setting up projects and partnerships through a collaborative governance approach may significantly set the tone for the outcome of the project. Because such endeavours are often government-led, the selection of stakeholders will occur from the state’s perspective, which
consequently determines how the matter is framed and what perspective will prevail. Furthermore, as Torfin (2016, p. 131) points out, involving all affected and relevant stakeholders can “enhance the collective capacity to design innovative responses to the problems, challenge and opportunities at hand. The ultimate goal is to include all affected actors in order to provide a pluralistic and comprehensive understanding of the problem at hand and to fully grasp the stakes involved in constructing an innovative solution. However … involving all the affected actors might prove impossible.”

Secondly, due to the nature of the issue at hand, collaborative governance may not be the appropriate choice to solve it, Gray & Purdy (2018) point out. Torfing & Ansell (2017) have indicated the sensitivity of situations which involve matters of public security or crises which require immediate action, for example. In general, state officials may be less willing to involve non-state actors in high-risk situations, involving high stakes and/or sensitive information.

Thirdly, whether a context is perceived competitive or cooperative can also impede the functionality of a collaborative governance approach. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aguerre Valencia (2006) argues that collaborative partnerships involving high numbers of stakeholders have a higher chance of succeeding when a common goal is established. Achieving this in a competitive environment, where participants view the context as ‘win-or-lose’, can be rather difficult or even impossible. Particularly when the number of stakeholders is high, the difficulty of managing the extent of relationships, which may have differing competitive or collaborative tensions amongst themselves, risks turning into a Sisyphean task (Aguirre Valencia 2006, Gray & Purdy 2018, Torfing & Ansell 2017).

3.3 On the Function-Sensitive Approach

To be able to classify the possible roles (or in this case, functions) of actors in polylateral sustainable development diplomacy, this thesis uses Eva Erman’s 6 functions (2018) as previously elaborated upon in background section 2.2.2: (1) problem identification, (2) agenda-setting, (3) implementation, (4) enforcement and monitoring, (5) evaluation and (6) decision-making. As described in section 2.2.2, rather than how the transmission belt model attributes political legitimacy to polylateral endeavours due to influence of non-state actors on the decision-making process, the function-sensitive approach ascribes political legitimacy to the roles or functions that non-state actors can fulfil in global governance processes. Particularly, it calls for participation in the first 5 out of 6 functions, but it also argues that democracy is lessened rather than heightened if non-state actors (as non-elected officials) attempt to influence the 6th function of decision-making. This thesis, in its analysis in section 6. Discussion, argues that, out of Erman’s six functions non-state actors can or cannot fulfil, these functions can vary influenced by the three contingencies of collaborative governance’s time, trust and interdependence. This argument is based on the assumption that, in certain governance processes (such as multi-stakeholder partnerships), which require extensive inclusion of non-state actors on the basis of their expertise, the increased level of dependence between state and non-state actors renders the latter more influential in the overall process.

3.4 Rounding up

Collaborative networks tend to be of a heterogenous nature: they are made up of actors with different interests, skills, and goals. Depending on how well roles (or functions) are assigned and these processes are guided and led, the effectiveness and political legitimacy of collaborative governance fluctuate strongly. “Thus, the effectiveness of a collaborative network results from the interplay between the overall structure of the network, the characteristics of its actors, and the network positions that they occupy.” (Bodin 2017, p. 6) Moreover, Carboni et al. (2017) point out that, although actors may have a seat at the table (high descriptive representation), they may not actually participate in the process in a meaningful way (low substantive representation). The levels of true inclusivity of collaborative governance, and thus the levels of its effectiveness, therefore strongly vary. By viewing and reviewing
the ties between state and non-state actors working in the setting of the Dutch embassy in Manila the Philippines, particularly for the MBSDMP, this thesis aims to add to the existing body of interdisciplinary research on polylateral sustainable development diplomacy as well as collaborative governance. By analysing how the role of non-state actors are perceived in diplomatic processes through the combined theoretical framework of collaborative governance and the function-sensitive approach, it hopes to shed a light on the intricacies (and potential future developments) of polylateral collaborations in the diplomatic arena. In a way, by better understanding the workings of polylateral diplomatic representation, it hopes to better understand the world it represents and where it is (or could be) headed. Because, as Pouliot & Cornut (2015) and Sending et al. (2015) put it: diplomacy, although disputedly so, matters to world politics in a vast variety of ways, ranging from polylateral governance to war to international law. Through the diffusion of new diplomatic practices, such as polylateral sustainable development diplomacy, which builds on new kinds of social relations to tackle new kinds of wicked issues, eventually international order transformation may unfold. (Andersson et al., 2018, Bodin 2017, Carboni et al. 2017)
4. Methodology

The following chapter discusses the methods used for this study as well as its limitations, with the purpose of providing an insight in how data has been gathered and analysed in order to tackle the research problem and questions as presented earlier. The first section briefly summarises the research problem and addresses the aim of this thesis. The chapter subsequently looks into the research approach, explaining the methodological rationale and the chosen method of data collection triangulation. Finally, it will consider the analytical steps of a case study, as well as the limitations and quality assurance of the chosen methods of research.

4.1 Research Problem and Aim of Thesis

As stated in the introduction, this thesis investigates the role of non-state actors in sustainable development diplomacy, adding to the growing body of research on the workings of polylateral diplomatic processes aimed at solving problems related to unsustainability. This leaves us with a research problem which is at once practical and theoretical. It is theoretical in the sense that in what can be called ‘classic’ literature surrounding diplomacy in the traditional and realist schools of international relations (e.g. Henry Kissinger 1994), diplomatic theory is a matter which involves state actors alone. Polylateral diplomacy, which Spies (2019) named to be the most recent evolution of diplomacy, involves not only multiple state (or public) actors, but also actors from the private sector. The practical side of the coin entails the workings of such polylateral diplomatic conduct: steering away from the traditional theoretical view of diplomacy, how do non-state actors fit most effectively in sustainable development diplomacy? The specific research questions guiding the investigation are stated in 1.1 Research Problem and Questions (p. 3).

Although contacts as such between diplomats and other influential actors in society have always occurred, explicit inclusion of non-state actors in the diplomatic processes of global governance is a relatively recent development, first coming to the fore about three decades ago. Therefore, although frequently called for (i.e. the promotion of multi-stakeholder partnerships in SDG 17.16), the process of involving non-state actors is still one that needs to be tried and tested. The limited research that has been conducted surrounding polylateral or sustainable development diplomacy has looked at either national projects, or a more overarching example such as the process leading up to the Sustainable Development Goals. By adding to that literature, as well as renew the research by taking on the different perspective of an embassy abroad and their inclusion of non-state actors in their daily diplomatic practice, this thesis aims to add to the growing theoretical and practical clarity surrounding the topic.

4.2 Research Strategy – A Qualitative Case Study

Qualitative research is common when studying social or cultural phenomena. This stems from the view that, when researching how a certain phenomenon is perceived, the depth of the available verbal data gets lost when trying to quantify it (Iacono, Brown & Holtham 2009). In order to produce contextual real-world knowledge about the practical side of the aforementioned two-fold research problem, this thesis’ research approach is that of a qualitative, inductive case study. In order to study the role of non-state actors in sustainable development diplomacy and how this is perceived by state actors, a qualitative and inductive approach seemed best suited to this type of query. An initial deductive element was involved in the sense of making sure that the case to be studied did in fact also match the theoretical discourse on polylateralism and collaborative governance. The selection of the case of the embassy of the Netherlands and the MBSDMP was based on the fact that it can be seen as a representative and typical case of a large multi-stakeholder project, involving two countries from the Global North and South jointly addressing the issues related to sustainability with the framework of the SDGs in mind.

Case study research offers the possibility to understand a certain phenomenon in its natural setting. This thesis looks at a single case study from which it attempts inductively to draw some tentative conclusions.
These may then be used as guiding principles (or improvement thereof) and can serve to ameliorate future instances of this phenomenon or add to the theory-building around the topic. This type of research strategy is appropriate when the focus is on contemporary events, when the phenomenon cannot be separated from its context and when the perception of the actors is significant to the study. Qualitative case study research is particularly suited to studies which focus on the organisational aspect rather than technical side of social contexts and can help capture as well as formalise the knowledge of practitioners, help turn practice into theory (theory-building) and set standards for future monitoring and testing of the practice (George & Bennett 2005, Iacono, Brown & Holtham 2009, Yin 2012). In sum, this thesis seeks to deeply understand the chosen case in order to help improve the efficiency of future instances.

