

# **How is Water Privatisation Justified? Frame Analysis of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).**

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**Tiivistelmä:** Tutkielman lähtökohtana on oletus, että neoklassisesta talusteoriasta voidaan johtaa erityinen oikeusteoria, joka selittää veden yksityistämisen oikeutuksen. Tutkielman tavoitteena on kuvailla miten ja miksi veden yksityistämistä oikeutetaan kolmen tutkimuskysymyksen avulla: Minkälaisia ongelmia voidaan tunnistaa puhtaan juomaveden saannissa? Minkälaisia yksityistämistoimenpiteitä ehdotetaan näiden ongelmien ratkaisemiseksi? Miten näitä veden yksityistämistoimenpiteitä oikeutetaan? Tutkimuskysymykset kontekstualisoidaan tarkastelemalla kattavasti veden yksityistämisen historiaa ja nykyistä asemaa osana laajempaa neoliberaalia projektia sekä tutkimalla neoklassisen talusteorian normatiivista taustaa Pareto-optimaalisuuteen liittyvän käsitteistön avulla.

Tutkimuksen aineistona käytetään 25:tä köyhyydenvähennysstrategiapaperia (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers), jotka 25 matalan tulotason maata ovat julkaisseet yhteistyössä Maailmanpankin ja Kansainvälisen valuuttarahaston kanssa vuosina 2010-2014. Aineistoa tarkastellaan pääosin laadullisen tutkimuksen keinoin hyödyntämällä niin sisältö- kuin kehysanalyysiä tutkimusmenetelminä.

Aineiston analyysin aikana esiin nousi ensiksi se, että huolimatta vesiongelmiensa laajuudesta ja suurista eroavaisuuksista, veden saannin ongelmat liittyivät pääasiallisesti veden epätasaiseen ja -oikeudenmukaiseen jakoon eikä niinkään veden aineelliseen niukkuuteen. Toiseksi tutkimus löysi kolme veden yksityistämistoimenpiteen strategiaa, joita olivat yksityistämisen strategia, kaupallistamisen strategia ja hallinnon vapauttamisen strategia. Viimeiseksi tutkimus löysi aineistoa tarkastelemalla neljä pääkehystä. Nämä kehykset olivat edistyksen kehys, taloudellisen hyödykkeen kehys, hallituksen vastainen kehys ja oikeuskehys.

Tutkimustulokset viittaavat siihen, että veden yksityistämistoimenpiteet enenevässä määrin hämärtävät 'julkisen' ja 'yksityisen' välisen eron. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että 'julkinen' toimii jo pitkälti markkinalogiikan mukaan eikä ero veden yksityistämisen ja valtion ohjauksen välillä ole enää yhtä merkittävä. Nämä toimenpiteet ovat oikeutettuja neoklassisesta talusteoriasta johdetun oikeusteorian avulla, joka pohjautuu Pareto-optimaalisuuteen. Näin kansainväliset rahoituslaitokset ja valtiot voivat paradoksaalisesti mahdollistaa vesihuoltojärjestelmien yksityistämistoimenpiteet, koska Pareto-optimaalisuus pyrkii luomaan utopistiset täydellisen kilpailun olosuhteet, missä vesiresurssit jaetaan kaikista tehokkaimmalla ja näin myös kaikista oikeudenmukaisimmalla tavalla.

## Abstract

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**Abstract:** The premise of this thesis is that neoclassical economics as a particular theory of justice explains the justification of water privatisation. Hence, the aim of the study is to describe how and why water privatisation is justified by asking three research questions: What problems are distinguished in relation to access to safe drinking water? What privatisation measures are proposed as solutions? How are these water privatisation measures justified? These research questions are contextualised by providing a comprehensive account on the history and present status of water privatisation within the neoliberal project and examining the normative basis of neoclassical economics via the concept of Pareto optimality.

This is done by analysing 25 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) that were published by 25 low-income countries under the guidance of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during 2010-2014. These PRSPs are examined through content analysis and frame analysis in a largely qualitatively manner.

In the analysis of PRSPs, the thesis found, first, that although the problems in relation to access to water were highly varied, the uneven and unequal access to water was more prevalent than physical water scarcity issues. Secondly, three strategies of privatisation measures were identified in PRSPs: strategy of privatisation, strategy of commercialisation and strategy of liberalisation of governance. Finally, the study found four principal frames justifying water privatisation in PRSPs. These frames were development frame, economic good frame, anti-government frame and right frame.

The results suggest that water privatisation measures increasingly blur the distinction between 'public' and 'private'. This implies that the 'public' is largely guided by the market logic, and thus the difference between water privatisation and public sector control is increasingly irrelevant. These privatisation measures are justified by drawing on neoclassical economics as a theory of justice that is based on Pareto optimality. This way, international financial institutions (IFIs) and states can paradoxically allow for privatisation measures in water supply systems since it can ideally create the conditions for perfect competition whereby water resources become allocated in the most efficient, and thus in the most just way.

