

# Public-Private Partnerships. An Emergent Paradigm in Disaster Governance?

MSc Research Thesis

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# **Public-Private Partnerships. An Emergent Paradigm in Disaster Governance?**

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## Abstract

Public-Private Partnerships are becoming an increasingly popular tool in Disaster Management, challenging traditional practices and identities. In the disaster governance discourse, the private sector is considered key to bring efficiency for the improvement of the disaster relief performance. The empirical research has not found clear evidences in support of this narrative. From a theoretical standpoint, it is argued that this multi-stakeholder approach is part of a widespread resilience discourse at governance level. By using the concept of governmentality I tried to make sense of the global endorsement of resilience and Public-Private Partnerships qualifying such turn as neoliberal. In light of this, I tried to investigate what may be the potential implications for the NGO sector as the private sector strengthens its position as humanitarian actor and funding source. Building on data from semi-structured interviews and literature review, I argue that Public-Private Partnerships ultimately contribute to an unequal distribution of global resources while not addressing the socio-economic root-causes of disasters. Additionally, an analysis of the motives behind private sector engagement has suggested that global NGOs will attract the vast majority of corporate funds widening the gap between larger and smaller NGOs. Only international NGOs can in fact provide companies with positive brand visibility and access to emerging markets.

**Key words:** resilience, governmentality, neoliberalism, disaster risk management, public-private partnerships, disaster governance, global capital.

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## List of abbreviations

ARISE: Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies  
CARE: Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere  
CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility  
DCHI: Dutch Centre for Humanitarian Innovation  
DM: Disaster Management  
DRM: Disaster Risk Management  
EWS: Early Warning Systems  
GIC: Global Innovation Centre and Innovation Fund  
GPPi: Global Public Policy Institute  
HA: Humanitarian Aid  
ICRC: International Confederation of the Red Cross  
INGOs: International Non-Governmental Organizations  
MNEs: Multinational Enterprise  
MoFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations  
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  
PfR: Partners for Resilience  
PPPs: Public-Private Partnerships  
PREP: Partnership for Resilience and Environmental Preparedness  
PS: Private Sector  
UN: United Nations  
UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund  
UNISDR: United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction  
UNGA: United Nations General Assembly  
USAID: United States Agency for International Development  
WHS: World Humanitarian Summit

## 1. Introduction

Public-Private Partnerships<sup>1</sup> (PPPs) are becoming an increasingly popular instrument among donors. The new resilience discourse in global disaster risk management accentuates the importance of private sector for the improvement of humanitarian aid and disaster relief activities. In fact, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, the main global framework for the sector, states the importance of PPPs for disaster prevention and response under its third priority, making of it an official objective of the international agenda (UNISDR, 2015). The research aims to explore what appears to be an emergent paradigm of global disaster governance; what are the narratives and drivers it is based upon and implications it may entail for the future of the disaster relief sector.

The findings suggest that the private sector will increase its role as funding source. It is argued that, due to the strategic drivers of such approach, global PPPs will contribute to an unequal distribution of global capital since they will bring western-based companies to work with world leading NGOs, also based in the west. In fact, on the one hand private companies privilege worldwide organizations with high reputational value for positive branding purposes and access to new markets, on the other INGOs necessitate significant donations to run their operations. This will not only leave intact the uneven balance of power between Global North and Global South but will also nurture the neoliberal economic model at the basis of global poverty and inequality as main strategy to enhance efficiency and reduce poverty. This, at the expenses of smaller NGOs that will not be able to compete in this new funding game.

From a theoretical standpoint the thesis argues that PPPs are the expression of a governmentality approach (Foucault, 2008) that belongs to a neoliberal phase of disaster governance (Joseph, 2013; Tierney, 2012; Welsh, 2014). It is argued that resilience discourse abandons the modernist projects and adopts complexity theory as the basis of production of resilient subjects. In this neoliberal episteme, disasters are turned into technical problems whose root-causes exceed human control (Joseph, 2013). Simultaneously, a constitutive feature of this neoliberal discourse lies in the interpretation of disasters as economic opportunities (N. Klein, 2007).

The resilience narrative, supporting the adoption of PPPs in both Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Humanitarian Aid (HA) sectors, judges the cooperation between NGOs, donors and the private sector as the expression of long sought efficacy and efficiency in project management (UNISDR, 2015; WHS, 2016). For this reason, donors support the cooperation of traditional actors with private partners. The private sector experience, it is argued, brings to the partnership a more economically sensitive mentality for finance and accountability in order to reduce costs and make disaster response as economically efficient as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Here interpreted as “voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and, as mutually agreed, to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits” (UNGA, 2006; p. 3).



In this regard, PPPs can take forms ranging from contracting or subcontracting directly between public donors and private partners or via NGOs working as mediators or brokers (Stadtler & Probst, 2012).

Even though studies about the claimed efficiency of PPPs are missing, the major donors and INGOs are adopting this approach. This allows new actors to emerge, redefining roles and responsibilities in the DRM sector. This paradigm emphasizes a holistic approach to disaster management. The latter consists of advocating for the involvement of all sectors of civil society in order to achieve more effective DRM. In this regard, the private sector is welcomed to bring technical knowledge, network, responsible business and financial support to the partnership. In return, private sector partners obtain better public relations media exposure and pre-testing of newly developed technologies (Izumi & Shaw, 2015).

Furthermore, this research argues that large NGOs are looking at PPPs in the Disaster Management and the Humanitarian Aid sectors with increasing interest as they represent a valuable source of funding, alternative to the traditional donors. The private sector, however, not only offers financial resources but also expertise, technical knowledge and network. These are the assets that can make the partnership valuable in order to improve humanitarian impact. PPPs have an impact on NGOs practice and identity, changing their way of working and their identity.

The thesis follows this structure: Chapter 2 introduces the methodology behind the research focusing on the origin of the interest and the research methods applied, Chapter 3 will provide the reader with a historical background in order to trace a trajectory of the relief sector and its identities, Chapter 4 will discuss the theoretical framework, namely the concepts and theories that prepare the ground for the increasing interest in PPPs as a governance approach, Chapter 5 will be divided into three main sections each aiming to expose and analyse the drivers behind the interest in PPPs from a donor perspective, an NGO perspective and, finally, a corporate one, Chapter 6 will further discuss the findings, thus outlining the main argument of the research.

## 2. Methodology of the Research

In winter 2016, something crucial happened in my academic career. From September to December I obtained an internship at CARE Nederland. As many of my fellow students, I was also dreaming of finding a spot in a world leading NGO in the relief and emergency response sector. I considered myself very lucky in being part of such a prestigious organization. I then moved to The Hague and started working on an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction CARE was developing. More specifically, given my previous studies in philosophy, I was selected to provide a consistent conceptual foundation to the Integrated Risk Management (IRM) approach CARE was developing. The approach results from the ambitious integration of expertise from the fields of disaster risk reduction, climate change and environmental degradation. To make things even more complicated, the narrative I was building needed to take into account the inputs of the other partners. I asked who these partners were. It was then explained that, on initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), CARE was part of the Partners for Resilience Alliance (PfR). Members of the PfR were other major Netherlands-based NGOs, Red Cross Nederland, CARE Nederland, Cordaid, Wetlands International and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre. The purpose of the alliance was to implement a combined approach to build community resilience.

The office was small and I had to work in the conference room, a larger space with a few computer stations on one side and, only separated by two meters of empty space, a round table with a conference phone in the middle. I was assigned to one of the stations and happened to involuntarily take part in all of the briefings and meetings taking place in that room. One day, as they were discussing resilience with my supervisor, I happened to pay more attention than normally. Then, when the words “private sector” were spoken the audience fell into silence. The meeting continued shortly after that brief interruption. I noticed an overall state of concern about it. They did not know how to do it, how to get in touch with companies. What kind of deal could they aspire to? What kind of language should have they used? Which companies to target and so on. The names of Philips and H&M were mentioned. I was certainly surprised. A big NGO working with a big global brand seemed to me quite a paradigm shift in respect to what I was taught and the images I had of humanitarian and emergency work. At the end of the meeting I approached my supervisor, intrigued by the discussion. He explained me that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was stimulating cooperation between NGOs and the Dutch private sector; the major NGOs were called to work together with it in public-private partnerships if they wanted to attract alternative funding sources.

I was even more startled, many questions popped up in mind at the same time. To me it looked like a dramatic shift of narratives and perceptions between companies and NGOs. But what I was even more interested in were the implications this could have for the NGO sector. When I was still disentangling all my thoughts and doubts, my supervisor added fatally “if we want to be part of the money then we have to be working with the Dutch private sector”. I knew, by then, that I found my thesis research topic.

Thus I decided to shed a light on the driving forces behind this policy in order to draw conclusions concerning the future of the NGO sector.

The primary data were collected during thirteen semi-structured interviews with staff members of some of the largest relief and development organizations in the world, one think-tank, one intermediary agency, one private sector foundation and one semi-donor agency. More specifically, the organizations are CARE Nederland, Red Cross Nederland and Oxfam International. The think-tank is the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi). The intermediary agency corresponds to the Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation (DCHI). I then interviewed a former high-profile manager of the Philips Foundation and, finally, a former programme officer of UNISDR. Some interviews took place in the Netherlands, others via Skype, between mid-June and mid-November 2017. The organizations were selected on account of the international scope. In this way, they would have been able to produce data relevant from a global perspective. The H&M Foundation was contacted but declined my invitation to participate in the research.

## 2.1 Research Questions

Out of my personal experience at CARE I centred my research around the following main research question, using the sub-research questions as tools to help answering the first one.

### Main RQ

- What can a growing involvement of the private sector in relief and humanitarian operations entail for the future of the NGO sector?

### Sub-RQs

- What narratives and motives are reshaping the roles and identities of humanitarian actors?
- What are the factors that allowed the widespread adoption of resilience discourse in disaster governance? Why now?
- Are PPPs likely to become the norm in the practice of relief INGOs?

## 2.2 Research methods

### 2.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

The reason behind the chosen NGOs and organizations lies in their ability to provide insights in relation to a global trend. My focus being the analysis of a global trend involving disaster governance actors, due to their global scope the selected NGOs are considered key in this regard. Therefore, I collected insights from staff members directly involved in PPPs with

private foundations but also external to them. The logic behind was to be able to reconstruct a narrative surrounding the perception of PPPs among NGO workers. This, in order to have at least a feeling of the favour (or scepticism) PPPs benefits from outside the border of people directly involved in such initiatives.

The reason why I chose the form of semi-structured interviews (Russel, 2011) was that it seemed to me the most appropriate to capture the essence such narratives as it would have enabled the respondent to draw from his or her own personal history and opinion concerning the sector and the role of PPPs. This method enables to better understand the images and narratives upon which the respondent builds his or her own worldview. Structured interviews have been discarded as more pertinent to a quantitative research while unstructured interviews are more useful during ethnographic research (Bryman, 2012). However, although not ethnographic in nature, I refer to observational data in one section in order to highlight the way in which professionals mobilise concepts such as efficiency in an everyday context.

The interviews were carried out in English and recorded entirely unless otherwise requested by the interviewee. The usage of the material was granted under condition of anonymity, as the information disclosed refers to on-going business activities. As a consequence, the information was considered by my respondents to be sensitive material. The quotes appearing in the research are extracted from transcripts approved by the interviewees.