4.3 Data Collection – Triangulation of Methods

Aiming to avoid methodological bias, the use of three types of research methods to investigate the selected qualitative case study was given preference. Also referred to as triangulation, this mixed method approach offers the possibility to view a research problem from different perspectives and to test one outcome against another, avoiding a too narrow view. To do so, this thesis has made use of (1) document analysis and literature review, (2) semi-structured interviews and (3) participant observation. (McCombes 2019, Yin 2012)

4.3.1 Document Analysis and Literature Review

The literature review provided the academic and theoretical context for the study, showing the state of current research and positioning of other researchers specialised in the topic. A wide range of authors with recurring research in the fields of non-state actor involvement in negotiations and/or diplomacy proved useful in gathering a well-rounded view on what has been concluded so far. In terms of specific documents, the embassy’s own Economic Work Plan 2019 and Annual Plan 2019 in combination with the United Nation’s Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals allowed for placing the Dutch embassy’s sustainability narrative within that of the wider context of global sustainable development governance in the background section. The reviewed literature and (inter)governmental documents also provide a sounding board for the information obtained out of the semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

4.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews with key informants from the side of the embassy allowed for information to be obtained surrounding specifics of the topic, but also for the embassy staff to speak freely, adding depth to the obtained data. All diplomatic embassy staff (from the ambassador to the policy officers) were asked to participate, but not everyone was able to participate within the limited time frame due to overly packed agendas. Nonetheless, as the respondents all hold central positions in poly-lateral diplomatic processes, they can be perceived as key informants to this case study.¹ Three interviews with embassy staff were conducted over the course of July 2019, therefore representing the view of state actors from the Dutch side more generally. The interviews with the Deputy Head of Mission, Senior Policy Officer – Economic and Public Affairs and Business Development Officer ASEAN were conducted over a year after the start of my internship (June 2018), thus expanding the total period of time reflected in the case study. The Deputy Head of Mission, together with the Head of Mission (or Ambassador) herself, is considered the highest representative from the side of the Dutch government. The Business Development Officer is directly involved in the implementation side of the MBSDMP, looking for opportunities to bring in Dutch NSA expertise in the rollout of the plan. The Senior Policy Officer is not directly involved with the MBSDMP as such, but he offers valuable insight in the collaboration between Dutch and Filipino civil society and embassy staff in poly-lateral diplomatic activities over the course of his career. Being a Filipino employed by the Dutch embassy in Dutch-

¹ Initially this study was meant to interview non-state actors as well, however, the attempts to obtain reactions within the allotted time turned out to be unsuccessful.
Filipino collaboration, he provides an extra level of depth to the cultural and political understanding of the case setting.

Looking at the case through the perspective of the Dutch embassy alone of course creates a certain level of bias. However, it also allows to zoom in on the state actor perspective of non-state actor inclusion, as opposed to much of the related research which focuses solely on non-state actors (e.g. Albin & Druckman 2017, Brühl 2010, Rietig 2016). By looking at the state actor perspective on non-state actor participation, this thesis offers the possibility to compare such research outcomes. Building on the basis that polylateral endeavours are often state-led or require governmental endowment (top-down), whether these occur within the UN institutional framework on the macrolevel or in MSPs such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan on a microlevel, understanding how the ‘dominant’ party views the inclusion of their non-state counterparts can be of great value in trying to understand and optimise polylateralism in global governance and frontline diplomacy (Rietig 2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Informant ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15/07/2019</td>
<td>Jaco Beerends</td>
<td>Deputy Head of Mission</td>
<td>JB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18/07/2019</td>
<td>Luuk Rietvelt</td>
<td>Business Development Officer ASEAN</td>
<td>LR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>24/07/2019</td>
<td>Kevin Punzalan</td>
<td>Senior Policy Officer – Economic and Public Affairs</td>
<td>KP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All interviewees received the interview questions alongside some background information regarding the focus of the thesis beforehand (Appendix 1). The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner in order to gain a deeper understanding of the respondent’s personal perspective and habits in their daily practices. The interviews were recorded and summarised under section 5. Results, alongside observations made through participant observation (following section 4.3.3). In order to increase their validity, the interview results are shared with the interviewees. The interview results are translated from Dutch into English where necessary and summarised jointly under the Results section. In line with Yin (2012) and Kohn (1997), the full extent of the interviews is not deemed to be essential for the aim of this thesis. Rather, the prompts and questions presented were of a vast, but detailed nature, seeking to stimulate further thinking on the topic. This resulted in open discussions and additional questions from both sides (interviewer and interviewee), in order to sketch as complete as possible image of the interviewee’s perception and practices in their diplomatic activities. The essence of the interviews is subsequently captured and analysed by means of the theoretical framework (chapter 3) presented in chapter 5. Discussion of Results of this thesis.

4.3.3 Participant Observation

Observations for this study were made during a six-month period (June-November 2018), where the researcher was involved (as a participant, an observer, or both) in numerous meetings, focus discussion groups, and progress presentations of the MBSDMP, as well as other frontline diplomatic activities involving both state and non-state actors. This allowed for close-up observation of the roles and dynamics between both types of actors in the diplomatic arena. Participant observation stems from classical anthropological research, where researchers used to travel to other countries and cultures in order to immerse themselves and subsequently study the habits of foreign peoples. Often mentioned setbacks to participant observation may be that the subjects are aware of the status of the observing researcher and thus may (sub)consciously alter their habits. As I was fully integrated in the daily practices and projects of the embassy’s policy department as a paid intern, and the intention to specifically research this topic only developed gradually over the length of my internship, this ‘researcher’s bias’ did not obstruct the observations. Instead, the six-month period allowed me to look at and learn the practices of the embassy from an insider’s point of view, with the ‘outsider’s glasses’ from my academic background in sustainable development, with its repeated focus on integrated and holistic thinking and problem-solving (Iacono, Brown & Holtham 2009). Evered & Reis Louis (2001)
refer to this duality in perspective as ‘inquiry from the outside’ and ‘inquiry from the inside’, which
refers to the researcher’s detachment from the organisation (outsider’s perspective) and the researcher’s
involvement (insider’s perspective). One can gain information from the outside by analysis of
documents from the organisation (see 4.3.1) or by integrating in the organisation (participant
observation) (Iacono, Brown & Holtham 2009, Yin 2012). By balancing out the approaches of
participant observation by document analysis and semi-structured interviews, as well as continuously
applying the ‘sustainable development lens’ to the organisation of the Dutch embassy, I have attempted
to avoid a potential lack of objectivity. In order to increase the transparency and overall reproducibility
of the analysis and the results, the semi-structured interviews were based on systematic questions, guided
by previous research, which adds to the overall level of objectivity of the study as well. It should
however be noted that a certain degree of bias can never truly be avoided, as also the ‘lens of sustainable
development’ may have caused some bias in itself. For example, so-called social-desirability bias may
have caused for interviewees to not criticise or speak against the application of the ‘poldermodel’, for it
is so integral to Dutch governance, and their awareness of the author’s academic background in
sustainable development may have geared their answers more favourably toward the application of the
SDGs, for example.

4.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of a qualitative case study and its data is usually undertaken in three steps. Data reduction is
the first step, involving the production of summaries, coding, written memos or abstracts on the key
findings of the study. Data display follows as the second step, wherein the reduced data is displayed in
a way which makes it clear for the reader. This can be done by presenting it in the results section of the
thesis in the form of graphs, images or tables. This thesis makes use of word tables, which lay out the
narrative of the findings (Robson 2002, Yin 2012). The final step is conclusion drawing and verification,
which is to be found in the discussion section of this thesis. By questioning whether the drawn
conclusions and explanations are plausible, checking whether there is evidence to support the claims
and if they can be replicated in further studies, the results are exposed to Popper’s (1963) principle of
falsification. Due to the complexity of phenomena under study within the social sciences, hypotheses
and theories are not expected to be confirmed, but to eradicate negative outcomes. Surviving the
previously mentioned attempts at falsification aimed at disproving the made assumptions, the results are
considered to be true as long as they have not been falsified.

4.5 Research Limitations and Quality Assurance

As Iacono, Brown & Holtham (2009) point out, the risk of subjectivity in data collection and analysis is
considered to be one of the main disadvantages of qualitative case study research, which can be caused
by a few factors. Firstly, the researcher’s presence can impact the behaviour of the studied subjects, and
secondly, the researcher’s personal background (or the opposite, full immersion in the project) can
impact the way things are interpreted. As mentioned previously, triangulation in data collection has been
conducted in order to take away part of that bias, next to the sharing of findings with the interviewees
in order to decrease the subjectivity bias. Due to partly covert research (the research idea only took shape
during the internship, hence the embassy staff only became aware of the research project when asked to
participate in the interviews after the internship had already been completed) and the conscious effort
of the researcher to avoid falling too easily into ‘status-quo’ thinking and keeping a ‘sustainability’ mind
throughout the internship, some of this has been avoided. Yet, it should be taken into consideration that
the academic ‘sustainable development’ lens is still not a wholly objective one. Furthermore, the
interview participants were aware of the researcher’s sustainable development background during the
internship as well as the sustainable development focus of the research project they were interviewed
for. This may still have caused a certain ‘politically correct’ or sustainability-oriented framing of their
answers, or even an increased sustainability focus during mutual collaborations during the internship

In further terms of validity of the results, due to the study only focusing on the perception of one Western
embassy of non-state actors, one could argue that generalisations can only be made for a small part of
globally governing actors. However, as a large part of the embassy staff is native Filipino in order to bridge that gap between the global North-South divide, it can still be considered an interesting example for the wider field of global polylateral diplomatic research. The Netherlands as a state is a relatively small country, yet economically prosperous. Generally considered ‘developed’ and ‘progressive’, it stands in stark contrast with the Philippines, which is still considered to be in its ‘developing’ phase and is perceived by most observers as slowly turning more authoritarian and conservative under its current government. Due to the versatile and contrasting political-environmental and cultural elements of the Dutch-Filipino context, the results of this case study can still be relatable to a variety of scenarios.