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# 1. Introduction

Water privatisation has been a heatedly debated topic during the past three decades. Around 1.6 billion people lack access to necessary water infrastructure, and four billion people face physical water scarcity for at least one month per year. Indeed, freshwater resources are under increasing stress due to climate change, population growth, economic development and shifting consumption habits (UNESCO 2020: 1-18). Water-related hazards, such as droughts and floods, are becoming increasingly intense and frequent<sup>1</sup> (Bakker 2018: 9; Woodhouse and Muller 2017: 225). South Africa, for example, has been suffering with more or less on-going drought for almost seven years in some parts of the country (Vollgraaff 2020). In conjunction, the global population is growing reaching around 9.7 billion in 2050 and expected to peak at nearly 10.9 billion in 2100 (UN DESA 2019: 1). This puts pressure on global food production as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2017: 4) estimates that 60% more food will be needed to feed the growing population by 2050. In fact, agriculture accounts for around 70% of all the global freshwater abstractions (FAO 2017: 2). According to the OECD (2012: 4), global water demand is going to increase by 55% by 2050. Unsurprisingly, water related crises and conflicts have been repeatedly identified as one of the major risks facing humanity in the future<sup>2</sup> (Woodhouse and Muller 2017: 225). Due to increasing freshwater demands and its growing scarcity, water has been identified as the ‘new oil/gold’ of the future (Bieler 2019: 131; Ward 2017; Flood 2018):

*“Water is the ‘blue gold’ of the 21st century. There is no substitute.”*

*(Noel O’Halloran, chief investment officer of KGI Global Investors, cited in Flood 2018)*

However, water is a highly renewable flow resource (Biro 2012: 86). Therefore, the materiality of water, unlike land, affects the availability of water, which fluctuates across time and space (Franco et al. 2013: 1652). Water is interconnected and not easily bounded above or below ground making it difficult to establish, for example, property rights to the resource. Furthermore, water is dense making its transportation difficult and expensive relative to value. Due to these biophysical properties and human water use, Bakker (2003b: 47-50) has described water as an

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<sup>1</sup> Developing countries, in particular, suffer from, what Briscoe (2009: 3) calls, ‘bad hydrology’ – i.e., there is a growing demand in water whilst there are smaller endowments in water infrastructure, more fragile institutions and more variability in relation to climate change.

<sup>2</sup> The notion of ‘water insecurity’ refers to the insufficient access to water that is required to meet necessary water needs and the inability to adapt to water-related disasters on the individual and global level (Abedin et al. 2013: 7).

‘uncooperative commodity’. Indeed, there are several market failures in relation to water supply: first, water supply infrastructure is an exemplary case of a ‘natural monopoly’. Simply put, production of a commodity is cheaper when only one company supplies the commodity (Lehto 1997: 9). Water production is capital-intensive and reliant on infrastructure of pipes and pumps; a new entrant to the water market has to be a certain size in order to realise economies of scale, thus making competition difficult and characterising markets by a single seller (Bayliss 2014: 293; George 1999; Bakker 2018: 8). Secondly, water production creates ‘externalities’ that are not taken into account in the price mechanism. For example, negative externalities, such as pollution, can be displaced via water’s materiality as a flow resource (Bakker 2003b: 47). Thirdly, markets tend to fail to provide public goods that are related to water supply since profit-making strategies are not necessarily accompanied by important ethical concerns (Bakker 2018: 9).

Despite of the difficulties in commodifying water, privatisation became a key policy in water delivery in the late 1980s. Following the economic shocks of the 1970s, state budgets started to attract increasing attention, and thus discussion shifted from the aforementioned ‘market failures’ to ‘state failures’ (Bayliss 2014: 294-295). For example, during the period between 1990 to 2005, 55 developing countries had experimented with private sector participation in the water sector (Prasad 2007: 227). However, even at the peak of privatisation expansion in 2000, the proportion of the world’s largest cities with private water supply was only around 11% (Hall and Lobina 2012: 128). Although privatisation efforts have slowed down after the turn of the millennium, private sector participation in the water sector is still heavily promoted by international financial institutions (IFIs), governments and private water companies (McDonald 2018a: 48; Lobina 2017: 152) According to Powell and Yurchenko (2020: 102), in 2015, 18% of the world’s cities with a population over one million were serviced by private providers suggesting a slow but growing number of private sector contracts in the urban water sector. Whilst some legal developments are making the remunicipalisation of water easier<sup>3</sup>, there are also new trade and investment agreements – such as the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) – that seek further liberalisation and privatisation of services, which could hinder future remunicipalisation efforts (McDonald 2018a: 54).

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in France, a legal amendment was passed, which ordered that the maximum length for water and sanitation contracts could not surpass 20 years. Whilst in Germany, clarifications to the pricing of public and private assets were legislated (McDonald 2018a: 54).

