

The duality of water:

Exploring its role in technological innovations for sustainable transformations

Department: Sustainable Development

Research group: Innovation Studies

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Project description

In the Netherlands, water can be described as both our greatest ally and enemy. This duality has driven the development of a wide array of water-focused technologies and infrastructures, with the most notable being the Delta Works. This research project aims to delve into how we understand what role water plays in our society, or in other words, to understand water as a socio-material phenomenon, covering aspects such as wastewater management, responses to sea-level rise, and its role in agriculture. Specifically, we will explore how water is perceived within the context of innovation projects, including those funded by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water, or their equivalents in other countries. These projects range from grassroots initiatives like the Great Bubble Barrier to large-scale endeavours such as the Delta Works. The central question here is how water is imagined: is it simply a resource for drinking water, or is it also seen as an influential external force that impacts societal processes through phenomena like rising sea levels?

The Brights Minds Assistant will undertake a vital role in this project, focusing on empirical qualitative analysis. The core of the research involves mapping the various perspectives surrounding water within the realm of technological projects, encompassing grassroots innovations and government-led initiatives. By conducting interpretative (discursive) analysis, we aim to unpack the diverse meanings and understandings associated with water in the context of these technologies. The Brights Minds Assistant will engage in regular meetings, typically on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, with the project supervisor to discuss progress, provide updates, and seek guidance. This collaborative approach ensures a dynamic and productive research environment.

For any enquiries about this position, send an email to a.hendriks@uu.nl

Job requirements

I am looking for an applicant with a strong interest in the social construction of technology, who is highly motivated and well-organized. The assistant is expected to work relatively independently on systematic document research, but in close methodological collaboration with the supervisor. Excellent communication skills in Dutch and/or English are required.

Literature suggestions

van der Brugge, R., Rotmans, J., & Loorbach, D. (2005). The transition in Dutch water management. *Regional Environmental Change*, 5(4), 164-176.

Ingildsen, P., & Liu, S. (2021). Visions for a sustainable water future. *Journal of Water Supply: Research and Technology-Aqua*, 70(4), 401-403.

Longhurst, N., & Chilvers, J. (2019). Mapping diverse visions of energy transitions: co-producing sociotechnical imaginaries. *Sustainability Science*, 14(4), 973-990.