When specifically looking at the MBSDMP, and not the overall collaboration between state and non-state actors in sustainable development diplomacy, the time span is another factor to take into account. As the length of the internship (6 months) certainly did not span the several years encompassing the development of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan, the results through participant-observation only relate to initial stages of relationship-building during the project. However, the limited time may have helped in keeping an ‘outsider’s view’ whilst gaining sufficient insight in local organisational practices as well (Iacono, Brown & Holtham 2009, Robson 2002, Yin 2012). Nonetheless, as the interviews with key informants took place well over 8 months after the end of the author’s internship, the overall coverage of the case study can still be seen as significant in relation to the overall timespan of the MBSDMP. With the full plan only having been finalised in May 2019, and the action plan scheduled to finish in July 2020, the long-term implementation phase of the project, which is envisioned until 2040, will only start once the action plan has been finalised (MBSDMP 2019). Therefore, interviewee responses and participant-observation are somewhat limited regarding functions 3, 4, and 5 to hypotheticals and predictions. Fortunately, these hypothetical and predictions can be founded in the larger picture of the key informants’ professional experience with non-state actor involvement in other diplomatic activities.

4.6 The Case of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Philippines

In order to empirically explore the theoretical argument, this thesis makes use of a case study on the Dutch embassy in Manila, the Philippines. The choice of a more narrow case study, focusing on the projects and policies of one embassy in the midst of the 2015-2030 trajectory of the Sustainable Development Goals, can allow for drawing wider conclusions about the potential of non-state actor involvement in sustainable development diplomacy conducted at the diplomatic frontline of embassies, permanent representations or consulates. The case can be viewed as a typical ‘case of’ multi-stakeholder collaboration for sustainable development between the public and the private sector, making it relatable to other cases of a similar disposition. Bringing together the Global North and Global South divide in the Dutch-Filipino context, the selected case can be relatable to a variety of frontline diplomacy settings. Other large multi-stakeholder partnerships between two (or more) countries can spring to mind here, but it can also be relatable to the activities of a different ‘Northern’ embassy active in a ‘Southern’ host country, or vice versa.

Having completed a six-month long internship in the Dutch embassy’s policy department from June to November 2018 as part of the Uppsala University MSc in Sustainable Development program in my second year, for which this thesis is written, provided me with the opportunity to compare the acquired academic theory on sustainable development with the practice of diplomacy in a country topping the list of countries with the highest risk of climate hazards, according to the Institute for Economics & Peace’s annual Global Peace Index 2019. During my time at the embassy, I was placed under the supervision of one of the three senior economic policy officers, Kevin Punzalan, with a main focus on renewable energy and (public) diplomacy. Due to the relatively small scale of the embassy, combined with its high ambitions to make a difference, regardless of size, the embassy and its staff are known to be one of the most active ones within Manila’s diplomatic community and take on a wide variety of projects. The embassy was headed by ambassador Marion Derckx (head of mission) and deputy-head of mission Jaco Beerends, who led both the economic and political departments, in collaboration with head of consular and internal affairs Peter Trimp. The economic policy department is designed around the areas of Dutch
expertise: the water-food-energy nexus (water/infrastructure/maritime, food/agriculture, renewable energy/circular economy), with a senior policy officer essentially responsible for one of the three aspects. (Allouche, Middleton & Gyawali 2019) Additionally, Luuk Rietvelt (business development officer ASEAN - region of South East Asia) acted as a fourth pillar of the economic department, connecting local business to that of the Netherlands as well as its regional neighbours. The political department had a main focus on human rights and Philippine domestic affairs. Due to the interrelated nature and consequential overlap of the focus areas, many of the activities and workload was shared between the senior policy officers and business development officer. Thanks to this highly fluid structure, I had the chance to assist in other areas as well, which also led me to participation in and observation of the consultation and planning process of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan.

During my internship, the country was halfway through President Duterte’s 6-year mandate, at a time where his popularity was challenged for the first time due to a number of reasons. The country suffered rice shortages and high inflation, the war on drugs continued, albeit less visibly and Duterte’s socio-economic agenda, which focused on inclusive growth, did not take off as swiftly as promised. The oppression of government opposition and critical individuals was highly visible and international business shied away from the heavy tax revisions the country’s economic system is undergoing. (NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018) Amidst this political upheaval, the embassy’s annual plan for 2019 maintained its focus on fruitful bilateral cooperation in the areas of “sustainable business development, climate change resilience, fighting human trafficking and maritime cooperation.” (NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018, p. 1) The Sustainable Development Goals are clearly incorporated as a framework of reference in the embassy’s long-term agenda. A specific mention was made of SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, SDG 5 - Gender Equality, SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 8 - Decent Work & Economic Growth, SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities & Communities, SDG 13 - Climate Action, SDG 16 - Peace, Justie and Strong Institutions, and lastly, SDG 17 – Partnerships (see section 2.2.1). The economic work plan 2019 of the embassy (NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018a) additionally referred to SDG 1 – No Poverty, SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation as well as SDG 15 – Life on Land. The economic work plan for 2019 explicitly stated that “the embassy will continue to prioritize the economic areas where the effect of interventions on poverty reduction and sustainable development manifest.” (NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018a, p. 1)

4.6.1 State of the Nation: Background to the Philippines

The Institute for Economics & Peace’s annual Global Peace Index 2019 recently named the Philippines as the country most vulnerable to climate change-related events. Historically, the country has always been prone to natural disasters in relation to extreme weather events such as typhoon-induced floods, which are only intensifying due to the rising global temperature. As an island nation, consisting of 7641 islands (World Atlas 2018), it is highly vulnerable to rising sea levels, and with a booming population concentrated in the larger area of Metro Manila, its capital, sustainable development and actions on climate mitigation are of the highest priority. The Philippines ratified the Paris Agreement in March 2017 and submitted a conditional commitment to cut emissions by 70% compared to ‘business-as-usual’ (BAU) levels by 2030. However, what BAU levels precisely entail remains unspecified and the conditional commitment demands sufficient assistance in the form of “financial resources, including technology development and transfer as well as capacity.” (Climate Action Tracker 2019, online)

As of 2017, 93% of the Philippine population had access to electricity (World Bank 2019), which comes for roughly two thirds from fossil fuels and one third from renewable energy sources. Energy demands are only expected to rise, as both the population as well as their disposable income increases steadily. (NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018a) There is also a strong demand for solutions regarding water treatment, water supply, sanitation, and flood management. About 10-20% of the population does not have access to clean water and the recent water shortages in Metro Manila highlight the increasing uncertainty the growing population of over 100 million people has to face. These shortages pose serious risks to the population for a number of reasons. Due to unsafe storage of water, water- or mosquito-borne diseases have greater chances of spreading, and low or negative pressure in pipes can allow for contaminants to
develop which put the supply at risk once it is restored. Subsequently, droughts also affect the country’s rice harvests, which are already threatened by the recurrent typhoons of increasing magnitude. Furthermore, only 7% of the country are connected to sewage systems, again, increasing health risks and an estimated 70% of the country’s available water is lost due to leaking pipes and water pollution (NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018a, WHO 2019). Expert assistance on sustainable development in terms of water management and other related issues is therefore sought abroad, which has resulted in closer bilateral and polylateral collaboration with the Netherlands.