## 1.1 Research Questions and Relevance

The premise of the study is the supposition that neoclassical economics as a theory of justice explains the justifications behind water privatisation measures. Although water privatisation has been studied at length, as Bruns and Frick (2014: 242) argue, there is a lack of critical socio-scientific research on water, in particular, on society-water interactions in the global Anthropocene. This thesis will look specifically at the influence of neoclassical economics as a theory of justice in creating the guiding principles of water (meta)governance, thus providing an insightful perspective on the power of frames and framings in shaping the current water governance paradigm on privatisation. Despite of the wide array of research on water and water privatisation, the global consensus on the impact of water privatisation remains unequivocal<sup>4</sup>. In the wider societal context of the changing environment, it is of the utmost importance for policymakers to take into account the broader societal and environmental consequences in designing and implementing policies on water – whether these policies support water privatisation or not – and critically evaluate these. As Rein and Schön (1993: 150) argue, ‘frame reflection’ is an increasingly important policy discourse whereby “taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie people’s apparently natural understanding and actions in a problematic policy situation” are identified in order to highlight and disclose stubborn policy controversies.

The purpose of the study is to *describe* how and why water privatisation is justified with regards to specific frames and framing processes. This is done by analysing 25 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) that were published by 25 low-income countries under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank during 2010-2014. The thesis asks three empirical research questions:

1. What sort of water scarcity issues are identified in relation to access to safe drinking water?
2. What sort of water privatisation measures are proposed in PRSPs to tackle the identified water scarcity issues?
3. How are these water privatisation measures justified?

The three research questions look for rich and systematic descriptions of the meaning of complex circumstances represented in the research data (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 122; Marshall and Rossman 2011: 68-69). The first two questions will be examined through content analysis in a largely

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Willner (1997) and Prasad (2006).

qualitative manner. The last research question binds the above questions together to ask why and how these water privatisation measures are justified. In order to answer the latter question, this study will rely on frame analysis by, first, applying the ‘signature matrix’ introduced by Gamson and Lasch (1981). Secondly, the framing process scheme developed by van Hulst and Yanow (2016) will be operationalised to provide a more in-depth analysis of frames and the framing process.

In order to answer the research questions introduced above, the thesis will be structured as follows: first, analysis of the key concepts regarding water privatisation, water crises and neoclassical economics are provided in Chapter 2. This will set the conceptual background for the study. Secondly, research data and methods as well as the epistemological and ontological foundations of the study are described in Chapter 3. Thirdly, Chapter 4. is dedicated to a rough summary of the wide array of literature on water privatisation. Due to the large amount of prior research done on the topic, this thesis will only scrape the surface of the main debates and discussions around the framing of water. Fourthly, Chapter 5. presents a detailed account of the findings inferred from the research data. Fifthly, these findings are critically analysed in Chapter 6., and their implications considered in the larger context of water privatisation and the current water (meta)governance paradigm. Finally, the thesis will conclude with Chapter 7. by summarising the results and arguments arrived at in the study. Also, the limitations of the study are considered and possibilities for further research are explored.



## 2. Conceptual Background

*This chapter will briefly define and contextualise the key concepts used in this study. First, the term water privatisation is defined by looking at different ways water supply systems can be privatised as a continuum. Furthermore, water privatisation is situated in the broader historical context of the neoliberal project in order to understand, on one hand, the wave of privatisations of water and, on the other hand, the counterwave of remunicipalisations of water. Secondly, the problem of 'global water crisis' is critically analysed and redefined as a problem of multitudinous local economic water scarcities. Finally, the viability of neoclassical economics, which is part and parcel of the neoliberal project, as a theory of justice is examined. The thesis will argue that through the concept of 'Pareto optimality', neoclassical economics can be conceptualised as a theory of justice in order to analyse it as a justification for water privatisation.*

### 2.1 Water Privatisation

Privatisation refers to the change in ownership from the public sector to the private sector. In the case of water, the ownership or management of water supply infrastructure (and on rare occasions water resources<sup>5</sup>) is transferred to private individuals or companies (Flores 2011: 2; Bakker 2018: 2). The level of privatisation of the water supply infrastructure varies from a full transfer of ownership to temporary transfers of control whereby the extent of private sector involvement depends on the model of divestiture (Budds and McGranahan 2003: 89). The main models of private sector involvement include service and management contracts wherein a private contractor assumes responsibility for specific operations and/or maintenance of the water utilities for a certain period of time. Secondly, under leases and affermage contracts, responsibility of all the operation and maintenance functions of the water supply system, including billing and revenue collection, is transferred to the private sector. Thirdly, long-term concession contracts allow private contractors to control the entire utility and invest in its maintenance and expansion. In the case of BOT (Build-Own-Transfer) type of contracts, the private contractor is usually involved in the construction of the water supply infrastructure and selling the supply to the government. Finally, in the divestiture model, the government sells the water business permanently to a private company (Budds and McGranahan 2003: 90). However, most water privatisation measures involve some sort of contractual agreement between the state and the private sector instead of a full transfer of ownership<sup>6</sup> (Bakker 2003a: 329; Budds and McGranahan 2003: 90).