### 2.2.2 Literature review

The literature review consisted of academic articles, policy documents, reports and working papers. The usage of the literature review was important in order to obtain a broader range of data upon which build my argument. The information obtained via literature review added to the data from semi-structured interviews helping to corroborate the view expressed in this research (Russel, 2011). Moreover, the literature review helped to maintain a comparative approach to the research. In fact, it is argued that a comparative perspective across organizations, programmes, policies and countries, would be better suited to draw conclusions on a global scale. The literature was key in building a theoretical framework in which to embed the empirical context for sense-making purposes. To reach this objective I adopted discourse analysis, this allowed me to identify what concepts and narratives actors involved mobilize to justify their actions.

### 2.2.3 Limitations of the research

A first limitation concerns the global scope itself of my research. To have researched a specific case studies as it unfolds on the ground would have certainly provided meaningful information about what a PPP approach entail at a local level, who are the actors involved and the narratives they mobilise, what are the power relations at play and so on. However, case studies present an issue in terms of deductive reasoning. In other words, to what extent one

can generalize the findings related to an ethnographic case study and make it significant from a global perspective? To do so would imply the extensive research of several cases, exceeding the scope of this research.

Secondly, as highlighted above, my internship experience was key in the genesis of my research interests. However, it also shaped the scope of my network as I relied on the contacts gathered during that experience. Adopting a snowball effect, it was then easier to obtain another interview if preceded by a personal collaboration. In theory, other networks may lead to other answers and, by consequence, to the emergence of a different narrative around PPPs. If on the one hand I am very much aware of such limitation, on the other, given the mutual confirmation between literature and primary data I believe that the emergence of a significantly different narrative would be unlikely.

### 3. Historical background and traditional NGO identity

The literature offers a variety of viewpoints on the history of humanitarianism (Hobsbawm, 1994; Rist, 2002; Kent, 1987; Barnett, 2011). Regardless for the account one finds the most accurate, looking at the history of humanitarianism helps to gather more analytical clarity around the role and the identity of NGOs. This, in order to put in perspective the momentum the private sector is benefiting from (Knorranga & Helmsing, 2008). The following sections will mostly focus on the colonization and decolonization periods as defining moments in humanitarian history. In fact, “colonial practices represent a point of overlap between state, secular and religious versions of humanitarian action, with missionaries forming an integral part of the colonial project, even if not always perfectly aligned with colonial policies” (Barnett & Weiss, 2008; pg. 22).

The rise of NGOs is deeply related to a period of colonization and, most importantly, of decolonization (Jennings, 2006). Furthermore, colonialism is not exclusively a history of conquer and subjugation. As the colonial era of the European continent stretches for hundreds of years, it had an impact in the cultural, economic and social layers of the former colonies. In other words, the western powers set up a system of public governance that endured the decolonization wave of the 1960s (Davey *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, if on the one hand the action of relief organizations was unarguably compelled by moral arguments (Davey *et al.*, 2013), on the other, it was also part of larger political international agendas (Rist, 2002).

To make the scenario even more complex, the decolonization movement intertwined with Cold War dynamics. This is highly relevant to us in the sense that Cold War and decolonization give us the larger global frame in which humanitarian interventionism thrived (Escobar, 1995; Getz & Streets-Salter, 2011).

It was in that period that core values and images of humanitarianism were formed (Hailey, 2000). But the role and identity of NGOs was more nuanced than a simple implementation of humanitarian principles. In fact, if international operations had to be interpreted both from the perspective of decolonization and Cold War then the action of international NGOs was, also, to be positioned in relation to a larger international relations context. In the 1950s, the highest concern of the western block was to limit the expansion of the communist ideology to poor countries and the highest concern of the soviet block was to stop the advancement of capitalism (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995).

Furthermore, the conceptualization of a Third World fostered a culture according to which the wealthy European powers had a moral obligation towards their former colonies. Thus, humanitarian intervention emerged and imposed itself as an ideology throughout Europe (Rist, 2002). Whether faith based or secular, NGOs in these years grew in number and, most importantly in scope (Kent, 1987). To this ideology a specific imaginary contributed to create an identity for the NGO sector.

The decolonization era was also crucial in providing NGOs with a specific mandate as state-building actors. In most cases the newly proclaimed independent democracies after the 1960s and 1970s were actually not only dependent in financial terms but also in more functional terms. NGOs were now flying over staff and equipment to provide a multiplicity of

state services to the local population, *de facto* substituting the state (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Sørensen & Söderbaum, 2012). In fragile states, the help of NGOs was necessary to provide education, health care and assistance to the population in need. In this process NGOs were working as *alter ego* of sovereign states that were too weak to sustain themselves after decolonization (Jennings, 2006).

At this juncture, it is important to notice that, following from a history of activism and interventionism, a narrative of humanitarianism developed around concepts and practices. In this narrative there was very little place for a favourable reading of the private sector. From an historical perspective there was little possibility to define the private sector as the privileged actor capable of bringing more efficiency and efficacy in the humanitarian aid sector (Scott, 2014).

The functions of NGOs were, increasingly, to help the population in need but also to succumb the failing states offering core services (Duffield, 2011; Jennings, 2006; Sørensen & Söderbaum, 2012). And this became evident with the turn of relief agencies towards the development sector.

At this juncture, it is also important to highlight that, as a brief overview over the humanitarian trajectory suggests, the private sector was not a structural part of the humanitarian narrative. On the contrary, it is argued that the introduction of private companies in humanitarian aid operations represents an unprecedented move in the sector, reflecting a deeper change in the cultural beliefs and ideologies of the global community (Knorringa & Helmsing, 2008).

The brief history of the humanitarian sector showed the origins of a specific narrative where the private sector was missing. For this reason, it is suggested that the introduction of the private sector in the donors and aid discourses around resilience represents a fundamental change in the practice of NGOs. The introduction of private sector engagement narrative is making the international aid model not only more complex but is also causing a change in the way in which NGOs have been operating for decades (UNISDR, 2013; UNISDR, 2015).

### 3.1 Private sector and NGOs: an interesting, unorthodox, marriage

Out of the brief history of humanitarianism traced above, we can see how far from the historical origins a narrative of support towards the private sector can be. One interviewee from CARE Nederland said on this point:

We as NGOs in the past were mainly complaining about the private sector or the way they handling their businesses in developing countries, often causing more problems and inequalities. So from complaining, let's say, we go towards working together and opening a dialogue and I think it's a change that has been slowly developing over the years, the recognition that it's not only about complaining and being against it, it's also about let's sit down at the same table (CARE Nederland #1, 13/06/2017).

As we will see in the later sections of the thesis, I argue that the traditional actors engaged in HA and emergency response not simply have undertaken a steady and vertiginous

redefinition of their identities but more specifically that such process was commenced by neoliberal influences as opposed to humanitarian arguments. Communities are no longer mere victims of natural hazards but affected communities where companies draw their workforce from (Twigg, 2001); NGOs are not exclusively implementing partners of donor policies but take the role of brokering agencies providing consulting services and networking opportunities; the private sector, on the other hand, is increasingly becoming a funding source and a strategic partner to the achievement of greater humanitarian effectiveness.

This gradual narrative turn was key to the burgeoning of the PPP approach in disaster relief and prevention (Hoxtell *et al.*, 2015). This change of in the international discourse allowed the converging of actors that used to belong to the opposite sides of the spectrum of the traditional humanitarian discourse. In this regard, one finds multinationals like the Coca-Cola Company partnering up with Oxfam America; Wal-Mart providing financial and logistical support to Red Cross America; Cargill backing women economic empowerment programmes as part of a poverty reduction strategy of CARE International.

Based on the interviews and the literature I argue that such turn is ultimately beneficial to the neoliberal reshaping of global disaster governance. Under a stringent need for financial support, often NGOs overlook the challenges that a growing involvement of PPPs may entail for humanitarian aid principles. Chapter 5.1.2 will expand on this point.

However, it is not yet clear what was the pretext for the enhancement of such redefinition of roles, at least at a global narrative level. Such starting point can be seen in the embracement of resilience discourse from the international community (UNISDR, 2013, 2015).

### 3.2 The rise of resilience

The humanitarian narrative that was allocating responsibilities and identities to the traditional actors involved in the international system started changing when resilience, a long-known concept in environmental sciences (Alexander, 2013), became part of the most important policy document and international agreements on Humanitarian Aid (HA) and Disaster Management (DM).

The idea of making of protection not a state responsibility but rather a community one, accepting disasters has the mark of a contingent world that cannot be governed, calling for the contribution of all segments of society to make communities more resilient, interpreting poverty reduction, climate change, environmental degradation, pollution, overpopulation as driving factors of community vulnerability, represented the conceptual precondition for the adoption of multistakeholder approach in disaster prevention and response and met the immediate approval of the international community (Pugh, 2014).

The international discourse on humanitarian efficiency has embraced resilience narrative unquestionably, seeing in private sector the privileged actor to implement such approach. As expressed by the words of Margareta Wahlström, UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction between 2009 and 2015:



The private sector is the perfect advocate for resilient thinking because of its direct relationship with consumers, customers and suppliers and can steer public demand towards risk-sensitive products and services. A new collaborative approach between governments and private enterprise based on trust will build disaster resilient communities (UNISDR, 2013; p. 5)

The quote offers a seamless example of the way in which resilience building articulates the involvement of corporate partners in DM. The research, however, has found during interviews and literature review, that such support for private engagement seems to be based on a widespread belief around its benefits rather than on evidence, arguing that the quest for efficiency risks to overshadow the shortcomings critics have highlighted (Sontag, 2012; Tierney, 2015). Chapter 5 will expand more on this.

To summarize, although the concept of resilience presents itself as a promising boundary concept allowing for more interdisciplinary collaboration (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014), it is nonetheless problematic. In fact, international organizations promote a narrative where the idea of an increased capacity of local communities to better prevent and recover from hazardous events is preferable to addressing the socio-economic causes of disasters (Djalante *et al.*, 2011). The communities are then asked to become responsible for the improvement of more efficient and effective ways of preparing to the eventuality of disasters. The research discusses the concept supporting this reading in the next Chapter.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

### 4.1 Resilience, origins of a powerful concept

The term resilience has become a must in the international debate around the future of the DRR agenda (K. Brown, 2014). Researchers have put great effort in collecting and organizing exhaustively the wide variety of definitions of resilience according to different scholars and disciplines (Aldunce *et al.*, 2015; Alexander, 2013; Klein, *et al.*, 2003; Manyena, 2006; Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014). Although it is not my aim to replicate neither such genealogy of the term, some of the collected definitions deserve a closer look in order to achieve greater conceptual clarity.

The origins of the concept lie in the field of ecological systems theory, rooting back to the 1970s with the work of Holling (1973). More specifically, the idea of equilibrium appears to be seminal for the development of a resilience approach. However, both the ideas of equilibrium and resilience will be criticized by other theories, notably political ecology and governmentality perspective, as the coming sections will show.

Since the 1970s the concept of resilience has come a long way and crossed many disciplines, from physics to psychology, from finance to ecology and sociology (Aldunce *et al.*, 2015; Alexander *et al.*, 2013; Tobin, 1999; Walker & Cooper, 2011). The connection that the concept of resilience suggests between vulnerability and adaptability becomes clearer when looking at the definitions coming from climate change adaptation research. On the account of the which we find, for instance, Timmerman (1981) and Adger (2006) who interpret resilience as “the measure of a system’s or part of a system’s capacity to absorb and recover from the occurrence of a hazardous event” or “the ability of communities to withstand shocks to their social infrastructure economic growth, stability and distribution of income, degree of dependency on natural resources, remittances and diversity in the kind of activities/functions being performed within systems” (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014).