4.6.2 The Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan

The Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan (MBSDMP) is a polylateral partnership between Dutch and Filipino state and non-state actors, focused on creating an all-encompassing framework for the sustainable development of the Manila Bay, where 25 million people live and work, generating 53% of the country’s GDP. The Manila Bay is the delta between the open South China Sea and the river-dominated catchments of the Pasig and Pampanga rivers. Due to the rapid increase of industrial and economic activities and population growth, the area is suffering heavily in terms of untreated domestic wastes from drainage and the sewers as well as industrial waste charges. These impact the water quality as well as ecology of the bay, and have resulted in coastal erosion and flooding, siltation and salinity intrusion, loss of biodiversity, degradation of habitats and overfishing, posing risk for both humans as well as the natural world. By making use of solicited private sector investments rather than the more ‘traditional’ way of public funding, the project aims to “achieve strategic management and development goals for inclusive growth, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, upgrading informal settlements, ecosystem protection, and improved water quality – MBSDMP’s five focal themes.” (MBSDMP 2018a)

Initiated by the Philippine National Economic Development Agency (NEDA) and the Dutch embassy, the 30-month preparation phase of the MBSDMP took off in January 2018 and, using a multi-stakeholder approach, incorporates (local) authorities, civil society and multiple commercial parties in the design of the framework which takes infrastructure, climate change, the environment, as well as economic and social sustainable development into account. The strategic planning phase, with the completed master plan as a result, ended in May 2019. Hereafter, the operational planning phase started in order to prepare an action plan which is scheduled to finish in July 2020. The Dutch-Filipino multi-stakeholder partnership is conducted as a jointly-led effort between (the Embassy of) the Kingdom of the Netherlands in collaboration with the Dutch Expert Team (DET) of applied research institute Deltares, and the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) of the Republic of the Philippines in collaboration with the appointed Local Consulting Firm (LCF) Orient Integrated Development Consultants, Inc. (OIDCI) as the lead firm comprised of Tractebel, Inc. (TRACT) and the University of the Philippines Los Baños Foundation, Inc. (UPLBFI). (MBSDMP 2018, 2018a, 2018b; Pernia, 2018)

The overall objective is to accomplish a “sustainable and resilient Manila Bay” which supports international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The project uses 4 methods simultaneously to optimise the sustainability and inclusivity of the project: (1) institutional arrangement, which ensures close coordination and engagement with affected stakeholders during the planning and implementation phases, (2) an integrated, holistic, and complementary approach to the identified opportunities and bottlenecks to guide system and policy making as well as identify the appropriate programs, activities, projects (PAPs) for the area, (3) MBSDMP monitoring system for the Manila Bay and its coastal and catchment areas to provide feedback regarding the selected PAPs and to signal appropriate prevention and mitigation measures, and (4) capacity building sessions on applied approaches and tools to optimise the multi-stakeholder engagement and cooperation (MBSDMP 2018a, 2018b, NL Embassy MNL-PH 2018a).²

² During my time at the embassy, I had the opportunity to attend a number of meetings, presentations and focus discussion groups that were organised during the strategic planning phase. My observations on the role of non-state actors in polylateral diplomacy and MSPs will be presented in section 5. Results, alongside the data retrieved from the semi-structured interviews conducted with diplomats...
5. Discussion of Results

The information obtained through participant observation (PO) and interviewing the previously mentioned key informants is presented below. Sections 5.1 and 5.2 each treat sub-questions 1 and 2 from the research questions respectively, first through a written summary, which is followed by a more detailed word table outlining the responses per informant. As sub-questions 1 and 2 were designed to inform the principal research question, section 5.3 considers the sum of the found results in relation to the principal research question of this study. More specifically, it consists of a written summary, as well as a word table outlining the perceptions by state actors of non-state actors’ capacity to fulfil Erman’s six functions of global governance. The interview questions which informed these results and shaped most of the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

5.1 Sub-Question 1: Summary of Results

From the perspective of the Dutch embassy in the Philippines, how is the concept of the Dutch ‘poldermodel’ or collaborative governance integrated in daily diplomatic practice and policy making in relation to sustainable development?

Daily diplomatic practice at the embassy includes a stream of non-state actors, varying from NGOs, universities, research institutes and companies. Diplomatic activities are a continuous give-and-take of knowledge, resources, and connections. Incorporating the right stakeholders and both being able to rely on their knowledge and resources as well as offering the right support as an embassy is at the very core of the Dutch embassy’s diplomatic practice. (PO) The Sustainable Development Goals are generally perceived to function as an overarching framework for all the embassy’s projects and policies, as is the need to view matters in a holistic and inclusive manner. Following that mentality, the ‘poldermodel’ is an integral part of Dutch working culture. Punzalan (2019) stated that through “offering both the SDGs as goals with common appeal to all and the poldermodel as the means to achieve these goals, [he is] able to open doors and build bridges far more effectively”, which resonates with Aguerre Valencia’s (2006) statement that collaborative partnerships involving high numbers of stakeholders have a higher chance of success when establishing such a common goal (see section 3.2). Furthermore, the inclusion of non-state actors is perceived to be integral to a “sustainable and holistic paradigm of economic development” (Punzalan 2019). Rietvelt (2019) noted that the inclusion of non-state actors, particularly in development-related projects, is unavoidable. Beerends (2019) added to this, stating that countries worldwide tackle global issues, but that for both him personally as well as for The Netherlands, it is “clear that this can never be an isolated process. NGOs and CSOs, but also private companies and research institutions, belong to the relationship-building, which is necessary for fruitful cooperation between countries.”

However, Rietvelt (2019) also pointed out the varied relevance of the inclusive ‘poldermodel’ to projects. Large undertakings which are directly funded by the Dutch government, and thus, the Dutch taxpayer, generally have a much wider scope and impact, and thus require the involvement of all concerned. Smaller projects, which only receive a subsidy based on a business case, involve much fewer stakeholders (f.e. an IT platform in the Philippines) due to the smaller impact. Although it was observed that Dutch working culture does normally involve decision-making through continuous, open dialogue between all levels of (relatively flat) hierarchy, staff generally also recognised that ‘poldering’ is not always the most straightforward, and thus, appropriate way of handling daily operations. The involvement of different stakeholders is thus dependent on a number of factors, including, but not exclusively: the scope and impact of a project, whom it affects (directly and indirectly), efficiency in terms of finance, human resources, time, etc., and whether ulterior knowledge is required in order to make an informed decision. Overall, the consideration of such factors seemed to be subconsciously embedded in the conception of new activities at the embassy and steered the ultimate approach to a project.
5.1.1 Results from Interviews and Participant Observation (PO)

Table 3. How the concepts of the Dutch ‘poldermodel’ or collaborative governance are integrated in daily diplomatic practice and policy making, particularly in relation to sustainable development, according to the interviewees and participant-observer (PO).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID informant</th>
<th>Results</th>
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| KP          | “In my role as a civil servant working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, I have served as both policy officer in the economic department and in the field of public diplomacy. In each of these areas, the need to view our work holistically and in particular to integrate the concept of the Polder model of consensus-based decision making has been consistent and constant. In the economic department, our priority sectors are all guided and informed by the SDGs. In particular, we focus on the food, water, and renewable energy sectors. By strengthening Dutch economic activities and relationships in these areas, we target the following SDGs:  

1. 2 – Zero Hunger  
2. 6 – Clean Water & Sanitation  
3. 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy  
4. 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities  

By using the SDGs as our aspirational targets, we espouse and implement activities that promote a sustainable and holistic paradigm of economic development.” |
| LR          | (Translated from Dutch by the author)  
Sustainable development has certainly gained importance over recent years: the SDGs are visible in all policy guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and should be at the core of everything you do and report on (f.e. annual working plans). It has become a framework, both at the Embassy as well as in The Hague (MFA), under which projects and policies get developed.  
The holistic approach of involving non-state actors is quite unavoidable. Everything that involves the taxpayer’s money (in terms of development aid and development-related projects) needs to look at the impact it has on the environment, women and children, or the displacement of people. An important example is that of the stakeholder consultation process of the MBSDMP: from the fortunate to less fortunate, from the LGBT commission to people for and against the development of the Manila Bay, everyone is involved. Large projects which are funded by the Dutch government certainly take on a holistic approach. In terms of subsidies that are provided to f.e. a visibility study on an IT platform in the Philippines, only the impact on the business case itself will be considered, not necessarily all possible stakeholders. Of course, the greater impact is taken into account, but it won’t be to the same extent as with a project as the MBSDMP. |
The same goes for my own professional approach: when it comes to business level queries as mentioned before, I deem (non-state actor involvement) not as essential as when I work on a project of a larger scale (f.e. a windpark or the waste2energy project with AWECT). But yes, the ‘poldermodel’, with its inclusive approach, is certainly a typically Dutch approach that is engrained in our working culture.

**JB**

(Translated from Dutch by the author)

The way countries tackle global issues differs immensely between countries, but for The Netherlands and for me it is clear that this can never be an isolated process. NGOs and CSOs, but also private companies and research institutions, belong to the relationship-building which is necessary for fruitful cooperation between countries.

**PO**

Daily diplomatic practice at the embassy included a stream of non-state actors, varying from NGOs, universities, research institutes and companies. Diplomatic activities are a continuous give-and-take of knowledge, resources, and connections. Incorporating the right stakeholders and both being able to rely on their knowledge and resources as well as offering the right support as an embassy is at the very core of the Dutch embassy’s diplomatic practice. Depending on the impact of a project, the number of involved stakeholders was either increased or decreased. The concept of ‘poldering’ (reaching consensus between all parties through continuous dialogue) was certainly visible, both internally within the embassy, as well as in daily business with external parties. Continuous, open dialogue between different parties and hierarchical levels was standard practice at the embassy, but the extent to which external parties were brought in depended on a number of factors: the scope and impact of a project, whom it affects (directly and indirectly), efficiency in terms of finance, human resources, time, etc. The MBSDMP, due to its large scope and impact, was conducted with an open door to external parties throughout: state and non-state actors the like where encouraged to bring in relevant parties in order to hear all perspectives, whether related to social, economic or environmental sustainability. Projects and events of a smaller scale related to a specific subject however were much more specific and therefore limited in the involvement of external actors: e.g. for a national event of Pinsan (Philippine Safe Abortion Advocacy Network), Dutch embassy staff always keep relevant connections in mind, but overall fewer stakeholders were brought in then when dealing with an interdisciplinary project such as the MBSDMP.