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Mehta et al. (2012) and Franco et al. (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Divestiture models have only been adopted on rare occasions, such as in England and Chile. These water companies operate under strict commercial rules and regulation (Budds and McGranahan 2003: 90).

In fact, according to Hukka and Katko (2003: 143), debates around water and sewerage services should refrain from employing the term ‘privatisation’, if the water business, including infrastructure, is not fully sold to the private sector as in the divestiture model (Kumlin 2016: 38; Budds and McGranahan 2003: 90). Only when full or material privatisation takes place can the term ‘privatisation’ be referred to. As most of the private sector involvement in the water supply systems occur in the form of contractual arrangements between the state and the private company whereby responsibilities and risks are shared, Hukka and Katko (2003: 143) argue that reference to ‘public-private partnerships’ (PPPs) is a more accurate term to describe the water services provision (Bakker 2003a: 329; Budds and McGranahan 2003: 90). Furthermore, the authors recommend employing the term ‘commercialisation’ when the performance and evaluation of water services under the public sector improve through the incorporation of market-derived business models and institutions (norms, rules and customs) that follow commercial principles (Hukka and Katko 2003: 143; Bakker 2018: 7). Indeed, when employing the term ‘privatisation’ in reference to any sort of private sector involvement in the water supply sector, the term becomes operationalised in a broader category, and thus processes of water privatisation can be found in greater numbers.

Whether or not this is desirable depends on the aim of the study. Water privatisation debates are saturated with conflicting interests. Yet, the term ‘partnership’ implies some sorts of shared objectives between the public sector and the private sector (Budds and McGranahan 2003: 88-89). Although partnerships can, indeed, be viewed as governance tools that combine ‘the best of both worlds’, it is also considered to be a more acceptable term for privatisation and outsourcing<sup>7</sup> (Rusca and Schwartz 2012: 116). Herein the emphasis on ‘partnerships’ deters the focus of the thesis away from the questions of *how* water is privatised and *why*. Furthermore, it obscures the various ways in which the private sector is involved in the water supply systems, and how the boundaries between ‘public’ and ‘private’ are constantly being blurred (Narsiah 2010: 379). If privatisation is considered purely as a transfer of ownership from the public sector to the private sector, the extent to which the *process* of privatisation in the water sector has already taken place is obfuscated (Ahlens 2010: 219; Budds and McGranahan 2003: 88). According to Bakker (2003b: 40), water management options should be conceived of as a continuum instead of a monolithic ‘public’ to ‘private’ transformation to better reflect the organisational and institutional shifts within the water sector from the state towards

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the director of the International Private Water Association, Kathy Shandling (cited in Bond 2004: 20) has stated that: “We don’t use the word privatization. Not anymore. We use the term public-private partnerships. Privatization is a bad word” (Kumlin 2016: 38). Furthermore, Prasad (2007: 233) notes that the free-market approach in the water sector is still dominant but it is merely “repackaged through different terminologies”.

market logic and private sector control. Moreover, Bakker (2002: 768-769) maintains, that privatisation refers to the interaction between processes of privatisation and commercialisation that are transforming the water sector in different ways depending on time and space.

Indeed, privatisation usually entails commercialisation – yet does not necessitate it as, for example, in some developing countries concessions are made to poorer consumers – whereby the public sector mimics the governance techniques of the private sector, and thus replaces Keynesian-welfarist techniques by neoliberal principles in policymaking (Narsiah 2010: 375; Bakker 2003a: 331). This relates to the changing role of the state that, in the context of the water sector, Bakker (2003b: 55) calls a shift from a ‘state hydraulic’ to ‘market conservation’ mode of water supply regulation. Moreover, this shift reflects the global structural transformation from strong state involvement to reliance on the markets; former state responsibilities are distributed and delegated among the state and private actors along a continuum of private sector involvement (Ahlers 2010: 214; Bakker 2003b: 38; Bakker 2018: 7). Hence, this thesis will employ the definition of water privatisation provided by Budds and McGranahan (2003: 89) according to whom privatisation<sup>8</sup> “refers to processes that increase the participation of formal private enterprises in water and sanitation provision but do not necessarily involve the transfer of assets to the private operator”. More broadly, following Narsiah (2008: 22), this study will look at privatisation as a historically constituted discursive practice and strategy that emerged as part of the neoliberal project as an objection to state intervention.