From a socio-ecological perspective we find Carpenter, Walker, Anderies and Abel (2001) according to which resilience is understood as “the capacity of a system to self-organize and the ability of a system to learn and adapt” (Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014).

Although many commentators have provided insightful definitions (Mileti, 1999; Buckle *et al.*, 2000; Twigg, 2009), I will focus on the definition provided by UNISDR in 2009 included in the publication *Terminology in Disaster Risk Reduction*, as it became the most operationalized definition in the disaster management community.

The UNISDR document defines *resilience* as:

The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions (UNISDR, 2009; p.24).

In the words of UNISDR, “Resilience means the ability to “resile from” or “spring back from” a shock. The resilience of a community in respect to potential hazard events is determined by the degree to which the community has the necessary resources and is capable of organizing itself both prior to and during times of need” (Ibidem).

As one can see there is a *Leitmotiv* linking them all. Despite the many possible definitions (the ones proposed are a mere fraction), the idea is rather clear. All definitions, in fact, agree upon the fact that resilience has to do, essentially, with systems or communities, structures, shocks, learning and adapting. But the concept remains problematic on several levels, as the coming sections will show.

Firstly, the shift of target that is evident since the first line of the UNISDR definition: the focus on community or systems is clearly removing central governments and other socio-political bodies from the burden of providing security and reducing vulnerability of people (Chandler, 2013; Duffield, 2011). Secondly, the two adjectives “timely and efficiently” open to the adoption of the efficiency and efficacy mantra allowing for a narrative building the need for private sector involvement (UNISDR, 2015). Thirdly the focus on “preservation and restoration” does not seem to suggest promotion of change (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2012).

These and other features make the concept very appealing for the international community. For instance, it offers a perfect conceptual platform for the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach in both DRR and Humanitarian Aid. In fact, as the new goal is achieving community resilience, the way towards it takes the form of a coordinated effort of all relevant sectors of civil society (Kaika, 2017; UNISDR, 2015).

The following sections will help understanding the success of resilience approach to the adoption of a neoliberal sensitivity in disaster governance.

## 4.2 Resilience as neoliberal governmentality

In *The birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, Michel Foucault (2008) discusses the concepts of biopower and governmentality and, most importantly, their relevance to explain neoliberalism<sup>2</sup> as a form of government. He argues that the direct exercise of power over citizens is far from encompassing the spectrum of possibilities in which power is performed by governments. Imposition from a central authority on its citizens fails to grasp the more pervasive nature of power. In this regard, Foucault argues that necessary precondition to the exercise of power is that citizens normalize a set of practices, norms, public institutions and bodies. That normalization is what makes the implementation of political and economic policies accepted, thus making the exercise of power possible and effective. Foucault goes even further by suggesting that, in this fashion, power is not simply limited to a specific sphere (the public one) but permeates all aspects of human life as a

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<sup>2</sup> In the context of this research neoliberalism is interpreted as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such (neoliberal) practices” (Harvey, 2007; p. 2).

continuum. By consequence, in Foucault's eyes it is more appropriate to talk about biopower, if one wants to grasp the elusive nature of governmental power.

Such concept is deeply connected to the one of governmentality. By performing a form of biopower, the subject thus created responds to the requirements of neoliberalism by supporting the case for a minimal role of the state, complemented by the endorsement of free-market ideology as optimal way to accomplish fair allocation of resources. This is why governmentality is such a powerful concept to understand neoliberalism as part of governments' political and economic agendas. The ultimate link to governmentality is the fact that, for neoliberalism as form of government to succeed, it is necessary to produce a public discourse aiming to build one's own world vision on a neoliberal episteme.

Resilience depicts the image of a world too complex to govern (Pugh, 2014). In relation to disaster, community have to understand disasters as the product of a highly complex interrelation of factors such as climate change, poverty, overpopulation and other factors. Such factors make disasters more and more unpredictable and frequent. In this regard, facing the impossibility of a definitive eradication of disasters one can only focus on minimizing their impacts by becoming more resilient.

This equals to foster a narrative where the citizens gradually interiorize the idea that disasters simply happen whilst addressing the root-causes lies beyond the reach of finite human capabilities. In this neoliberal episteme, simple models are exchanged with a more complex representation of the unbound human-environment relation; but, when moving towards implementation, resilience easily turns into an engineering approach to social dynamics of power, being, by consequence, much more conservative than disruptive (Turner, 2013). This passage perfectly articulates the relationship between resilience and subjectivity:

Part of this process involves the embedding of these norms and values in a new set of social institutions and practices. Tickell and Peck describe this as the "roll-in" phase of institution building which reflects a shift from the earlier, more aggressive "roll-out" phase, to a new emphasis on normalising the logic of the market through softer ideas such as public-private partnerships, networked governance and an individualised conception of civil society based on mobilising active citizens. [...] Although the state "steps back" and encourages the free conduct of individuals, this is achieved through active intervention into civil society and the opening of new areas to the logic of private enterprise and individual initiative. This is the logic behind the rise of resilience (Turner, 2013; p. 42).

Thus, resilience performs a sublime form of governmentality by portraying disasters as non-political phenomenon. Such portray, leaving the economic and socio-political root-causes (Wisner *et al.*, 2004) of disasters untouched, is ultimately favourable to a neoliberal economic model that directly contributes to global poverty, marginalization, environmental degradation and climate change. The following quote further supports this reading:

Resilience approaches operate on the normative assumption that communities can and should self-organise to deal with uncertainty, that uncertainty is a given not something with a political dimension, and the role of government is limited to enabling, shaping and supporting, but specifically not to direct or to fund those processes. This locates the responsibility of communities as needing to organise themselves, primarily in the context of sustaining economic

growth. As a consequence, there is little sign of a profound engagement with a politics of resilience as a means for conceiving of change; of revolution through resilience (Welsh, 2014; p. 20).

The subject that is created in this fashion is by consequence suitable for the neoliberal economy in which his or her ontology is embedded. Joseph (2013) argues that, when looking at the dimensions of the resilient subject, it appears evident how it serves as a form of governance serving a wider structure of biopower:

Resilience fits with a social ontology that urges us to turn from a concern with the outside world to a concern with our own subjectivity, our adaptability, our reflexive understanding, our own risk assessments, our knowledge acquisition and, above all else, our responsible decision-making (2013, p. 40).

The resilient subject is autonomous, responsible and aware; an idea of subjectivity extremely close to the one of neoliberalism. In this way, resilience would promote a governance discourse where its character of governmentality lies upon the emphasis of limited involvement of central governments and the encouragement of free conduct of self-aware, rational (here interpreted in the sense of economic rationality) and responsible citizens.

Another influential author, David Chandler (2013), offers a different understanding of the link between resilience, state building and neoliberalism. In his account, the resilience paradigm is post-liberal. Starting from a state-building perspective, resilience would be the expression of a neo-interventionist discourse stemming out of a post-liberal sensitivity in global governance. Chandler's (2013) argument poses a strict interpretation of liberty in classical liberalism where the provision of protection is a key function of a modern state. Social contract theory and state based provision of protection being the pillars of classical understanding of the modern state; the resilience discourse inverts this understanding by making the citizen responsible for his/her own protection. In the resilience rhetoric the state is emancipated from the burden of security provision (Chandler, 2012) in favour of social practices of community capacity building leading to the creation of a new subjectivity where the resilient individual is capable of adaptive behaviour.

Julian Reid (2012) offers a reading that enables us to move from neoliberal governmentality into a more radical position, namely Klein's (2007) argument on disaster capitalism, explored further below. According to Reid one cannot fully understand the relationship between the neoliberal episteme and resilience until the economic dimension is taken into account. In this way, the resilient subject is the one that embraces the uncertainty of a too complex world to govern by turning this into an economic opportunity rather than engaging in political action. The idea of resilience relies on the shared apprehension of a complex world where outcomes of human interactions in a networked, globalised economy are impossible to govern. In this sense, today's global governance reflects Hayek's neoliberal epistemology (Walker and Cooper, 2011). If the impossibility of the state to provide security, departing from a classical interpretation of the civil society-state relationship, is due to the finite capabilities of knowing and planning, the individual becomes, by consequence, the ultimate actor responsible for its own safety. In this framework, the individual responsibility

is to place oneself in a post-political<sup>3</sup> space where more pragmatic considerations must take place over more political ones concerning eliminating vulnerability and risk. In this regard, Public-Private Partnerships are the mark of a new acceptance of civil society involvement in the process of turning hazards into (economic) possibilities and where resilience becomes “an ideology attuned to the uncertainties of a neoliberal economy” (Duffield, 2011; in Welsh, 2014, pg 16).

The point I make here echoes what Rose defines as “Foucauldian circle” (2013). “The circularity of the relation is founded on the fact that the apparatus that manages the problem simultaneously reinforces this problem as the state’s central concern – which in turn justifies the apparatus” (Rose, 2013; p. 216). Governmentality expresses the ways in which one welcomes and embraces state power as something objective (or true, to use Foucault’s terms). Such embracement is necessary to governments to control their population. To extend this reasoning, I argue that global disaster governance is facing the same form of circularity by suggesting as disaster reduction strategy the same economic rationale that contributed to increase community vulnerability by enhancing global inequality, climate change and environmental degradation.

Ultimately, the explanatory power of governmentality lies, in my view, in its capacity to unveil the production of subjectivities tailored to the needs of a dominant political or economic ideology. Something that resilience discourse is eminently operating.

#### 4.3 Are PPPs a form of disaster capitalism?

After the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, the reconstruction efforts in Sri-Lanka, India and Indonesia were centred on the revival of tourism as the main way to enhance recovery and economic growth. On the assumption that only a strong tourism sector would have generated enough profits to allow the affected zones to be reborn, coastal areas were allocated to the construction of hotels and resorts *de facto* destroying the livelihood of those local communities that were relying on access to water (Haynes & Rice, 2005).

Klein (2007) argues that world powers (US at the frontline) stimulate the adoption of neoliberal economic policies globally exploiting the status of shock typical of post-crises settings. It is in that moment, she argues, that populations are unable to organize resistance against unwanted privatization policies, the war in Iraq being a textbook example in this regard.

Such policies are ultimately beneficial to the reinforcement of neoliberal world economy that secures a position of power to the largest economies (identifiable with the West). As one can deduce from the case mentioned at the beginning of the section, disaster capitalism deals with the idea of turning disasters and crises into profitable opportunities for companies. In the aftermath, companies see the opening of a new market, which they can enter forcefully or otherwise. Ultimately, disasters and crises are reinterpreted as business opportunities that work towards the well being of global capital.

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<sup>3</sup> The term post-politics indicates the fall, after the Cold War era, of political ideologies as foundations of global society in favour of the acceptance of a world based upon capitalism and neoliberal state governance (Fukuyama, 1989).

In this regard, both neoliberal governmentality approach and disaster capitalism highlight the same fundamental rationale underlying the endorsement of neoliberal policies at global governance level. However, the research engages more critically towards Klein's perspective as it risks assuming an overly simplistic account of global politics and power relations. Most importantly, I argue that the rise of PPPs cannot be too closely associated with a disaster capitalism perspective due to the absence of direct profitability for companies involved. In fact, as disaster capitalism focuses on capitalization and profitability it is more applicable to contexts, especially popular in the United States, where private sector hugely benefits from government contracts in security and defence.