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### 5.2 Sub-Question 2: Summary of Results

*How do Dutch embassy employees view the respective roles of state and non-state actors in polylateral diplomatic endeavours (such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan) and how does this translate into practice?*

In general, interviewees came to the conclusion that non-state actors can fulfil the same roles as state actors in polylateral diplomacy as defined by Geoffrey Wiseman (1999), but to varying degrees. This arose mainly due to the shared perception that, although non-state actors can readily take on roles in reporting, communication or negotiation, they cannot *represent* in a manner as wholly encompassing as a state actor can. According to interviewees, their unelected status diminishes the legitimacy of their representative capacity, and thus, their claims. This aspect of legitimacy is also what Erman (2017) brings forward when arguing that non-state actors should not partake in the function (6) decision-making of global governance. Secondly, according to interviewees, their specific interest-related bias also impedes the possibility of non-state actors to take a leading role in decision-making processes. One key informant described this as non-state actors having the potential to become “narrow experts”, which
makes them valuable contributors to global governance, but also limited ones. Yet, they complement the broader, “generalist” and facilitative skills of the diplomatic corps. Non-state actors can perform lobbying roles for and in collaboration with the embassy and can flag positive and negative developments. As one key informant pointed out: non-state actors are essential to relationship-building between two countries. Whether they provide technical expertise, inside knowledge or other resources, the Dutch embassy cannot do without polylateral collaboration.

The author, however, observed a discrepancy between the shared view of interviewees and the literature by Erman on the fulfilment of decision-making and representative roles by non-state actors, and the role division in practice. In the embassy’s daily activities of a smaller scope, non-state actors often provided information which can guide policy-making and project conception. These actions can in itself be informative, but not necessarily decisive. In larger, multi-lateral projects like the MBSDMP process however, a wide spectrum of Dutch and Filipino non-state actors was involved in mapping out the entire planning process, as well as the performance of environmental assessments informing the overall project. Some non-state actors at the head of the project did decide, or co-decided with state actors, on large parts of the undertaking. For example, on which information coming from which non-state actor was to be incorporated in the final MBSDMP, and how. The author therefore argues that non-state actors determining and deciding on the outcome of the MBSDMP on the basis of their expert authority can set the course for, and thus largely influence, the decision-making process surrounding the implementation of the plan, as well as future government policies that will be developed on further outcomes related to the MBSDMP.

5.2.1 Results from Interviews and Participant Observation (PO)

Table 4. How the respective roles of state and non-state actors in polylateral diplomacy are perceived according to the interviewees and participant-observer (PO).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID informant</th>
<th>Results</th>
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| KP           | “Non-state actors play a valuable role in performing ‘specialist roles’ in ways an Embassy cannot. For instance, NGOs specialize in advocacies where they develop targeted responses, generate policy recommendations, and invest in developing capacity in very specific areas of policy which can inform the work of the Embassy, and can serve as a ‘force multiplier’. For instance, when NGOs specialize in disaster relief, an Embassy can connect them with authorities that need that capacity, or with donors seeking a trusted recipient.”

“I agree ... that these functions [of reporting, communication/dialogue, negotiation and representation] accurately represent the work of diplomacy, with one omission: funding, especially for development."

“On the ... question [whether non-state actors can perform these same functions]: non-state actors perform the same roles, but cannot represent anyone other than their own organization. Embassies can act on behalf of the state, or a particular business, or an institution, but NGOs cannot broadly represent other actors besides the people they seek to serve. This focus allows NGOs to become ‘narrow experts’ but also prevents them from claiming to broadly represent other actors.”

“I also believe civil society is strongest when working at the grassroots level, acting as a barometer of how effective policies are on the ground. By collecting information in an empirical way, they help relay how prevalent individual sentiments are and if they constitute prevalence.” |
“[Non-state actors] need scientific expertise in the field they choose to work in. For DRR for instance, climate change knowledge and social work are important.”

“A willingness to share information and an openness to dialogue – NGOs [or other NSAs] that only seek a sounding board are difficult to work with.”

“NGOs may have agendas that are unstated and different from ours. Ensuring alignment is a difficult and time-consuming process. An NGO could use its relationship with an embassy to gain access to privileged information, and to reveal this without the consent of other parties. On the other hand, NGOs are able to get more transparent feedback from the grassroots, which is difficult for Embassies to collect because of factors such as social distance. – To quote HBO’s Chernobyl: “Trust, but verify.””

When asked on non-state actors in relation to Erman’s (2017) 6 functions (see 3. Theoretical Framework): “(1) As organizations are linked with the grassroots, they often are the first to articulate societal issues in a manner where the international community will take notice, (2) … depending on the financial capability of the [NSA], they can either lead the agenda-setting or collaborate with other parties, (3) Non-state actors normally take a backseat in implementation unless certain functions or activities are delegated to them, such as stakeholder mapping, (4) While [NSAs] do not have any means to compel parties to comply with agreements or plans, they do have the ability to monitor implementation and pressure others through lobbying or exposure into compliance, (5) … linked to their monitoring function, but in the end they may not necessarily create the “official” narrative, (6) Decision-making, without the power to compel others, this is where non-state actors are weakest.”

“I do not directly work on the MBSDMP, but I have performed a supporting role for CSOs in the process by setting up meetings between Dutch and Filipino CSOs, or by interlocution with public sector actors that have bearing on the MBSDMP. … In other tasks [or projects], non-state actors serve as fonts of information that can then be used to guide policy.”

In terms of collaboration with NSAs in this process, according to the gravity model, you will more naturally collaborate with those with whom you’ve got most in common and who have similar attitudes towards the roles and importance of other state and non-state actors. For the Netherlands, that would more often than not mean the Scandinavian countries and neighbouring countries, as you share the same vision regarding how a country could be assisted, how one does business with a country and how this done as sincerely as possible without obstructing the international justice system or taking advantage of the host country.

The diplomatic functions of reporting, communication/dialogue, negotiation and representation according to Spies (2019) and Holmes and Rofe (2016) remain unchanged, even though frontline diplomacy may be headed towards a more business-oriented era.

Businesses may do reporting on a business interest level and may refuse to do business in a country because of conflicts with their CSR notions. In terms of representation, Dutch businesses can fare well on the good reputation that the
Netherlands has in the water/agri/food sectors f.e. However, this also means that businesses have a kind of responsibility and function to bear in that sense as well. NGOs and everything in between (public-private organizations) do not represent a country as much, but their own interest. In my completely personal (thus non-embassy) opinion, this can make it quite hard for the Netherlands to take a stand on whatever NGOs may claim. F.e. if the Red Cross makes an ideological statement about how things should be in the world order, this does not only relate to what happens in the Netherlands, this involves other parts of the world as well. Hence, this makes it difficult for The Netherlands to take a diplomatic stance on such claims. For example, some Belgian NGOs were associated with the New People’s Army (armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines) in the news a little while ago, and this immediately reflects badly on Belgium, and consecutively also on the Netherlands and Europe by association. Before you finance an NGO or similar, you need to have tools in place (which I believe NL does have) which can ensure you do not accidentally finance acts of terrorism, for example. This can complicate cooperation with NGOs. However, cooperation with companies that can for example present scientific research on the potential of waste-to-energy may add to the validity of an economic proposal.

In reaction to Erman’s six global governance functions: “Non-state actors can fulfil roles 1, 2, and 3 in any setting in the National or international field. Non-state actors can play a leading role here identifying issues, working on the issues, bringing them to the attention of policy makers and to prepare projects for implementation. For Roles 4/5/6 non-state actors can play a supporting but not leading role. Through non-state actors specific knowledge/technology/networks they can perform certain tasks potentially more efficiently than state actors can. Thereby providing valuable inputs/information for state actors faster and better. For roles 1/2/3 non state actors are often better equipped to do these tasks than state actors, because they are more efficient, often more experienced and therefore provide better value.”

In the MBSDMP, NSAs (f.e. NGOs/CSOs from both NL as well as PH) can monitor and steer the process and signal when actions may have unintended consequences. But sometimes they go overboard by only focusing on how everything is bad for the Philippines, which keeps the process from going anywhere at all. WWF f.e. used to protest strongly against everything, but they have now realized themselves they can have a greater and more constructive impact if they actively get involved in the solution. NSAs such as NGOs, CSOs etc. participate in the roundtables, working groups and task force. Furthermore, companies that may fulfil an executionary job in the implementation of the plan are also involved. The Dutch environmental assessment agency Commissie MER has most recently been contracted as well to report on the Manila Bay.