### 2.1.1 History of Water Privatisation within the Neoliberal Project

‘Neoliberalism’ as a term is difficult to define precisely due to its ambiguous nature. Several ideological positions, discursive representations and institutional practices are attached to *the* neoliberal project (Gilbert 2013; McCarthy and Prudham 2004: 276). Furthermore, the term ‘neoliberalism’ is used most frequently by its very critics – left-wing researchers, journalists and political activists. According to Castree (2010: 1729), neoliberalisation should be conceived as “a multiscalar, geographically uneven phenomena not the sort of singular, coherent thing signified by the concept of ‘neoliberalism’”. Similarly, Narsiah (2010: 376) argues, that neoliberalism aims at creating a homogeneous economic space yet varying in its effects, applications and institutionalisations. In broad terms, neoliberalism implies a way of conducting social life that gives

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<sup>8</sup> Some scholars, such as Prasad (2007; 2006), prefer reference to private sector participation (PSP). However, as this dissertation analyses instances of privatisation more broadly, including the divestiture model, the study will, as argued, refer to the term ‘privatisation’ (including PSP).

priority to the ‘free market’; by allowing individuals to buy and sell on free competitive markets, everyone benefits as if led by Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ (Castree 2010: 1726; McCarthy and Prudham 2004: 276; George 1999). Indeed, neoliberalism combines the basic principles of classical economics and neoclassical marginal economics (Narsiah 2010: 375). Castree (2010: 1728) has identified seven characteristics comprising the neoliberal project: privatisation; marketisation; deregulation; market-friendly *re*-regulation; commercialisation of the public sector; encouragement of ‘flanking mechanisms’ in civil society to fill the vacuum left by state diminution; and creation of ‘self-sufficient’ individuals and communities. These dimensions can be distinguished as ‘neoliberal’, although not necessarily practiced or applied in a similar manner across time and space.

The rise of neoliberalism can be traced back to Milton Friedman and the monetarist Chicago School of economics largely influenced by the works of Friedrich von Hayek. These ideas gained political impact as actual government programmes in the ‘Chilean experiment’ following Pinochet’s coup in 1971, and later through the election of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ronald Reagan in the United States (US) (Gilbert 2013: 7-9; Narsiah 2010: 376). Privatisation of public assets became a way of articulating this new economic consensus of neoliberalism in the 1980s and the 1990s<sup>9</sup>. Beginning in the UK in the late 1980s, privatisation of formerly state-owned assets, such as water supply systems, became more widespread leading David Harvey (2005: 148) to refer to this state-led strategy as ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Bieler and Jordan 2018: 939-941). According to this notion, states play a pivotal role in pillaging nature and ‘the commons’ by creating conditions for privatisation and securing their profitable operation (Liverman 2004: 734; Swyngedouw 2005: 89). Privatisation is, indeed, enabled by government policies – not by the ‘invisible hand’ (Bayliss 2006: 158). According to Swyngedouw (2005: 83), the privatisation of urban water supply systems, in particular, has become an important testing ground for these national and global neoliberal policies; herein, the tactics of accumulation by dispossession are at play. George (1999: para 16) has called this wave of privatisations as “one of the major economic transformations of the past twenty years”.

Furthermore, in the early 1990s privatisation, along with the market-friendly ideals of the ‘Washington Consensus’, became a key policy also in development economics (Bayliss 2006: 151-153; Bond 2004: 19). According to Narsiah (2010: 374), neoliberalism became the hegemonic discourse of development. These neoliberal aims came to be articulated in the developing countries

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<sup>9</sup> These neoliberal policies became to be known as TINA (‘there is no alternative’) (Fine and Hall 2012: 50).

through various economic measures, such as fiscal austerity, export-oriented production and the privatisation of public sector services. For example, the economic literature of the World Bank shifted dramatically from the focus on market structure to the significance of ownership *per se* as means to widespread economic benefits (Bayliss 2006: 152). On this basis, privatisation requirements became linked to aid conditionalities, for example, in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Latin America and in numerous developing countries in Africa. This expansion of privatisation was carried out by a small group of French and English water companies that were backed up by the aid conditionalities of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Bieler and Jordan 2018: 941). Although the push for privatisation loosened during the late 1990s within the context of the so-called ‘post-Washington Consensus’, that recognised the diversity of different economies and the importance of strong institutional frameworks and competition in enabling the markets to work, the priority of private sector participation in bringing about economic benefits has remained entrenched in development economics<sup>10</sup> (Bayliss 2006: 153; see also Alston 2018).

### 2.1.2 ‘Strategic Retreat’ or ‘Shallow Expansion’?

The minimal successes, and in some cases outright failures<sup>11</sup>, of water privatisation mounted evidence around the world’s cities during the late 1990s. Although the effects of water privatisation have not been identical nor invariably unsuccessful across the globe, Lobina (2017: 152) listed few of the main failed promises of water privatisation: on one hand, there has been disappointments with the poor operational performance of the private sector; underinvestment; disputes over operational costs and price hikes; highly increased water bills; lack of financial transparency; workforce cuts and poor service quality. On the other hand, there has been difficulties and high costs in monitoring and regulating private operators. In addition, McDonald and Swyngedouw (2019: 323) recognised the lack of credible bidders for private contracts as well as the broader dissatisfaction with some of the adverse socio-economic and ecological impacts of privatisation and neoliberal deregulation policies

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<sup>10</sup> For example, according to a study conducted by the European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD 2018), conditions for the IMF-supported loans had, in fact, increased for programmes approved in 2016 and 2017 compared to those approved in 2011 and 2013. These conditions also included 30 structural conditions on privatisation (including public enterprise restructuring) (EURODAD 2018: 13). See also World Bank (2018).