Although closely related, I argue that PPPs operate in the interests of global capital in a much subtler way and that governmentality approach is better suited to point out such nuances.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of policy documents and international frameworks in disaster management, I argue that resilience can be considered the conceptual foundation behind the adoption of PPPs as a tool for disaster management. However, the concept has been problematized in its inability to address the root-causes of disasters. In this regard, a reading of resilience as a narrative convenient to global governance has been proposed.

In order to reach this reading I adopted the lenses of neoliberal governmentality approach given its ability to explain how the production of resilient subjects which are perfectly suitable to embrace economic neoliberalism as a dominant global ideology.

Finally, I discussed disaster capitalism in relation to governmentality arguing that both contribute, although differently, to reveal the driving forces in global governance. PPPs are the result of the adoption of neoliberal ideology in disaster management, favouring a specific unequal distribution of global capital in a neoliberal world economy.

## 5. Business engagement in humanitarian aid and disaster management

After the earthquake, with good will and money pouring into Haiti, international officials were determined to use the disaster as a catalyst for transforming not only the intractably poor country but the world's ineffectual strategies for helping it. Bill Clinton, the United Nations special envoy for Haiti, invoked the "build back better" mantra he had imported from his similar role in South Asia after the tsunami. And Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton cautioned donors to stop working around the government and instead work with it, and to stop financing "a scattered array of well-meaning projects" rather than making "deeper, long-term investments" (Sontag, 2012; p. 2).

The 2010 Haitian earthquake is a prominent example of the shortcomings that foreign aid can run into. The Clinton Foundation, the Haitian government, NGOs and other private contractors formed a commission aiming to coordinate the reconstruction phase. On the premises that this would have represented a prime example of fast and efficient post-disaster recovery, foreign money, agencies and companies started pouring into the afflicted country. Unfortunately, it became worldwide known for its inability to address the problems of Haitian population. After years, housing programmes were still lacking behind due to sheer mismanagement, lack of transparency and accountability (Sontag, 2012).

The population was not consulted while international consulting firms were hired (PricewaterhouseCoopers was given a \$2.4 million contract as *pro bono* consultant of the Clinton Foundation led commission). Moreover, as almost all contracts were endowed to foreign NGOs, agencies and privates, this contributed to adding up to 10 per cent administrative costs given that they were sub-contracting, in turn, to other companies (Sontag, 2012).

The case of Haiti is relevant to us since it contains the elements of private sector involvement, foreign aid industry, media coverage, efficiency rhetoric, long-term investments and build-back better (also constitutive part of resilience discourse). This helps to shed a light on the inherent risks of a narrative that takes efficiency as its ultimate foundation by showing how easily it can turn into an example of sheer inefficiency.

However, the case of Haiti reports a private sector involvement with whom the HA system is rather well acquainted. In fact, businesses have been present for decades in relief efforts providing goods or services. What is analysed and investigated in this research is not private economic activity *per sé*. The interest lies more into the emergence of "new forms of business engagement", as Binder and Witte put it (2007):

Recently the business community has started to respond unconventionally to needs arising from humanitarian emergencies, offering more than just logistical support or the delivery of construction materials on a fee basis. This suggests that new forms of business engagement in humanitarian relief may be emerging. One new form of engagement is partnership between companies and traditional humanitarian actors to improve disaster relief services. These partnerships are voluntary. Companies often claim that their participation in such collaborative alliances is not primarily, if at all, motivated by financial incentives, but is rooted in a desire to demonstrate their Corporate Social Responsibility (2007; p. 3).



The significance of the passage is its consideration for Corporate Social Responsibility as a new discursive force behind the rise of PPPs in the humanitarian and disaster management sectors (Jenkins, 2005). The upcoming sections will investigate what are the official narratives that actors mobilise with respect to their support to PPP approach, what are the drivers underlying this approach and what can this approach entail for the future of the NGO sector.

## 5.1 Global Disaster Governance

The following section will concentrate on the global discourse around resilience and why it has become so successful at a global disaster governance level. Before proceeding, a clarification around what is intended here by global disaster governance helps in clarifying the line of argumentation.

Tierney has defined disaster governance as “the interrelated sets of norms, organisational and institutional actors, and practices (spanning pre-disaster, trans-disaster, and post-disaster periods) that are designed to reduce the impacts and losses associated with disasters arising from natural and technological agents and from intentional acts of terrorism” (2012; p. 344). Based on this I interpret global disaster governance as the array of institutions, governmental, non-governmental and inter-governmental agencies that determine global policy concerning the interpretation and management of disasters.

Examples of institutions involved in disaster governance are the UN and UN agencies, Donor Governments and INGOs. Looking at the governance discourse these actors are bringing forward, namely the resilience approach, can help in drawing preliminary conclusions around an evident trend in the HA and DM communities.

### 5.1.1 Negotiating state responsibilities

Resilience discourse enables global governance to redefine of the role of the state allowing the emergence of non-traditional actors such as the private sector. This is consistent with a global capital economy supporting a limited role of the state, free market policies and free circulation of capital.

Via private sector engagement the state redefines the terms of its relationship with citizens (Joachim & Schneiker, 2015). It is in fact not responsible for providing security but shifts this responsibility on other parts of the “civil society”, the private sector being one of those. In this sense, the resilience approach, pushing for a multistakeholder approach, has paved the way for the introduction within the HA system of actors whose drivers are eventually based on economic rationality. In interview, a key informant noted:

I think you can argue for that argument from two different perspectives, depending on your ideology but on the one hand a diminishing role of the state in the humanitarian sector wouldn't be good at all because then response would be defined by other motives than humanitarian principles. On the other hand some would probably argue that – you know – particularly in the area of resilience, if you have private companies investing in creating disaster risk management programs, strengthening resilience of the supply chain, developing rapid response capacity, -

you know IBM was famous for doing so where they had developed their own expertise so that if a tsunami hits in South-East Asia the structures are already in place to help own employees, the communities we work in, get the operations up and running and then they ended up selling this expertise to other companies - so I mean is that such a bad thing? Probably not. So if you can get this sort of more local response that has nothing to do with Germany giving a flash of a hundred million euros to an organization, this kind of decentralized type of response in which the private sector would have to play a massive role isn't such a bad thing. But again, you could easily argue on the other side that this is concerning because they might only help one group and let the other suffer (GPPi, 30/06/2017).

This long quote highlights the tension between principled and pragmatic action. Namely, the idea that if private sector involvement is about improving the efficiency of the humanitarian response the risks this may pose to the humanitarian aid principles are seen as ideological or, possibly, negligible. The same interviewee, an expert in humanitarian affairs, took very seriously my question about the neoliberal redefinition of roles and responsibilities in the HA and DM. When asked if such paradigm shift could be qualified as neoliberal he made a straightforwardly pragmatic argument stating "So many people have built that argument and I mean it's a very important debate to have but at the same time I have always taken a much more practical approach to my research. I mean in the end I don't really care whether it is neo-liberal or neo-conservative or constructivist type of movement but rather, does it help?" (GPPi, 30/06/2017).

Another interviewee, from the Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation (DCHI), expresses the same spirit saying, "I definitely see a risk but there is always a risk in our sector. It's much more about how you manage those risks. We can discuss about these risks and it's good that you discuss. So yes there are risks but they are manageable" (DCHI, 02/08/2017).

### 5.1.2 In the name of efficiency

We should use the private sector more for effective disaster response. I mean, 80% of DRM is implemented by the private sector, all those measures... (former UNISDR officer, 31/07/2017)

Although I did not keep a field diary given the non-ethnographic scope of this research, I take the freedom to embed the above quote in its situational context. I believe, in fact, this can better convey the attitude that officers involved in private sector cooperation often show towards efficiency discourse.



I meet my interviewee in The Hague, it's a cold morning and we decide to share a coffee to warm us up as the interview unfolds. She is a young woman that has worked for UNISDR in the very office in charge of overseeing the private sector engagement strategy for disaster management. She has a lot of experience and I can tell she masters the topic with confidence. The conversation flows naturally and she gives me a lot of valuable insights. Towards the end, as I use to end my interviews asking about the likelihood of private sector mainstreaming in

DRM, she expresses the view contained in the above quote. I look confused, for a moment, as I never saw that data in the literature. However, getting along with it, I weight her words and say “more than 80%?”. She chuckles and adds rapidly “I think it’s the only way to do it, the governments don’t have the capacity to do it.”

As her lunch break is over she tells me she has to get back to work otherwise her boss would scold her. I thank her for her time, one final handshake. While I see her walking towards the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I think about her words. If that were true rather the inefficiency of private sector in DRM would be proven.



The analysis of the most relevant policy documents has suggested that efficiency is the main rationale at the basis of the unquestioned acceptance at governance level of resilience discourse. A stronger focus on increasing the system efficiency through partnerships appears to be dominant in the future of NGOs as some suggest (Kent *et al.*, 2013). The same goes for all major UN agencies involved in humanitarian aid and DRM such as UNOCHA, UNICEF or UNISDR (Hoxtell, 2017).

During the interviews, this increase in coordination among organizations have been mentioned as one the strengths of a common framework, made possible by the ability of resilience to offer a platform for cross-sector collaboration. As one programme office from Red Cross says, “I think its been a big improvement because there is much more coherence between organizations and what we are doing” (Red Cross Nederland #2, 19/06/2017).

The most relevant policy documents aim towards the same trajectory. For instance, *The Grand Bargain. A Shared Commitment To Better Serve People In Need* was issued from the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) of 2016 and restates the importance of increased coordination and knowledge sharing among all stakeholders involved in the humanitarian aid system to reduce management costs and improve response.

Moreover, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction* (SFDRR), the global 2015-2030 agenda for DRR, emphasizes the necessity for a renewed and more effective disaster management sector and offers a discourse linking efficiency, PPPs, disasters and sustainable development:

Disaster risk governance at the national, regional and global levels is of great importance for an effective and efficient management of disaster risk. Clear vision, plans, competence, guidance and coordination within and across sectors, as well as participation of relevant stakeholders, are needed. Strengthening disaster risk governance for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation is therefore necessary and fosters collaboration and partnership across mechanisms and institutions for the implementation of instruments relevant to disaster risk reduction and sustainable development (UNISDR, 2015; pg. 17).

SFDRR Priority number 3 reaffirms this:

Public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures are essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities, countries and their assets, as well as the environment. These

can be drivers of innovation, growth and job creation. Such measures are cost-effective and instrumental to save lives, prevent and reduce losses and ensure effective recovery and rehabilitation (UNISDR, 2015; pg. 18).

Additionally, another relevant document suggesting a direct link between the efficiency and efficacy discourse and private sector involvement is from UNISDR (2013). The working paper *Disaster Risk Reduction Private Sector Partnership Post 2015 Framework - Private Sector Blueprint Five Private Sector Visions for a Resilient Future*, sets the new apprehension of the private sector in the UN perspective. The creation of the UN DRR-PSP (United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction Private Sector Partnership) is, in itself, a rather self-explanatory sign of the momentum that the private sector has gained. The document proposes five different visions that would form the overall of the engagement between UNISDR and the private sector, identifying different types of activities for different sectors of industry, finance, infrastructures and so forth. The paper offers a vigorous narrative advocating for the necessity of the private sector in DRR programmes in order to achieve greater efficiency and, by consequence, greater impact (UNISDR, 2013). From a donor perspective to engage with the private sector is the privileged way to increase resilience of communities.