I expect NSAs to support research and help complete the full picture according to the poldermodel. Not everyone can be 100% happy if you want to move forward, multi-stakeholder partnerships are based on compromise. Then the embassy can pass on this knowledge to the appropriate places and people, because you need people with
<table>
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<th><strong>JB</strong></th>
<th>(Translated from Dutch by the author)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No precise answers provided due to time constraints, but it was made clear that diplomacy and global governance cannot exist without the inclusion of non-state actors in building relationships between countries.</td>
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</table>

| **PO** | The Global Witness Report, of which the author attended a discussion meeting of several embassies and NGOs on the day before the launch of its 2018 edition, was a good example of an NSA (NGO) contributing to global reporting on the status of f.e. human rights and/or environmental degradation worldwide: here, the role taken is informative and can serve as fuel for lobbying strategies of other NGOs fighting for justice in terms of human rights and environmental degradation. States can take this type of information into consideration in their security policy, and potentially use it as a point of reference in their collaboration with other states and NGOs regarding the matter. |
|        | However, contrary to findings from existing literature or the interviews, NSAs were observed to complement the diplomatic ‘generalists’ in decision-making processes of the MBSDMP with their expert knowledge and techniques, when it came to more technical matters, which are related to e.g. environmental degradation or climate change. The appointed Dutch expert team Deltares in collaboration with the appointed Filipino local consulting firm were seen as the expert authorities on the roll-out of such an all-encompassing master plan, with the Dutch government having had previous experience with Deltares in Jakarta, Indonesia a couple of years prior to the MBSDMP with a similar multi-stakeholder partnership. The selection and invitation of other NSAs joining in the multi-stakeholder process was largely led by the two (NSA) teams, as well as the further mapping and roll-out of the planning process. Progress updates and drafts of the master plan were presented to all parties, both state and non-state, yet, the operational lead was largely taken by the two non-state actors, by delegation of the Dutch and Filipino governments. |

### 5.3 Principal Research Question: Summary of Results

*How do state actors perceive of the role of non-state actors in frontline diplomacy, particularly in relation to sustainable development?*

Projects such as the MBSDMP intensify the ties between two countries, as well as relations between all the stakeholders involved. When done successfully, such multi-stakeholder partnerships can contribute to increased social, economic and environmental sustainability of a region, which state actors alone would not be able to achieve due to their limited knowledge and resources. The MBSDMP is a good example of a multi-stakeholder partnership as referred to in the Sustainable Development Goals, which has been initiated by state actors but is for the majority carried out and guided by non-state actors. During the MBSDMP process, non-state actors, varying from businesses, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), research institutes and environmental assessment and monitoring agencies are bundling their resources to sketch a complete as possible picture of the Manila Bay. However, it was also observed that the leading non-state actors of the project managed to open
communication pathways with a major Filipino development corporation, whose projects massively affects the Manila Bay area: a door which was previously closed to the embassy. Non-state actors can therefore not only provide information, but also open important dialogues and contribute to lobbying and negotiation processes. Now that the project is nearing the implementation phase, companies are brought in to start working on the problem areas that have been defined (e.g. waste treatment, sanitation, sustainable housing).

Non-state actors are thus indispensable participants in Dutch frontline diplomacy. They prove extremely valuable in sustainable development-related activities due to their ‘narrow expertise’, which ‘generalist’ diplomats cannot provide. Key informants agree that, depending on the size of the project, the number of stakeholders grows, of which non-state actors make up the majority. Embassy staff perceive non-state actors to be both actors that can support them (by e.g. providing information or technical expertise) as well as recipients of support (by e.g. linking them to appropriate (business) partners or by setting them up with funding opportunities). Thus, depending on the nature and size of the activity, as well as the position that the non-state actor is in (supporting or receiving support), the roles that NSAs can fulfil varies. More importantly, when key informants were asked about the capacity of non-state actors to fulfil Erman’s six global governance functions (see section 5.4.1 for specifications), or diplomatic responsibility, their perceptions were much more limited than what the responsibilities and functions carried out by non-state actors in their daily activities actually reflected. Although having little diplomatic weight in government-to-government negotiations and dialogue, NSAs were observed to have leading roles and strong voices in the polylateral decision-making of the MBSDMP for example, or in other business case-related diplomatic activities where their technical knowledge was predominant. According to Erman (2017), NSA involvement in decision-making processes diminishes the democratic legitimacy of the decision, as NSAs are not elected by the public. Indeed, NSAs were not observed to directly and single-handedly take decisions in most activities of the embassy, but they were involved to a great extent in the facilitation of decision-making within the process of the MBSDMP, which is an important distinction to make. By largely heading and steering the direction, and thus, the outcome and focus of the MBSDMP, NSAs can effectively guide future policy. This phenomenon seemed not to be directly perceived as such by the interviewed state actors, but became apparent through “outside” observation. Both state and non-state actors may benefit from greater awareness of this difference in dynamic, as it can create new opportunities as well as risks in future diplomatic endeavours. Keeping SDG 17.16 and its call for the implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships in mind, this nuance becomes especially important as more multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development will be rolled out in the future.

5.3.1 Results – Erman’s Six Functions of Global Governance

Table 5. Interview (KP + LR) & PO results - Eva Erman’s Six Functions of Global Governance (2017)

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Problem Identification</td>
<td>Interviewees agreed that non-state actors can fulfil the function of problem identification: “As organizations linked with the grassroots, they often are the first to articulate societal issues in a manner where the international community will take notice,” noted on key informant. Another agreed, stating that NSAs can play a “leading role” here, both nationally as well as internationally.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Agenda-setting</td>
<td>NSAs can set the agenda, to a greater or lesser extent: “depending on the financial capability of the CSO, they can either lead the agenda-setting or collaborate with other parties”, but they can certainly bring issues to the “attention of policy makers”.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>One key informant said that “non-state actors normally take a back seat in implementation unless certain functions or activities are relegated to them, such as stakeholder mapping.” However, informants were in agreement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>that NSAs with practical or technical expertise (such as companies or research institutes) involved in f.e. MSPs can have an executionary role.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Enforcement and monitoring</td>
<td>Informants agreed that NSAs can have a strong “supporting, but not leading role” here: “while non-state actors do not have any means to compel parties to comply with agreements or plans, they do have the ability to monitor implementation and pressure others through lobbying or exposure into compliance.” One mentioned also that they may even perform such tasks better or more efficiently, due to NSA’s specific knowledge/technology/network related to the task at hand. Yet, one should be wary of NSAs not necessarily painting the “official” or ‘full’ picture due to their specific interests.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Same perception as function (4).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>One key informant mentioned that, without the power to compel others, this is where non-state actors are weakest. However, as observed in the MBSDMP, strong non-state actor influence in, and facilitation of, decision-making can occur (cf. example of getting access to previously ‘closed’ partners). Although it must be noted that in an MSP such as the MBSDMP, the non-state actors (f.e. Deltares, Tractebel, University of the Philippines) that head such endeavours are usually selected by state actors, by then heading the project and determining the majority of the course of the project, the outcome and content of the MBSDMP is heavily influenced by non-state actors. Particularly when setting up an all-encompassing plan, this can determine the course for policies and government funding that follow such processes.</td>
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6. Concluding Analysis

The debate on diplomatic relevance arose early on in this study: in this era of global governance by supranational institutions such as the European Union or United Nations, is frontline diplomacy really necessary still? Is it not simply an archaic leftover from times when the larger issues were handled on a bilateral basis, from state-to-state? Many authors argued that, particularly in the face of global, wicked problems such as climate change, the need for frontline diplomacy has simply diminished. Both in its participant observation as well as through its semi-structured interviews, this thesis has established quite the opposite point of view: rather than diminishing in relevance, it views frontline diplomacy as an essential tool to implement strategies as suggested in international frameworks Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations General Assembly 2015). Multi-stakeholder partnerships are argued to be one of those strategies, and the case of the Dutch embassy in the Netherlands shows that, not only can these be brought to realisation through frontline diplomacy, it is also a means to bridge the North-South divide. Frontline diplomacy can be a gateway to sharing resources and knowledge not only with neighbouring and/or like-minded countries, but also those that face similar issues (e.g. rising sea levels due to climate change) on opposite sides of not only the globe, but also political and ‘development’ spectrums. Non-state actors have become indispensable contributors to the diplomatic activities of global governance, particularly in issues that surpass national borders. Sustainable development diplomacy is therefore unmistakably polylateral: not only does it encompass transnational wicked problem-solving in relation to the global commons, it requires the input of all relevant stakeholders in order to even start to grasp the complexity of such issues. Non-state actors, with their so-called ‘narrow expertise’, complement the ‘generalist’ knowledge of the state actor in frontline diplomacy and are thus indispensable to the intricacies of sustainable development diplomacy.