<sup>11</sup> For example, perhaps the best-known case is the Cochabamba Water War in Bolivia in 2000. Following the privatisation of the Cochabamba’s water supply system in 1999, water tariffs soared leading to mass protests in the major Bolivian cities in the spring of 2000 (Swyngedouw 2005: 97; Finnegan 2002). Other unsuccessful water privatisation cases include cities, such as Berlin, Atlanta, Dar es Salaam and Lagos as well as cases in Bolivia, Tanzania, Indonesia and in parts of Europe (Terhorst 2014; Jehl 2003; Vidal 2005; Vidal 2015).

as additional reasons for the recent trend of water *remunicipalisation*<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, Kishimoto et al. (2015: 17) identified an increase in the number of water *remunicipalisations* – i.e., the return of previously privatised water supply systems to public service delivery – from 2 cases in 2000 to 235 cases by 2015. These include transfers of water services from any model of divestiture to public ownership, management and democratic control. Combined with the fact that, nonetheless, water supply infrastructure has historically remained a public sector service, Lobina (2017) argues, that the tide is turning *against* water privatisation (Hall and Lobina 2012: 128).

As the number of terminations and *remunicipalisations* of privatised contracts are growing, many French and English private water companies have started to withdraw from their international operations, in particular, in developing countries<sup>13</sup> (Lobina 2017: 149-150; Bieler and Jordan 2017: 941). This ‘strategic retreat’ by the private water companies and public authorities has been largely driven by low profitability, criticism by the shareholders and increasing resistance by the civil society that is fuelled by the inability of the private sector to deliver on their promises of efficiency and sustainability (Bieler and Jordan 2017: 941; Powell and Yurchenko 2020: 94). Consequently, McDonald and Swyngedouw (2019: 323) estimate that the *remunicipalisation* of water will grow in the medium term. However, they argue that this growth will not likely sustain in the long term due to the growing differences within the *remunicipalisation* movement<sup>14</sup>, fiscal restraints that force governments to privatise, increase in legal barriers against *remunicipalisation* efforts and the strong opposition from powerful water agencies. For example, the international financial institutions (IFIs), some UN agencies and professional water associations, such as the World Water Council (WWC) and Global Water Partnership (GWP), continue to support water privatisation financially and ideologically (Lobina 2017: 152; McDonald 2018a: 48; Bakker 2010: 75).

Indeed, according to a study conducted by Powell and Yurchenko (2020), despite the presence of the global trend of *remunicipalisation* of water, there is also an indication of a new wave of privatisations taking place in larger cities around the world. Focusing on cities with a population over one million, Powell and Yurchenko (2020: 94) discovered that during the period between 2000

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<sup>12</sup> Various terms have been used to describe the phenomenon, such as de-privatisation, reclaiming public services back in public hands, in-sourcing and social reappropriation. Although ‘*remunicipalisation*’ by definition refers to the municipal level, herein the term is also used to refer to the regional and national level (McDonald 2018a: 47; Lobina 2015: 7).

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, rural areas, wherein 75% of the developing world’s poor population live, have largely been serviced by the public sector (Powell and Yurchenko 2020 94-95). Private water companies have not been interested in investing in rural water supply systems; thus, questioning the strategy of delivering safe drinking water to the poorest of the world through private provision (see, for example, Veolia 2019). Indeed, private sector investment tends to flow to countries with higher levels of connection rates or reforms in the water sector (Prasad 2007: 228-229). See also Gilbert (2007).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, McDonald (2018a).

and 2015, 56 cities transferred from public to private provision whilst only 21 cities remunicipalised their water during the same period. Also, the record for the highest level of overall privatisation transactions was reached in 2015 (over 300 billion US dollars), beating the previous record set in 2009 (McDonald 2018a: 48). For example, the number of private operators, in particular, in the East and South Asia as well as in the Middle East is growing significantly (Powell and Yurchenko 2020: 102). This has led scholars, such as Pierce (2015) and Bakker (2013), to argue that a new wave of privatisations known as the ‘shallow expansion’ is taking place. Learning from the failures of the previous privatisations, it is “continuing to retreat in some areas but spreading to others” (Pierce 2015: 191-120). Similarly, Pierce (2015) argues that instead of a U-turn in privatisation there is a new geography of water privatisation; the focus has shifted to countries with a more secure profit base (Bakker 2018: 6).