To our discussion, it is now relevant to notice that such efficiency is neither supported by the interviews nor the literature (Binder & Witte, 2007). On the contrary, when asked about the effectiveness of PPPs, the interviewee from DCHI said to be underwhelmed by the impact stories, “I have a gut feeling that it is effective, I think that it’s really interesting to explore it further but I am genuinely underwhelmed by the impact stories. I know there are some partnerships that are very famous but if I actually talk to people about it then I am still underwhelmed” (DCHI, 02/08/2017). Echoing this point, another interviewee said, “it really depends. You can’t make a blank statement about it. I’m not going to say that PPPs are always the best way, or solution because they are just simply not” (GPPi, 30/06/2017) due to the fact that private sector is only one actor involved in operations on the ground that are more complex.

Another important point to make here is that during the interviews it was not always clear what was the object of PPPs and who were the main actors involved. This lack of clarity is expressed by another interviewee who said “I don’t think we engage directly with the private sector. A lot of our work is done with foundations or charities so not directly with private companies as partners” (CARE Nederland #2, 15/06/2017). Yet, foundations and charities are often the entities through which corporations engage in PPPs as part of CSR policies (Binder & Witte, 2007).

To offer a much more assertive view on the effectiveness of PPPs is another respondent, former manager at Philips Foundation, who said “I think it’s definitely being demonstrated that these partnerships and these initiatives can really have a lasting impact on thousands or millions of people” (16/11/2017). Unfortunately she could not provide evidences in support of her claim at the moment.

To conclude, despite the lack of clarity and evidences on the alleged improvement of HA and DRR, almost all interviewees trust the fact that PPPs will be increasingly adopted in the coming years as preferred tool to enhance efficiency in the relief sector.

### 5.1.3 Resilience and economic neoliberalism. The case of Aid & Trade policies

Another important point to make in order to highlight the link between SFDRR and neoliberalism in global governance is the case of the Dutch Aid & Trade policy (MoFA, 2013). Given the importance that SFDRR puts on private sector development as poverty reduction strategy, donor countries have integrated trade policies to enhance economic growth into their foreign aid policies. This seems to support the idea that drivers of disaster risks such as marginalization, climate change, inequality and poverty can be addressed by fostering the same economic model that is historically responsible for them. Furthermore, many examples (some of which are proposed at sub-section 4.2.1) can prove how such discourse can translate into an approach favourable to the strengthening of large companies based in the west, despite the “local” private sector development rhetoric.

Interviews with one NGO staff member and one former programme officer at UNISDR have outlined this movement towards an integrated approach:

The new Dutch strategy of the foreign aid ministry about good growth and aid is pushing for new ways of working. I mean what the Dutch government is trying to do is to promote Dutch businesses through the means of development assistance. So the all way of strategizing to our donors is changing in perspective (CARE Nederland #2, 15/06/2017).

For the Netherlands we have a ministry of trade and development and trade is also integrated with humanitarian aid and development so for us is that integrated approach that is very important. If donors, so if OCHA is applying to funds from the NL then they have a higher chance of getting their proposals approved if they use that integrated approach (former UNISDR officer, 31/07/2017).

The purpose of the policy is to facilitate poverty reduction strategies by linking them to private sector development initiatives in developing countries. For this reason facilitation mechanisms are envisaged for Dutch companies that aim to do business in developing countries with the underpinning idea of developing local capacities. The literature offers similar examples for other countries such the UK. In this case the UK aid policy aims to “contribute to the reduction of poverty and also strengthen UK trade and investment opportunities around the world” (UK DFID, 2015; pg. 3). Thus reflecting the adoption by the donor community of the OECD policy document, eloquently titled *Aid For Trade. Making It Effective* (OECD, 2012).

### 5.1.4 Conclusion

To summarize, the international community justifies the PPP approach as a tool to enhance efficiency in the humanitarian and disaster management sectors. However, the case of Haiti 2010 seems to suggest rather the opposite. Simultaneously, this approach, based on a resilience discourse, allows the state to redefine their responsibility while allowing them to promote economic interests via foreign aid policies.

However, neither the literature nor the interviews have supported such discourse in global governance. On the contrary the interviews have shown a self-confident attitude towards the capability of managing the risks that an extensive use of private sector can entail.

## 5.2 Relief NGOs and global partnerships

Resilience discourse is changing the humanitarian aid system. The partnership approach it bears reflects a more positive framing of non-traditional actors. In fact, “the boost in public-private partnerships, however, was caused by a gradual shift from seeing the private sector as a pure donor or subcontractor to also seeing the private sector as a more strategic partner” (Hoxtell *et al.*, 2015; p. 16).

Over the past decade, the cases of multi-stakeholder partnerships in relief efforts and humanitarian aid have burgeoned (Auzzir *et al.*, 2014; Chen *et al.*, 2007; Tomasini & Van Wassenhove, 2009). According to the economic sector in which the collaboration takes place (insurance, logistics, technical services among others) the goals and drivers change. However, a pattern common to the largest NGOs is the moving towards this type of engagement with increasing interest. Publicly, PPPs aim to improve the efficiency of humanitarian response, access to technology and managerial expertise, private sector development and poverty reduction. However, despite the rhetoric, this seems to happen while overlooking the needs of local communities. In the following sections I will explore narratives and drivers behind NGO engagement into PPPs, taking case studies from the interviews as starting point for further analysis.

### 5.2.1 PPPs and NGO drivers

NGOs are now increasingly asked by donor policies to work in partnerships with other actors in order to perform humanitarian or disaster management activities (UNISDR, 2015). Thus driving a change in the international humanitarian aid discourse.

I think over the last ten years the emergence of resilience puts much more emphasis on working in partnerships and having dialogues with stakeholders. There is much more urge to find areas of common interests, which there is plenty. This has changed towards the past, now we try to sit with private companies and see if their interests are our interests (Red Cross Nederland #1, 17/06/2017).

Another interviewee repeated this point saying, “this PPP model has been rising over the past five or ten years. It’s a *donor trend*<sup>4</sup>: in the past NGOs would receive money from donors, mainly international organizations like the World Bank, etc. I think modalities are changing” (CARE Nederland #1, 13/06/2017). A clear example of this trend is the case of the PFR alliance described on p. 4 of this research.

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasis mine.

As we have seen, in the governance discourse PPPs intend to foster efficiency of the humanitarian system while implementing the vision of resilient communities in developing countries. In this regard, the number of PPPs that have already taken place is remarkable (Izumi & Shaw, 2015; Oetzel & Doh, 2009; IOB, 2013). In light of their complex variety, encompassing insurance, banking, reconstruction, infrastructure, logistics, technology development, training, healthcare assistance, technical services and others, the research attempts to problematize the underlying rationale of PPPs.

When looking at the drivers of PPPs, an important motive that emerges from interviews and literature is knowledge sharing and expertise. Building resilient communities necessitates the combination of expertise coming from different actors. In this regard, many suggest the complementarity of each other's expertise (in this case NGOs and private companies) as a key driver capable of bringing NGOs and corporations together. As one interviewee said

Companies are really good at the technical infrastructure, look at the Indonesia Jakarta Bay, there are good engineers who can make dams, safe water infrastructures, but they don't have the soft skills to actually work with local communities, get the message across and to change behaviours. That's where we come in with more experience. By talking together we have seen that both parties have added values to bring to the table. It can be a win-win (CARE Nederland #2, 15/06/2017).

Besides the interesting introduction of business language among NGO workers ("win-win"), the Jakarta Bay Reclamation project mentioned during the interview is, paradoxically, a fine example in support of the view expressed in this research. The project, launched in 2014, aimed to prevent flooding in the Indonesian capital city. A coalition of Dutch consulting firms, the Dutch government and the Indonesian central government, agreed on the implementation of a \$40 billion investment project for the construction of 17 artificial islands in the Jakarta bay. The structure, shaped into the *Garuda*, the Indonesian national symbol, would create a sea wall more than 1.000 hectares large (Colven, 2017), in order to address Jakarta's land subsidence problem understood to be causing the flooding. Additionally, the project has been praised as beneficial to the city, due to its capacity to reduce pollution, protect coastal areas and generate economic growth.

However, local authorities, watchdog environmental organizations and activist groups reported not only a corruption scandal (which temporarily halted the project in 2016) but also its detrimental impact on environment and local communities. In fact, if implemented, the project would entail the destruction of marine ecosystems (both by construction of working sites and by progressive change of water flows) while undermining the livelihoods of local fishermen (Bakker *et al.*, 2017). Adding to this, the project envisages the creation of real estate opportunities on the islands, likely leading to a widening of the inequality gap in the Jakarta estate context (Bakker *et al.*, 2017).

It is also important to notice at this stage that the very design of this ultra large-scale water project seems to suggest the re-emerging of a modernist narrative affirming human control over unruly nature and, at the same time, a neo-colonialist one concerning the modernisation of Jakarta via western intervention. Interestingly, both narratives contradict

the resilience narrative mobilised by my interviewee. The focus on community resilience suggests the shift from state based intervention to more local responses to disaster adaptation. However, despite the rhetoric, often western actors operationalize resilience approach, hinting to a disguised modernist narrative at play. This example is highly explanatory of the fluidity of boundaries such concept can be stretched to. The same narrative is in fact mobilised in order to justify the setting up of Early Warning Systems (EWS) in local communities as well as projects “heavily reliant on hydrological engineering expertise, hard infrastructure, and private capital” (Colven, 2017; p. 251).

Other, less contested, examples of global partnerships are the ones between the Philips Foundation, Red Cross Nederland and UNICEF.

The intention of the Phillips Foundation was to bring access of health to vulnerable population all over the world [...] To give you an example, the Red Cross was building two health centres in Ivory Coast, a couple of years back and we were equipping it with Philips equipment. But that project went a bit beyond putting there medical equipment. It was also about training the local communities in how to use the clinic and to create self-sustaining mechanisms around it because the context was very remote and distribution channels within Philips are not necessarily designed to reach that type of setting (former Philips Foundation manager, 16/11/2017).

The project refers to the partnership between Red Cross Netherlands, Ivory Coast Red Cross and Philips Foundation during which the Foundation supported the construction of two health care centres with a donation of 300.000 euros. In this context, the Philips Foundation would have the opportunity of testing new medical technologies as well as Ivory Coast as potential new market for Philips products (see Chapter 5.3.3).

Philips is also in partnership with UNICEF in the context of UNICEF’s Global Innovation Centre and Innovation Fund (GIC). Aim of the centre is to develop technological innovation to improve children’s lives conditions around the world ([blogs.unicef.org](https://blogs.unicef.org), latest access 27/01/2018). This involves the expertise of companies using UNICEF as a mediator between companies and the needs of local communities (suggesting an increasing role of NGOs and UN agencies as brokers and mediators). This latest aspect is non-negligible since NGOs typically act as spokespersons of local people’s interests. However, the Jakarta Bay project has been heavily criticized also for its lack of transparency and its exclusion of local people from consultations. The same dynamic occurred after the Haitian earthquake of 2010 during which the commission in charge of coordinating the reconstruction efforts deliberately excluded representatives of the Haitian population (Sontag, 2012).