The following and final chapter will first analyse the discussed results of this study through the Ansell & Gash’s (2008) three contingencies of collaborative governance - time, trust and interdependence - by linking them to the six functions of global governance of Erman’s function-sensitive approach (2017): (1) problem identification, (2) agenda-setting, (3) implementation, (4) enforcement and monitoring, (5) evaluation and (6) decision-making and Wiseman’s (1999) distinction between the four roles of reporting, communication, negotiation, and representation as part of polylateral diplomatic conduct. However, rather than merely linking the three contingencies to the applicability of collaborative governance to a problem of a sustainable development nature, this thesis argues that those three factors also strongly influence the extent to which non-state actors can fulfil Erman’s global governance functions (2017) within collaborative governance and Wiseman’s (1999) roles of polylateral diplomacy. The final sub-section will then draw on the previously discussed results and the following brief analysis in order to answer the principal research question guiding this thesis:

*How do state actors perceive of the role of non-state actors in frontline diplomacy, particularly in relation to sustainable development?*

6.1 Time

*Time* is perceived to be the first core contingency determining the applicability of a collaborative governance approach: as stated previously, consensus-building takes time and certainly cannot be rushed. It is argued that, for acute problems (e.g. an oil spill in international waters), an immediate reaction is required. An inclusion of all affected stakeholders, and the search for consensus amongst them, would most likely delay the solution to the emergency at hand. However, as presented in the results, this does not only entail to what extent collaborative governance can be applied, this also affects the number of (non-state) actors involved and to what extent. The results showed that key informants determined the amount of time and number of stakeholders to be involved depends on a number of factors e.g. on the nature of the project and how the project is funded. For example, in projects of a
smaller scope or limited time frame, where the Dutch embassy only provides assistance in linking potential (business) partners or helps access funding, public-private interaction is limited. In such cases, non-state actors can be seen to be either only recipients of support, or they perform global governance functions of a less decisive or leading nature, such as Erman’s (1) problem identification or (2) agenda-setting through lobbying or Wiseman’s reporting and communication, for example.

Larger undertakings of a polyilateral nature such as the MBSDMP, which are initiated and funded primarily on government-initiative (and thus, funded indirectly by the taxpayer), require justification as they require long-term investment and involvement of other state resources (e.g. human capital in the form of embassy staff). By involving all affected stakeholders in order to wholly encompass the impact of the undertaking and by allocating sufficient time to thoroughly collect information, deliberate upon the collected data and come to a consensual solution to the matter is not only a way of obtaining a holistic solution to a wicked problem, it also legitimates and justifies the Dutch government’s expenditure on such an endeavour. The global governance functions or polyilateral diplomatic roles that non-state actors fulfil in such long-term MSPs as solutions to sustainability issues can be considered much vaster and more complex than in short-term diplomatic interactions. For example, NSAs in the MBSDMP were observed to fulfil leading positions over the whole course of the project and were entrusted by the initiating state actors to set the course of the project (and thus, fulfil a (6) decision-making function) due to their specific expertise. Not only were all affected stakeholders consulted during repeated focus discussion groups and meetings during the planning and implementation phase of the MBSDMP (functions 1 and 2, and reporting, communication and negotiation) in order to set up a system and policy making approach (which again indicates an influence on function 6), it also entails an NSA-led monitoring system (function 4 and 5) to guide the implementation of appropriate programs, activities and projects for the area by e.g. private companies (function 3). It can of course be argued that the Filipino and Dutch governments determined the foundations of the project by selecting the leading expert teams for the MBSDMP. However, as these firms eventually largely decided upon the stakeholders involved in the planning process, and again encouraged these participating stakeholders to invite partners whom they thought were relevant, it can be argued that non-state actors in this MSP had at least a strong influence on the eventual outcome and thus, future decisions made on the basis of the MBSDMP. Moreover, the sheer political weight given to the collaborative governance-approach of the MBSDMP is undeniable. Regardless of the actual result of the project, the recognition of the importance of involving non-state actors in the overall development of the plan is manifested in the significant amount of time and political capital invested in the collaboration with non-state actors over the course of the development of the MBSDMP. It can therefore be argued that time-intensive, collaborative undertakings, such as by the SDGs suggested multi-stakeholder partnerships, increase the influence, importance and thus, level of responsibility of functions that non-state actors can perform in sustainable development diplomacy. Even decision-making roles, especially in such an expertise-based context.

6.2 Trust

Trust, the second core contingency, is very closely interlinked with the opportunities and challenges that time creates. The extent to which state actors entrust non-state actors with varying functions - ranging from (1) problem identification to (6) decision-making - is highly dependent on the amount of trust that has been built between the two over time. Long-term and repeated instances of successful collaboration between certain state and non-state actors can result in high levels of trust. As an example, the Dutch expert team selected for the MBSDMP had in the years prior to the project conducted a similar master plan in Jakarta, Indonesia. This project, initiated at the time by the Dutch and Indonesian governments, together with previous instances of proven competence in this specific area have most likely played a large role in the natural delegation of responsibilities from the public to the private sphere observed during the roll-out of the MBSDMP. Key informants noted that they on one hand value the expertise that NSAs can provide, but they are also wary of their interest-based bias. As an example, one key informant pointed out how one NSA in the beginning of the MBSDMP focused solely on the negative side effects of the compromise that such a project aims to establish. By doing so, this NSA not only blocked any real progress towards a solution, it also inhibited its own capacity to shift from solely performing (1) problem identification to other global governance functions in the process, where it could

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have a much greater and more constructive impact. The NSA’s shift towards a more constructive strategy within the MBSDMP at a later stage of the project not only unblocked this self-imposed deadlock, it also increased mutual respect and opened up future pathways for increased collaboration between the parties.

The importance of trust in state-non-state collaborations becomes even more clear in relation to one of the core diplomatic functions (Wiseman 1999, Spies 2019a, Holmes & Simon Rofe 2016) discussed earlier in this thesis: representation. A large part of this thesis has zoomed in on the view that embassies, in essence, represent their nations, and NSAs “cannot represent anyone other than their own organisation”, again because they have not been elected. However, it was brought to the attention in observations and discussions with key informants that the accountability and representation of both parties can quickly become intertwined in the perception of outsiders. In a positive sense, this means that Dutch NSAs (e.g. companies) can benefit from the Dutch representation in i.e. agriculture or water management. On the flipside, as brought to the attention by one key informant, if an embassy or government aligns itself with, for example, an NGO which is later associated with funding terrorist activities, it will reflect badly not only on the NGO itself, but also on the entire nation that embassy or government represents. This can evidently have repercussions in the international political arena as well. The notion that NSAs can add great value to global governance for sustainable development is therefore undeniable, as is the variety of responsibilities they can theoretically, and in practice, assume. However, the potential risk associated with the inclusion of NSAs in frontline diplomacy is a factor which cannot be denied either. Appropriate frameworks (and a sufficient amount of time) in order to ensure such reliability and trust between all parties is therefore of the essence.

Therefore, this thesis argues that representation by NSAs in polylateral diplomacy, just as the extent to which decision-making can be conducted or facilitated by them, can vary depending on the circumstances. During the interviews, key informants iterated that NSAs can never represent (a state) as wholly encompassing as a state actor can. Yet, it was observed that, by means of delegation from the Dutch and Filipino public to the private sector, non-state actors have represented their states in the overall conduct of the MBSDMP, in the same manner as they have strongly influenced and facilitated decision-making by heading and guiding the project. Therefore, democratic legitimacy of global governance is not necessarily diminished if NSAs partake in Wiseman’s (2017) representation and Erman’s (2017) decision-making. After all, unelected government officials (such as embassy employees or ministerial policy officers) are also only in the position to represent, or make decisions on behalf of, a nation by that same mechanism of delegation passed on from their elected counterparts. Depending on the established level of trust through time, and the following contingency of interdependence, the division of these roles and thus, responsibilities fluctuates.

6.3 Interdependence

Interdependence between stakeholders is the final contingency that Ansell & Gash (2008) attribute to the applicability of collaborative governance. This thesis argues that, due to the magnitude of sustainable development-related problems, non-state actors are not only indispensable in the problem-solving process of larger undertakings such as MSPs. The reliance of state actors on resources of non-state actors in the forms of e.g. (technical) expertise, human capital and even funding in some instances has also extended the global governance functions that non-state actors can fulfil (see above). As Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2012) point out, collective uncertainty about how to manage societal problems can create increased interdependence. There are no known solutions to the wicked problems we face today, and the ‘generalist’ qualities of diplomats alone do not suffice when trying to find solutions for complicated, ‘narrow’ problems related to i.e. climate change or environmental degradation. As mentioned earlier in this study, polylateral collaboration is more likely to be successful if all stakeholders, both state and non-state, establish a common goal (Aguirre Valencia 2006). The overarching framework of the SDGs can play a big role in providing such a common goal, potentially making polylateral diplomacy particularly suited to this context, rather than diplomatic efforts focused on security, for example. Although it remains a difficult task in any setting, especially when involving a large number of stakeholders and thus, different interests (Albin & Druckman 2017), one may hope
that all actors involved in sustainable development diplomacy, to a greater or lesser extent, are preoccupied with the preservation of the planet and humanity. Ansell & Gash (2008) point out that the implications of interdependence may sometimes be counterintuitive: “highly antagonistic stakeholders who are also highly dependent upon each other may move toward a successful collaborative process” (Ansell & Gash 2008, p. 553, Imperial 2005, Yaffee & Wondolleck 2003). Strangely enough, the all-encompassing, wicked nature of sustainable development-related issues, which inevitably brings together very different stakeholders, may thus increase the chances of successful collaboration.