Indeed, Bakker (2003a: 330-331) has identified four characteristics that can distinguish the current wave of privatisations, or the ‘shallow expansion’, from the previous one: the scale of the multinational companies involved in the water sector; the amount of finance mobilised; the ideological and financial support from key actors in international finance to private water companies; and water privatisation becoming a part of the debate over state legitimacy and state indebtedness. In addition, according to Fine and Hall (2012: 53-55), after the ‘shock therapy’ of the first wave of privatisations and the Washington Consensus, the support for private sector and the preparation of the public sector for private sector involvement in the water sector is increasingly done via corporatisation/commercialisation – i.e., the operation of state bureaucracies by commercial principles. The strategy of the divestiture model has, indeed, fallen out of fashion with cities and private companies as opposed to commercialisation (Pierce 2015: 126). This trend towards the restructuring of the state to emulate private sector practises is usually a covert process whereby market logic becomes internalised within state bureaucracies with little consideration for democratic accountability, thus further confusing the boundaries between ‘private’ and ‘public’ (Smith 2004: 375-377; McDonald and Swyngedouw 2019: 325). Even in cities where water has not been privatised, there has been a push to pursue commercialisation of water utilities, which Bayliss (2014: 295) argues, helps to focus on efficiency goals and facilitate private sector involvement at a later date.

Furthermore, according to Fine and Hall (2012: 53-55), in addition to the increasing complexity, the current era of neoliberalism is characterised by the process of financialisation – i.e., the growing prevalence and influence of financial markets, financial incentives, financial institutions and financial elites in the economy and its governing institutions as well as the greater influence that

these have on economic policies and outcomes (Bayliss 2014: 294). According to Bayliss (2014: 295), privatisation has laid the groundwork for financialisation by transforming public services into tradable assets. Finance has both promoted as well as benefitted from privatisation whilst the interests of private capital have become more aligned with those of finance (Fine and Hall 2012: 53). This process has created a global infrastructure market that provides capital with new profitable investment opportunities. Various international banks and investment institutions have, indeed, identified water as an important profitable investment opportunity (Bieler and Jordan 2018: 939). Consequently, complex financial instruments have been created in the water sector in order to satisfy the interests of private financial capital (over the needs of the society for infrastructure investment); in fact, at least four major water-related exchange traded funds (ETFs) have been created since 2005 (Bayliss 2014: 298-301). In the anticipation of scarcity together with the growing demand, the global water market is expected to value at about 914 billion US dollars in 2023 (Bayliss 2014: 301; World Water Exchange 2018).

## 2.2 ‘Global Water Crisis’

Water is a subtractable resource, thus it can potentially become scarce (Ahlers, 2010: 214). According to the United Nations (UN) (2021a: 7), almost up to 26% of the world’s population lacked access to safe drinking water services in 2020. For example, the World Economic Forum (2021: 14) has ranked ‘water crises’ in its top five ‘Global Risks by Impact’ list consecutively from 2012 to 2020 putting it under ‘natural resource crises’ in 2021. Globally, people that are the most affected by water scarcity are people living in predominantly poor and rural areas. Indeed, many developing countries suffer from extremely arid climates that tend to be subject to more intense seasonal and spatial water scarcities (Biro, 2012: 86). It has been predicted that, in particular, India, northern China, north and sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and some parts of Eastern Europe are regions that will be the most prone to water scarcity in the coming years (Srinivasan et al. 2012: 1). Unsurprisingly, the literature on ‘global water crisis’ and the potential ‘water wars’ has been widespread particularly in numerous newspaper articles<sup>15</sup> as well as in reports and publications by different NGOs, such as the UN (2021b) and the World Bank (2021).

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Harvey (2021), Layne (2021) and Milne (2021).



The notion of ‘global water crisis’ can be traced back to the early 1990s<sup>16</sup>. This particular discourse determines the problem as one of global water availability resulting from increasing demand and environmental degradation (Linton 2004: 1-2; Bruns and Frick 2014: 416). Bruns and Frick (2014: 417-424) argue, that the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach became the universal paradigm to solve the ‘global water crisis’. The IWRM approach is “a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems and the environment” (Global Water Partnership 2011). It invites different NGOs and private stakeholders into decisionmaking processes that focus on demand management “by increasing technological and financial efficiency, and the decentralization of water management to regional and local authorities” (Padowski and Jawitz 2009: 105; Bruns and Frick 2014: 416). However, instead of assessing whether some IWRM principles, if any, are desirable in different contexts, the IWRM approach comes with predetermined solutions<sup>17</sup> that are coordinated and supported by Western international donors and alliances, such as the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and UN-Water (Lautze et al. 2011: 3-5). Although the GWP (2000: 6-7) warns against ‘one-size-fits-all’ arrangements, the IWRM approach runs the risk of legitimising existing power inequalities and simplifying the diversity of concerns and needs of the local people along the Western water management paradigm of ‘global hydrology’ (Chikozho and Mapedza 2017: 63; Bruns and Frick 2014: 417-424).