Additional PPPs relevant to our discussion are the ones between USAID and Wal-Mart, Red Cross America and Wal-Mart, CARE Nederland and the H&M Foundation. Both USAID and the American Red Cross have a sound cooperation with Wal-Mart, one of the largest retail corporations in the world (London & Fay, 2015). This latter has donated, via its Foundation, up to \$35 million since 2007 to Red Cross for disaster preparedness and disaster relief efforts ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), latest access 31/01/2018). The company has also been involved in the humanitarian response in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in 2005, delivering various aid items to the population and obtaining huge visibility.



The H&M Foundation has funded CARE Nederland's project "*Strengthening Women. A Catalyst for Positive Change!*". The project, started in 2014, aims to strengthen the role of women in developing countries as entrepreneurs in order to reduce poverty through private sector development. The project was implemented in 11 countries aiming to reach 100.000 women to fund their small-scale business activities. According to CARE's report "The partnership between CARE and H&M Foundation combines CARE's on-the-ground experience and evidence-based knowledge with the Foundation's entrepreneurial spirit and its interest in testing and scaling up new ideas" (CARE, 2017; p. 11).

Also, Oxfam America is leading a programme<sup>5</sup> on how to make corporate investments more sensitive to resilience and climate change while performing social impact. In this context, the work of Oxfam with the private sector takes more the form of consulting and brokering services, confirming a change in the type of services that NGOs provide. One programme officer at Oxfam International underpinned this stating "we reach out to companies helping them to make their investments more risk informed. So yes, we take that consultancy role, from what I hear it is very appreciated and they are very receptive" (Oxfam International #1, 05/10/2017). This is highly telling of how the PPP approach is affecting the way of working of NGOs and how it is reshaping their attitude towards the private sector.

Finally, another example clearly articulates the interaction between PS and resilience. Discussing the ARISE initiative,<sup>6</sup> my respondent from UNISDR stressed the fact that a current strategy to increase private sector involvement is to show the direct business benefits that investing in disaster prevention brings.

Within that bigger alliance (ARISE) you have all these programmes. You have different ones, for instance on education and one on insurance. The last one it's a big one, because if people are insured they can bounce back faster from a disaster. Hotels as well, which is beneficial for tourism (former UNISDR officer, 31/07/2017).

Once again, the quote also captures the way in which PS and resilience are mobilised in order to foster cooperation between global intergovernmental agencies and corporations. In fact, the "people" my interviewee was mentioning can hardly be identified with local fishermen communities but, rather, with owners of resort facilities whose expansion burgeoned in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami (Haynes & Rice, 2005). Such narratives at governance level, allowing for big corporate investment in reconstruction projects, eminently suggest the presence of neoliberal governmentality and disaster capitalism rationales at play.

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<sup>5</sup> The Partnership for Resilience and Environmental Preparedness (PREP) is a platform that aims to draw from best practices for companies that want to make risk informed investment to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Companies are then invited to work with communities in order to find solutions with the mediation of NGOs. Levi Strauss & Co. and Starbucks figure among the companies participating in the programme.

<sup>6</sup> The Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies (ARISE) aims to facilitate knowledge sharing and expertise by providing private companies with practical insights for the implementation of the SFDRR. The programme counts more than one hundred companies as partners, the majority of which are located in OECD countries or owned by larger companies therein domiciled ([www.unog.ch/arise/members](http://www.unog.ch/arise/members). Latest access, 31/01/2018).

### 5.2.2 A neoliberal redefinition of roles?

As previously exposed, the growing acceptance of the PPP approach throughout the development, HA and DM sectors would have not been possible without a radical change in perception among the stakeholders involved. A short quote from one interviewee perfectly captures the spirit of this shift: “very short? From foe to friend” (Red Cross Nederland #2, 23/06/2017).

Framing the private sector as “friend” has considerable implications for its future involvement in humanitarian activities. The thesis argues that the interviewees and the literature not only showed an almost unanimous faith in an increasing popularity of PPPs in the coming years but they also did not produce any evidence against it. On the contrary, the interviews support this idea.

I think it will become the norm. I think it is necessary as well. The same as several years ago the Dutch government started to say well you can only apply for funds if you work in alliances, not anymore as standalone organizations and it has become the norm now. It is socially accepted by now, people stopped complaining and started working together. On the PPP front I think it will become the same, in ten years from now we won't know any better than doing this kind of work together (CARE Nederland #3, 27/06/2017).

Moreover, when asked if we are witnessing a shift in the identities of NGOs, the interviews confirmed this pattern. NGOs are gradually reshaping their roles and functions according to changing international narratives around international engagement (Arenas *et al.*, 2009). One programme officer at DCHI with extensive experience in the humanitarian sector supported this:

It's definitely happening, it's right there. Collaboration can only work if there is clear definition of what role is taking whom. I come from a sense of urgency that the time is up for humanitarian organizations for working like solo superstars. This is over and also don't believe that it's ever been the case but they overlooked that there are other actors making a difference on the ground. Now I feel that more and more people are starting to realize that we are not the only one having an impact on the ground. Also about corporate partners a lot of people are now starting to think that we need to start working with them or we might miss the boat. If humanitarian organizations don't take the chance to redefine their role, eventually the work will be done by very different actors (DCHI, 02/08/2017).

The passage is interesting to our discussion as it acknowledges the necessity for a redefinition of NGOs roles *vis-à-vis* of a growing participation of non-traditional actors. Private sector engagement is therefore perceived as something incontrovertible that humanitarian organizations ought to see as an opportunity rather than a threat. Otherwise, “we miss the boat”, in the words of my respondent. The tone of the passage conveys, therefore, the necessity, for NGOs, of reshaping their identities in function of the changing global context. One can easily see how this echoes the disaster capitalism discourse highlighted in Chapter 4.3 of this research.

The “different actors” my respondent was referring to are, in this context, clearly identifiable with private businesses, confirming, once again, their new role as constitutive part of the HA system. To go even further, a certain neoliberal discourse has been accepted and endorsed by NGOs as part of their strategy. The economic model against which many NGOs created their identities (Lewis & Kanji, 2009) has been now accepted (surely to different extents) and proposed as a development and resilience strategy for the benefit of local communities.

This is problematic for two main aspects, leading us to a key passage of the thesis. Building on the case of the Jakarta Bay Reclamation project and other case studies exposed in Chapter 5.2, I argue that on the one hand resilience discourse proposes as remedy a neoliberal understanding of the economy, and a reality that was originally responsible for the socio-political and economic vulnerability of local communities, where they are often being forced to live in disaster prone areas due to poverty and marginalization. On the other hand, the widespread endorsement of the PPP approach across HA and DM fosters the unequal distribution of global resources. In fact, despite the rhetoric on community resilience building, PPPs emerge as a dialogue between western-based corporations, donor governments and the largest NGOs in the sector, leaving untouched the uneven distribution of power while nurturing the unequal distribution of global capital.

The following sections will help in clarifying this view.

### 5.2.3 The quest for funding

Although resources mobilization is accredited as one of the most important motives behind the interest of NGOs in PPPs with private actors (Hoxtell *et al.*, 2015), the results from interviews and literature clearly acknowledge funding needs to be the underlying driver of NGO interest into the private sector. What my supervisor at CARE Nederland expressed (see Chapter 2, end of p. 4) is not only a general sense of necessity towards private funds but the enshrining of the private sector as funding source.

This is confirmed also by the active attitude that NGOs show towards it, as expressed by this quote from a programme officer at Oxfam International UK

From as far as I can see we certainly reach out to companies. [...] It's you know, contacts, meetings at conferences, we have a fund raising department who also do the job for the domestic part of our job who happens to have contacts with companies and you get in touch (Oxfam UK #1, 05/10/2017).

Significantly, PPPs are normally initiated by fund raising departments of NGOs in a dialogue between them and CSR or communication departments of private companies (Öberseder *et al.*, 2013).

On a similar vein, experts from DCHI and GPPi highlighted how the quest for extra funding is often the core driver of NGOs saying, respectively,

It (private sector engagement) very often starts for humanitarian organizations, maybe regrettable, but with an interest in money. There is always the hope that it will lead to extra funding, this is undeniable and for some corporates as well (DCHI, 02/08/2017).

The second expert, elaborating more on the point, argued

Humanitarian organizations can't keep up. I mean, not just logistically or staff wise but simply money, there's not enough money to address all of these crises. Not only sudden onset disasters but also kind of these longer protracted crisis and there's no money to go around from governments and so humanitarian organizations are exploring other avenues of financing hence companies, private individuals and foundations are among the avenues that they're exploring to try to keep up with humanitarian needs (GPPi, 30/06/2017).

However, if on the one hand fundraising constitutes the main fuel for NGO interest, on the other hand it is certainly not the only one. It would be misleading to read the interest of NGOs as solely funding driven, which was clearly addressed by several interviewees that explained how a pure interest in money transfer would not be sufficient for a successful PPP (Red Cross Nederland #1, 17/06/2017). Rather, a sincere commitment to the improvement of humanitarian response or disaster prevention is reported to be instrumental in this regard (Hoxtell *et al.*, 2015).

However, if funding opportunities are not the only driver for NGO engagement in PPPs, it certainly is the main one. This raises questions about the risks of resorting to extensive corporate funding.

Interestingly, when asked about what these risks might be, the interviewees promptly cited reputational damage, taking the question on the risks for the humanitarian aid principles as unexpected. As I was explained, "there's certainly an increasing wave of getting more contacts and financial resources from privates [...] but it doesn't mean that private companies determine more what we, as civil society organizations, do. I question that. On the other hand, I don't think we can completely say "ok, give us your resources and we do as we please" of course not; it's a dialogue" (Red Cross Nederland #2, 23/06/2017).

Rather, reputational damage seems to worry NGOs more than the adherence to humanitarian principles or privatization. NGOs are in fact aware of their social capital in terms of access to local communities in developing countries. Therefore, they avoid partnering with private companies that would compromise their legitimacy in the eyes of poor communities. This point is well expressed by the same officer at Red Cross, who stated,

We are a bit reluctant to be too closely associated with other organizations, governments and indeed private companies. Some companies are much less of a threat than others. Philips and Friesland are not very contested in the things they do. Shell would be a whole different organization to collaborate with. So we need to be very careful about who we want to be associated because of our image. That is a risk (Red Cross Nederland #3, 25/06/2017).

In order to protect their image, intergovernmental agencies and NGOs have developed guidelines for private sector engagement (ICRC, 2002). Such tools work as preventive measures towards reputational damage.

These guidelines represent the official strategy adopted by UN agencies and NGOs to manage the risks of corporate involvement into HA and disaster relief and prevention. However, guidelines seem to address more the preservation of reputational capital necessary to access communities and to leverage companies than preventing a neoliberal redefinition of the sector.

#### 5.2.4 Conclusion

PPPs entail a dramatic shift of mutual perception among stakeholders. In this scenario, NGOs assume increasingly the role of brokering agencies between local communities and private companies as the cases of PfR, PREP and ARISE suggest. As Jones, Oven, Manyena and Aryal argue, “these networks (such as global platforms in the case of DRR) mobilize information, knowledge, and values with the objective of integrating new conceptions of (environmental) phenomena into everyday worldviews and practices of private and public actors. [...] These ‘networks’ can influence the direction of donor funding and approaches taken by multi-lateral agencies” (2014; p. 80). Building on the previous quote and the multiple examples exposed above, I argue that the PPP approach, adopted within the international resilience framework, leads to creation of platforms, or “networks”, where world leading NGOs link with multinationals, mostly based in the west, ultimately underpinning an uneven concentration of capital in the Global North. As a result, resilience fosters a narrative inherently favourable to those actors benefiting from a neoliberal global market economy that produced widespread poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and climate change. The paradoxical aspect lies in the fact that the actors (primarily the private sector) involved in community resilience programmes are the same actors whose global power positions were caused by the same economic rationale that is also largely responsible for the vulnerability of those communities.