Even on a smaller or non-MSP-related scale, frontline diplomatic activities depend on a constant give-and-take between an embassy and other embassies or non-state actors. Diplomacy is based on dialogue, and embassies “serve as nodes for interaction between parties that do not normally converse with one another (KP 2019, see 5.1.1, Table 2).” As emphasised in the results, NSAs that work on the grassroots level can function as barometers which display how effective already implemented policies really are, and where they lack. Without repeated feedback from civil society, it would prove very difficult for the international community to, firstly, understand what exactly is happening around them, and secondly, to know what can be done about it. Also here, non-state actors’ functions vary, starting with (1) problem identification or reporting and communication, but, depending on financial and knowledge resources, spreading to (2) agenda-setting, (4) enforcement and monitoring, as well as negotiation and lastly, when recruited for technical or business-related capacities, also (3) implementation and (5) evaluation as well as representation.

### 6.4 Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

How non-state actors can be fitted in sustainable development diplomacy is therefore even harder to grasp than the concept of diplomacy itself. Their inclusion is undeniable, but their function or place within the diplomatic realm is far from static. The influence and thus responsibility that non-state actors can carry will heavily depend on the duration and intensity of the project, the established trust between the public and private actors as well as the level of interdependence between all parties. Whereas Erman (2017) argues that non-state actors should not be involved in decision-making processes and as it diminishes the democratic legitimacy of the decision due to their unelected status, and key informants found NSAs’ role in representation limited because of that same reason, this thesis concludes that in large multi-stakeholder partnerships or long-term diplomatic endeavours, such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan, they very well can. The respondents would most likely agree with Erman’s claim, as they do not view the non-state actor in a role of direct decision-making or representation. However, they miss that although non-state actors may not directly take the decisions, they certainly do facilitate and/or influence the decision-making process by steering and determining the course of the planning process, and thus, its outcome. This is an important discrepancy to address in future research and policy, as it indicates a very different division of influence and thus, power between state and non-state actors than has previously been assumed.

Moreover, the democratic legitimacy of representation and the decision-making process is hereby not jeopardised or diminished. This is based on the perception that not one unelected, non-state actor single-handedly takes a decision: the larger the project, the more stakeholders are involved, and the more interests are blended into one consensus-based solution. The plurality of voices in collaborative governance, when conducted correctly, therefore avoids potential interest-based bias. Furthermore, as such MSPs are often government-initiated and thus, such managerial reign is entrusted upon ‘expert’ non-state actors by elected ‘generalist’ officials through delegation, one can say that the decision to pass on (part of) the decision-making and representative functions is therefore a democratically legitimate one.

The concept of polylateral frontline diplomacy for sustainable development, just like that of ‘collaborative governance’ therefore promises “a sweet reward” (Ansell & Gash 2008, p. 561). For instance, in the case of the Dutch embassy in the Philippines, it offers the possibility to finally start bridging that North-South divide through an exchange of knowledge and resources in the name of sustainable development. This implies hope in terms of finding solutions which are potentially
interdisciplinary enough to be able to tackle the increasing pile of wicked problems we have brought upon ourselves. The inclusion of non-state actors in the traditionally state-centric diplomatic sphere is therefore promising, and a welcome evolution, both in theory and in practice. However, the inclusion of the ‘wrong’ non-state actors can be just as damaging for international relations, creating potential barriers and problematic precautions, particularly from the perspective of state actors. Beyond the immediate findings of this thesis, future attention in research could therefore be paid to these barriers and precautions, as well as what frameworks can be implemented to diminish them.

The state actor perspective on the role of non-state actors in diplomatic processes alone asks for further exploration, as one thesis can only encompass so much. Possible variations on the chosen case study are manifold, inviting further research from the perspective of different embassies, consulates, or perhaps permanent representations of supranational institutions such as the United Nations. Also the specific example of the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan is a research topic which invites further investigation from a variety of angles. As the call for the implementation of multi-stakeholder partnerships as tools for sustainable development only occurred a mere four years ago (see SDGs 17.16 and 17.17), and the variation in their scope, nature and composition is immense, an ocean of research questions within numerous disciplines could be devised solely for the purpose of mapping, optimising, or even just understanding, their potential. Because, in the face of still-unsolvable, wicked problems, and for the sake of coming full circle, as only a holistic approach can:

“There may have been easier times for studying diplomacy, but there never have been better or more interesting ones.”

(Paul Sharp 2011)
7. Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis is never an easy process, and there is quite a number of people who have been indispensable over this intense period of time.

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As we near the end of all my ‘thank you’s, I would like to express an enormous thank you to all of my parents, for welcoming me in your homes during the most difficult of times. Thank you, mama, for your unwavering support and evil laughter, but golden heart. Your strength and compassion are a daily example. Thank you, Joris, for always making me feel welcome and for your genuine kindness to everyone around you. It’s a welcome change from the harshness of this world. Thank you, pap, also for your unwavering support and ‘tough love’ where necessary. You showed me that unconditional love is not always easy, but it is certainly worth it. Also, thank you, Hanna, for having been my dearest friend from the start of this MSD ride, come rain or come shine. Remember, you are never truly alone.

Penultimately, to Melissa, with love. Thank you for tasting all these cultures with me.

Finally, naturally: thank you, gorgeous planet, for making me care enough to even start this whole process. I have definitely not given up on you (or your numerous inhabitants) yet.
8. References


## Appendix 1 – Interview Questions

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<th>KEY CONCEPTS</th>
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<td><strong>Non-State Actors</strong></td>
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### Overarching Research Question

*How can non-state actors be fitted into the field of frontline sustainable development diplomacy, theoretically as well as in practice?*

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<th>Sub-question 1</th>
<th>Interview questions</th>
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<td><strong>1) From the perspective of the Dutch embassy in the Philippines, how is the concept of the Dutch ‘poldermodel’ or collaborative governance integrated in daily diplomatic practice and policy making in relation to sustainable development?</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Sustainable development builds on solving wicked problems through a holistic approach, involving all aspects and actors.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>a. How much of this do you see being integrated in the policy of the Dutch government?</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>b. How much of this do you feel is engrained in your own professional approach?</strong></td>
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<th>Sub-Question 2</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
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<td><strong>2) How do Dutch embassy employees view the respective roles of state and non-state actors in polylateral diplomatic endeavours (such as the Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan) and how does this translate into practice?</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Brian Hocking (1997/1998) has pointed out two long-standing, opposing themes in the historical debate on diplomacy: ‘newness’ and ‘decline’. On one end of the spectrum, people argue that diplomacy and, in particular, the resident ambassador/embassy have become irrelevant in light of overarching institutions such as the UN/EU. Even more so, opinions have arisen that they are ill-equipped to deal with the globe’s current challenges (i.e. climate change, inequality, etc). On the other side, you have people arguing that diplomacy is not in decline, but in evolution. One points this out in the utilisation of new tools, the involvement of non-state actors in (previously state-centric) diplomatic processes and a wider range of topics that diplomacy now handles.</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>a. How do you see the future and/or relevance of frontline (embassy) diplomacy in regard to the spectrum outlined above?</strong></td>
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2. Several authors (including, but not exclusively, Wiseman 1999, Yvonne Spies (2019 & 2019a) and Holmes and Rofe (2016)) have pointed out that, regardless of what definition is ascribed to diplomacy, its nature in terms of strategy or mission remains unchanged: reporting, communication/dialogue, negotiation, and representation.

| a. What is your notion of diplomatic responsibilities? |
| b. To what extent can non-state actors take these on? (In other words: to what extent can diplomatic responsibility be shared between the public and the private sector?) |
| c. When working with non-state actors, which tasks do you envision for them to fulfil? |
| d. What expertise do you expect non-state actors to bring in? |
| e. What characteristics are decisive for you to bring them into the diplomatic process? |
| f. What are the risks and opportunities when involving non-state actors particularly in more sensitive situations of i.e. negotiation or representation? |

3. To what extent can non-state actors fulfil the following six functions in diplomatic activities (if at all):

“(1) problem identification, (2) agenda-setting, (3) implementation, (4) enforcement and monitoring, (5) evaluation and (6) decision-making”

4. Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan

| a. If you have worked or are working on the MBSDMP, could you please elaborate upon your role and involvement in the project? |
| b. If you have worked on the MBSDMP or similar projects, what tasks did the non-state actors fulfil (both in the process of negotiating the MBSDMP, as well as the roll-out of the planning process)? |