#### 5.3 Socially responsible private sectors

It needs to be clear that it’s not about charity (DCHI, 02/08/2017).

Given its role of brokering agency in the humanitarian sector, the DCHI is in a privileged position to mediate among the interests of stakeholders involved in PPPs. The quote, from a DCHI officer, perfectly summarizes the private sector perspective.

The vast majority of corporates approach the humanitarian action and disaster relief sectors from a CSR perspective. The following section will problematize such standpoint in order to highlight more fundamental drivers of corporate engagement. The interviews have in fact shown a tension between social responsibility discourse and other profit driven motives such as positive branding and access to new markets.

### 5.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility rhetoric

The term began its history at the beginning of the XXth century, changing its features across the century (Carroll, 2009). Broadly speaking, the concept of CSR developed around the idea that companies have a broader responsibility towards environment and society. The idea that businesses have to endorse a perspective bigger than mere profit making echoes the concerns that a discourse on sustainable development was developing around the 1960s in the United States (Burchell & Cook, 2013).

Certainly, the first and most tangible form of CSR was philanthropy. It is hard to establish an accurate timeframe concerning the establishment of such a concept among corporates as it traces back to the beginning of the past century. However, philanthropy does not go as far as ascribing a normative framework to entrepreneurship. In other words, philanthropy was and is defined by its voluntary character. Nonetheless, philanthropy was vigorously entering the business management sector supported by a lively discourse on sustainable practices advocating against the depletion of the environment (Schrempf-Stirling *et al.*, 2015). Prior to that, the Great Depression of the '30s in the United States had such a lasting impact on collective memory that the principle of humanity started to appear as a balancing concept to oppose to uncontrolled profit making rationality (Carroll, 2009; Jenkins, 2005).

Even though “philanthropy continued as the most noticeable manifestation of CSR during the 1960s” (Carroll, 2009; pg. 28), the public opinion of the Global North was crossed by a growing discourse around consumers rights, working conditions and environment. The step forward with respect to philanthropy discourses was the increasing demand for such concerns to be part of formal governmental regulations (Carroll, 2009).

After the globalization period of the 90s, social movements in favour of social and environmental rights grew stronger until shaping the very idea of a larger responsibility for private companies towards the rest of society, the basic idea being that businesses are legitimized in making profits as long as it does not endanger the well being other social and environmental actors. In this light, the exploitation of natural resources, leading to environmental depletion and pollution, was perceived as something companies had to compensate for (Chaudary *et al.*, 2016).

The concept of CSR came then to include issues such as child labour, pollution, deforestation and human rights abuses. The UN definition provided an important improvement as it extended the definition of stakeholder of a company's interests to a broader set of social groups, exceeding the standard circle of suppliers, employees and clients.

The social responsibility of the private sector (also referred to as corporate social responsibility) concerns the relationships of a company not just with its clients, suppliers and employees, but also with other groups, and with the needs, values and goals of the society in which it operates. All these groups can be regarded as stakeholders in the company. Stakeholders can be identified as those individuals or groups of individuals that have an interest, or take an interest, in the behaviour of the company both within and outside its normal mode of operation. They therefore establish what the social responsibility of the company entails or, at least, how they perceive it to be (UN 2000: 2).

In its specificities the CSR discourse takes different shapes according to the mandate, size and sector the company is operating in. However, what is important to highlight is that CSR aims to break through the idea that a private business's sole responsibility lies in producing goods or providing services in a manner that is as efficient and profitable as possible. The core idea that the CSR discourse wants to underpin is that private businesses have a responsibility that is social. In this regard, the European Union (EU) definition mirrors the trajectory of the concept. CSR was firstly defined as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (European Commission, 2001). Ten years later the indication became "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society" (European Commission, 2011).

As one can deduce, essentially companies are held responsible for the impact they have on the environment and communities as they exploit resources to generate profits. The PPP approach comes into play when NGO collaboration is perceived as a tool through which to operationalize the compensation narrative that CSR fosters. Therefore, companies support social and environmental programmes, in partnership with NGOs or other groups involved in the protection of human rights, in order to compensate for their detrimental impact (Carroll, 2009).

However, a further analysis of CSR practice will show that, ultimately, the concept may be more about profitability than philanthropy.

### 5.3.2 The role of media and communication

The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami is relevant to our discussion also for the unprecedented level of media coverage (Brown & Minty, 2008). High exposure to global media had generated an unprecedented number of private and corporate cash and in-kind donations, and private companies providing logistical support causing the stalling of harbours and slowing down the humanitarian response (Binder & Witte, 2007). Despite this, the 2004 tsunami acted as a "catalytic event" (Ivi, pg. 11) teaching the importance of disasters and humanitarian action for positive branding purposes. Additionally, some argue that corporates have used CSR in order to draw the attention from critical contexts to more positive ones (Clark & Grantham, 2012), in this case using CSR as a brand insurance (Werther & Chandler, 2005). One interviewee at Oxfam International UK mirrored this view saying:

Yes, absolutely. I mean every company has different motives for doing this kind of things. In this global market you set yourself apart in whatever way you can, so it's good for the global brand to get involved in these things. Also, if you're doing good somewhere, or there's at least the perception that you're doing good, you have happier employees, you can recruit people better (Oxfam UK, 09/10/2017).

On a similar vein the respondent from DCHI commented as follows on the importance of visibility:

I think for the companies also there is this change where it becomes more important to show why they are socially responsible. Nobody wants to be seen as the bad money-making guy, or girl (DCHI, 02/08/2017).

At the occurrence of a disaster the private sector seems to be more eager to intervene through CSR initiative and PPPs. Disaster relief operations, in fact, offer optimal opportunity for communication strategy by a company. From a company perspective it is important to show commitment to its own stakeholders as well as the wider public (Du *et al.*, 2010). This applies to logistics giants (UPS), global retailers (Wal-Mart) or technology companies (Philips) equally.

The role of medias is therefore extremely nuanced, as it on the one hand is crucial to draw attention on humanitarian crises facilitating awareness among the wider public and mobilizing financial resources necessary to run relief operations (Brown & Minty, 2008). On the other hand, companies could use that media exposure as a valuable opportunity for rebranding purposes (Bendell, 2005). The line between CSR and strategic marketing would therefore be hardly distinguishable.

Although overall the private sector engagement in emergency response (along with other fields, healthcare for instance) cannot be reduced to a matter of marketing strategy, there are tangible and non-tangible benefits for businesses that decide to engage in DRM. Often disasters offer the case for a good PR strategy for corporates. These reputational gains are well understood from both parties. Businesses prefer highly respected NGOs to gain visibility and NGOs refuse to cooperate with businesses that may undermine their reputation (Gent *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, the role of CSR as marketing strategy is ultimately highlighted by the close link between CSR and communication. The case of the Philips Foundation is key as “each CSR team has Phillips employees, typically in communication or a similar role that is volunteering” (former Philips Foundation manager, 16/11/2017).

In light of the benefits in terms of positive visibility for the company global brand, PPPs are something private companies approach as a form of insurance (Werther & Chandler, 2005). As interviews suggest, CSR represents as a form of investment in marketing strategy. As one interviewee put it “I would also argue that you can never find the case of a company that would do it only to be a good guy or woman. I don’t think that altruism necessarily exists in this context; I mean there’s always a reason” (GPPI, 30/06/2017). To put it in more academic terms,

Information on the key motivations behind companies entering the market for humanitarian relief remains scarce. Interviewees often did not understand the purpose of our inquiries regarding their motivation for entering the market with a commercial approach. If at all, they answered by listing their strengths vis-à-vis the non-profits, or emphasised that a key rationale was to ‘help people in need’. However, as these companies are for-profit, it can be assumed that financial interest is a key inspiration for their engagement (Binder & Witte, 2007; pg. 22).

The passage is interesting for it not only conveys the same feeling of bewilderment I encountered when asking my interviewees about the risks of privatization of the DRM sector



but is also consistent with other critics that question whether a corporate interest can be non-economic in nature (Banerjee, 2008; Werther & Chandler, 2005).

This leads us to another key point. Given that corporations are strengthening their position as funding source in the development and relief sectors in accordance with CSR commitments, such funding is also conditional. As interviews and literature have shown, an important driver of PPP engagement is positive branding. By consequence, such positive publicity can only be provided by global NGOs with high reputational value. In light of this I argue that smaller NGOs will be marginalized by this new funding scheme while world leading NGOs will strengthen their global power positions. Answering whether more local, smaller NGOs will be disadvantaged one respondent reasoned,

Yes definitely, as with any type of mechanism if you've been doing it for a while you know what the risks and benefits are. You know how to minimize the risks and maximize the benefits, you have an infrastructure in place to negotiate these agreements, to manage these agreements, evaluate them, improve them. The ones that have been doing it for longer they simply have much more experience (CARE Nederland #3, 27/06/2017).

However, what I argue is that such possibility is not contingent on a matter of timeframe but is instead inherent to the drivers of corporate engagement. The next section will add another important element to the overall argument.

### 5.3.3 Access to new markets

If you look at the strategies I think a lot is about linking the Dutch private sector and increasing their market, particularly if you look at the water sector or the agribusiness sector. I think there's a lot of push from the government to work together and actually develop proposal together to make their [Dutch companies] market share bigger while at the same time talking about improving the well-being of people in poorer areas of the world (CARE Nederland #4, 04/09/2017).

The passage is crucial in highlighting another important driver of corporate collaboration with global NGOs. CSR commitment can in fact also translate into the opportunity to test the viability of new markets in developing countries. The quote from a Red Cross officer explains the way in which NGOs with a global scope are especially targeted.

Building relationships with an organization like Red Cross gives to corporates access to a market they would otherwise never be able enter. For example, to know where to start working in Africa is considered to be commercially very interesting. You have an interesting foothold if you get access to key stakeholders on the ground through humanitarian organizations. So access is also a big reason why (Red Cross Nederland #3, 25/06/2017).

Companies have therefore an additional interest in partnering with NGOs with a global network capable of reaching the most remote areas. The case of Philips, the Philips Africa Innovation Hub, aiming to bring investments in humanitarian products development, is

exemplary of such rationale. The creation of the platform “underlines the company’s commitment to invest in Africa. The Philips Africa Innovation Hub will work both on the creation of new inventions, as well as bringing these inventions to the market” ([www.philips.com](http://www.philips.com), latest access 20/01/2017). As the literature explains:

In considering emerging relationships between MNEs and locally based stakeholders such as NGOs, we see a range of potentially complementary benefits. The MNE brings size, scale, experience, and resources to the table and the NGO enables the MNE to access stakeholders that would be difficult to reach without the partnership (Oetzel & Doh, 2009; pg. 112).

Another interviewee moved one step forward by underlying the necessity of approaching PPPs from a market-based perspective. In fact, this would make the partnership functional and successful for all parties involved. In this regard, making the business case for private sector engagement seems to be the strategy many agencies and NGOs are developing. To use her words:

A lot of times you need to think, because you’re engaging with the private sector, I mean they are doing it for CSR but the main reason, if you want to get big investments, is that they need to get profits from it as well so if they do not see the case for this they are not so willing to get involved. So you basically need to make a business case for PPPs (former UNISDR officer, 31/07/2017).

This attitude, also supported by some literature (Dahan *et al.*, 2010; Schreck, 2011; Weber, 2008), contains arguments in favour of private sector itself, making the case for the financial benefits of engaging in DRM activities. In other words, it puts forward the financial reasons according to which the private sector should engage in DRR activities making it a business case. This is of course not the only document of the same fashion. *Disaster Management and Private Sectors* (Izumi & Shaw, 2015) is by all means one the most comprehensive efforts describing the state of the interaction between different business areas and their potential contribution to better disaster management. The book shares a pragmatist vein that pushes for the awareness of the impact of disasters on businesses. The following passage summarizes the beneficial interest that private sectors have in investing in resilience and disaster risk reduction.

There is a clear mutual interest for the public and private sectors to work together, as the private sector relies on the resilience of public infrastructure and services to conduct their businesses, and governments and communities depend on resilient business practices for a stable and sustainable economy (UNISDR, 2013; pg. 2).

This “clear mutual interest” easily opens the way to the introduction of efficiency discourse if the rationale adopted is borrowed from economic rationality. The paradox lies here in the fact that neoliberal discourse of efficiency, mobilized to improve the HA sector, seems to overlook the serious risks it entails. As Banerjee puts it, “the limitations of a market-based model of corporate social responsibility mirror the shortcomings of economic rationalism” (Banerjee, 2008; pg. 74). In this regard, not only the case of the Haitian earthquake of 2010 is eloquent but also the post-Katrina reconstruction efforts.

Among the consequences of this widespread privatization of relief and recovery were major cost overruns, mismanagement, corruption and profiteering, as well as a loss of transparency and accountability. The now notorious Road Home program, which was established by the state of Louisiana but operated by the consulting firm ICF International, is one among many examples of what can happen when companies that are responsible not to the public but to their government income sources and their shareholders are put in charge of critical recovery activities. By 2010, 5 years after Katrina, only 55% of the nearly 230,000 applicant households had received assistance. The remainder were disqualified, denied, or simply gave up on ever being able to receive assistance (Tierney, 2015; pg. 12).

If market access is corollary to a market-based interpretation of PPPs, it also underpins the overall argument of the thesis more comprehensively. In fact, building on the previous section, I argue that, being market access another key driver in corporate engagement, the private sector will seek partnerships with NGOs with the necessary scope and network to facilitate access in emerging markets; another factor contributing to marginalize smaller NGOs with respect to corporate funding.

#### 5.3.4 Conclusion

Since its origins in the 1960s, CSR discourse has known increasing popularity among the business community. Initially centred on philanthropic behaviour, the concept extended to indicate a broader responsibility of companies towards communities and environment.

However, a closer look at the motives in support of CSR commitment of companies revealed that a market-based rationale is still largely in place. The use of CSR projects for positive branding and the interest in PPPs for market access support this view. As the interviews with Red Cross Nederland and Philips Foundation reveal, the NGO network offers access to communities and markets that were a traditional NGO prerogative. In fact, the research has indicated in positive publicity an important driver from a corporate perspective. High media coverage in the aftermath of disasters and being associated to worldwide known NGOs with high reputational value translate into positive publicity for global brands. Moreover, the advantage of working with a global NGO includes also access to markets in developing countries that represent, today, an attractive opportunity for market expansion.

Considering the donor support of this pattern (the “aid & trade” policies discussed at Chapter 5.1.3 are a clear example of it), I argue that this will reinforce the power positions of western companies and world leading NGOs whilst smaller NGOs will be at the margins of corporate funding. The interview data from a programme officer at CARE Nederland acknowledged the presence of such pattern by adding that large NGOs will be also advantaged by previous experiences in the field of PPPs.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

### 6.1 Discussion

The previous chapters have attempted to shed light on a sensitive moment in the history of NGOs. In fact, if private sector engagement in development programmes worldwide traces back several decades, the spreading of such an approach to DM is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Among the possible models in which private companies engage into disaster relief operations, the PPP approach exhibits an unarguable momentum, promoted by all major international frameworks for DRR. The difference with other typologies, such as contracting and sub-contracting service delivery, lies in the fact that PPPs are non-commercial. This implies that companies do not receive money from donors, intergovernmental agencies or NGOs in exchange of their services. Rather, such a modality is characterised by common sharing of tasks, responsibilities, resources and benefits. In this regard, various actors work together in partnership, sharing knowledge and expertise, in order to achieve specific goals.

Via semi-structured interviews and literature review the research aimed to provide more clarity regarding the public narratives and private motives underpinning PPPs in disaster prevention and response. More specifically, the thesis has tried to uncover the underlying rationale of such an approach. Doing so enables us not only to identify the emergence of a new discourse in global disaster governance but, most importantly, to draw conclusions concerning the future of the disaster management sector.

PPPs have remarkable impacts on several levels. They challenge the identity and the traditional way of operating of NGOs. In fact, when looking at the history of NGOs it appears that NGO identity was deeply rooted in the mission of state-like actors in post-colonial contexts. In the traditional scenario, a specific rhetoric was allocating defined roles and identities to the actors involved. PPPs are the ultimate expression of the redefinition of such rhetoric.

The aim of this section is to connect more closely the theoretical framework to make sense of the research findings. Building on what the interviews and literature have shown, I argue that PPPs are the mark of a neoliberal turn in disaster governance. Until the 2000s, I argue, other ideological frameworks such as the end of colonization (hence the sense of moral obligation towards Europe's former colonies and the rise of humanitarian principles) or geopolitical agendas entrenched into Cold-War dynamics, defined the humanitarian sector. The appearance of a vigorous neoliberal discourse based on efficiency and efficacy entered the international community, approximately, on the turn of the third millennium.

This neoliberal turn and the current momentum for private sector are closely linked. A radical shift in framing of the private sector is in fact key element to the growing support of PPPs from the disaster governance. The private sector benefitted from a radical redefinition of its role since the adoption of the concept of resilience in disaster management.

The theoretical framework problematized resilience discourse by highlighting the ways in which it mirrors the adoption of neoliberalism in global governance. Borrowing from Foucault's governmentality approach, I argue that resilience promotes the production of

neoliberal subjectivities embracing the vision of a world too complex to govern where disasters can only be mitigated. In this neoliberal episteme, the responsibility for protection and safety shifts from the state to the citizen, responsible and autonomous. The governmentality aspect lies in the fact that such an episteme is a precondition to the introduction of resilience and its PPP approach at governance level.

What I argue is that resilience, by moving attention away from the socio-economic and political root-causes of disasters, resolves into a global discourse ultimately favourable to a neoliberal market economy. However, I attempted to push the argument a bit further by claiming that PPPs are not only favourable to the adoption of a market-based rationality in disaster governance but they ultimately promote an unequal distribution of global resources by promoting the concentration of capital in the west. The argument is complementary to Klein's Disaster Capitalism perspective. If not by turning disasters directly into profitable opportunities, companies nonetheless benefit from PPPs by being associated with reputable NGOs and by obtaining access to markets previously closed. The interviews with NGO workers and the Philips Foundation have demonstrated that market expansion represents a big driver of corporate engagement in disaster relief, hence the reading of PPPs also as valuable strategies to explore avenues for future investments.

The analysis of the drivers of donors, NGOs and the private sector, with the support of case studies and data from the interviews has corroborated this point by showing how PPPs translate into a dialogue between western-based corporations and world leading NGOs, also based in OECD countries, reinforcing an uneven global distribution of power. From the donor perspective, behind the call to bring efficiency into the disaster management sector, resilience discourse concedes an offloading of responsibilities while private sector development strategies give to governments the possibility to foster national economic interests by supporting domestic businesses over local ones. Global NGOs reshape their roles working increasingly as consultants or brokering agencies for companies. The benefits from PPPs are multiple. By partnering up with private companies NGOs access global networks, new technologies, knowledge and expertise capable of improving humanitarian performance. However, NGOs approach PPPs primarily with financial needs in mind. Companies, taking CSR discourse as a basis for their engagement into humanitarian programmes, obtain positive visibility and access to new markets.

Using data from the interviews and case studies from famous PPPs I tried to show how, despite the rhetoric on community resilience building, these type of partnerships do certainly have an impact on the ground while, ultimately, favouring the principles of extending the neoliberal world economy.

Building on the previous chapters I argue that this is extremely problematic for two main reasons. On the one hand PPPs bear a paradox lying in the fact that they foster the economic rationality based on the same market model that was at the origin of inequality, poverty and environmental degradation, which increased community vulnerability. To move to the second part of the main argument I refer to a quote from an NGO worker. When I asked about the potential risks of an extensive role of private companies as funding sources he reasoned

You see a lot of NGOs that have agreements with the private sector. The consequence is that especially the bigger companies are probably approached by a multitude of organizations that would like to cooperate. So I think there is also an increasing competition for the most likable favourite candidate. I don't know what that will lead to but...(Red Cross Nederland #2, 23/06/2017).

I take here the freedom to complete the reasoning. Based on the analysis of the drivers of the parties involved, I argue that the smaller NGOs will be at the margins of corporate funding ultimately reinforcing the dominant position of world leading NGOs.

What is more, the research did not find evidence supporting the governance discourse according to which the involvement of private sector would entail an automatic improvement of the system. Quite the opposite, in fact, as the case has shown how the introduction of neoliberal rationales and private actors can take a problematic turn. Nonetheless, the literature and the interviews reveal an increasing presence of private actors in disaster management.

## 6.2 Conclusion

As I tried to provide a larger picture in which the interest in private sector involvement is thriving, the interviews with NGO workers have proven key in confirming a wider pattern I perceived from my internship experience at CARE Nederland.

To answer my initial research question concerning what a growing involvement of the private sector in disaster relief and response might entail for the future of the NGO sector, I mobilized theories, empirical research and literature. To finally summarize the main argument, I claim that PPPs in DM are the expression of a neoliberal discourse in disaster governance that, paradoxically, underpins and furthers an unequal distribution of global capital by strengthening the accumulation of capital into western-based groups. The same economic rationale that was at the origins of global issues such as poverty, inequality and environmental degradation is now proposed as remedy to community vulnerability. Based on the drivers behind PPPs, I claim that a rise in inequality is to be expected in the NGO sector as the private sector strengthens its donor position. In fact, corporations will privilege global NGOs that can offer positive visibility and market access, while local NGOs become more marginalized.

Concerning the limitations of the research, a larger participation from the corporate side would have helped to build a more complete understanding of its perspective. The company contacted (H&M) chose to decline. The same applies for donor agencies. As it is usually easier to access policy makers and government officials through a third party, my informants did not provide me with access to that network. A larger sample would have helped to provide more nuances, however, interesting avenues for future research remain.

Out of my experience, a much more critical debate, both in academia and civil society, urges exploration. It is my opinion that a critical perspective on HA and DM can be highly beneficial in drawing attention to the political causes of disasters. We cannot prevent an earthquake from happening, but we can investigate, collectively, why a community was living in a disaster prone area, why were they living in precarious conditions, and how urbanization

contributes to the impact of disasters. These and many other questions are worth exploring. Last but not least, what is the correlation between PPPs and the companies' performances on the stock market, for example? That could shed light on the connection between PPPs, CSR, disaster engagement and profitability. Reversely, how do we prevent stock exchange performance influencing the involvement of private companies in humanitarian aid? A multitude of perspectives can answer such questions, however, a critical one is better equipped to investigate them because of its ability to raise the issue in the first place.



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