Agyenim and Gupta (2012: 47) argue, that the IWRM approach has been discursively captured by the neoliberal project as it focuses on water as an economic good and on the increasing role of stakeholders at the expense of the state<sup>18</sup> (Bakker 2014: 486). According to Ahlers (2010:

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<sup>16</sup> In particular, to two books published in 1992 and 1993: *Last Oasis: Facing Water Scarcity* by Sandra Postel, and *Water in Crisis: A Guide to the World's Freshwater Resources* by Peter Gleick (Bruns and Frick 2014: 415; Linton 2004: 6-8). These books were based on misleading research done by few Soviet hydrologists whose data, based on Soviet hydrological methods, have been subsequently produced and applied for the purposes of quantifying the distribution of global water resources. Even the hydrologist themselves cautioned against this data since it was regarded as merely approximations. Nonetheless, this research formed the basis of the so-called ‘global hydrology’ or ‘modern hydrology’ approach that underpinned the ‘global water crisis’ discourse (Linton 2004: 8-9).

<sup>17</sup> The GWP (2017), which was created to coordinate the IWRM activities, offers 60 different ‘tools’ to address the diversity of different water-related issues and situations around the world (Lautze et al. 2011: 3; Castro 2007: 12). These include, for example, the establishment of water rights, water markets and water use permits etc. See, for example, GWP (2000). However, with these limited and predetermined solutions it has been difficult to assess which ‘tools’ might work better in some areas compared to others. In conjunction, it has been also difficult to assess the success of the implementation of these different ‘tools’ (Castro 2007: 12). See also Agyenim and Gupta (2012).

<sup>18</sup> This approach is largely the embodiment of the new ‘sustainable development’ perspective introduced by the Brundtland Commission’s *Our Common Future* in 1987 and the Dublin Principles of 1992 that shifted perceptions about water management and governance as a social or public good to one of an economic good (Chikozho and Mapedza 2017: 54)

219), advocates of market mechanisms within water management refer to the ‘global water crisis’ to provide a transformational opportunity for capital to justify privatisation and commercialisation. However, although less than 3% of the world’s water resources are freshwater resources, this has been historically more than sufficient to meet human needs (UNICEF 2021: 4; Padowski and Jawitz 2009: 99). Globally, water use has remained relatively stable since the turn of millennium. Only 18% of all the available water resources are regularly being withdrawn, which means that the world as a whole is not defined as water scarce (UN 2021a: 8). Indeed, water scarcities can have multiple meanings; instead of a neutral discourse, power in relation to the historical and current water governance paradigms shapes the problem of ‘global water crisis’. Although the IWRM approach can seem as a technical response to a ‘natural’ biophysical problem of water scarcity, the definition of the problem, and thus the solution can be highly political (Biro 2012: 91-101; Bruns and Frick 2014: 424). As Ahler’s (2010: 215) points out, biophysical changes in the hydrological cycle can, indeed, induce water scarcities yet these changes are usually the consequence of historical and current social relations and transformations in the struggle over water.

The ‘global water crisis’ is based on a ‘top-down’ approach whereby water crises are seen to be the effect of different geospatial factors instead of human action that can and does control these factors (Srinivasan et al. 2012: 1). Indeed, the distinction between ‘physical water scarcity’ and ‘economic water scarcity’ helps to contextualise the problem of so-called ‘global water crisis’; physical water scarcity refers to *de facto* lack of water whereas economic water scarcity refers to a lack of *access* to water as a result of, for example, inadequate financial and/or infrastructural development. Indeed, economic water scarcity can take place even in the context of abundant water resources (FAO 2009; Padowski and Jawitz 2009: 100). Despite the alarming warnings of water becoming more important than oil and the future being saturated by ‘water wars’, the occurrence of social struggles over water have historically been more multitudinous; “water control has been a major factor in the establishment and consolidation of asymmetrical power relations often leading to structural conditions of inequality and injustice in the access to water” (Castro 2007: 109). The notion of ‘global water crisis’ is a simplified abstraction since water scarcities, which are highly social and political by nature, vary widely based on temporal and spatial differences (Bakker 2014: 471; Castro 2007: 98-99). Hence, the ‘global water crisis’ ought to be referred to as a “set of interrelated water scarcities at multiple scales” that are largely *economic* and located predominantly in the developing countries (Bakker 2014: 471).

## 2.3 Neoclassical Economics in Water (Meta)Governance

Bayliss (2002: 606-612) lists five economic arguments that are made by the IFIs to push for water privatisation as a poverty reduction strategy in the developing countries: these are contributions to economic growth; development of the private sector; fiscal benefits; improvement to the performance of enterprises; and the release of aid funds that are tied to privatisation. These arguments derive from neoclassical economics, which has become the hegemonic mainstream economic theory through effective communication of its economic arguments and ideas to large audiences (Narsiah 2010: 376). As George (1999: para 9) argues, the neoclassical marginal economists of the Chicago School of economics together with its large network of foundations, private think tanks, publications, scholars, and research institutes have thoroughly understood the Gramscian idea of cultural hegemony making neoliberalism and its economic foundations “as if it were the natural and normal condition of humankind”. The process of water (meta)governance<sup>19</sup> allows for wide variety of different legitimate and resourceful actors to combine, facilitate, shape and direct particular modes of governance in accordance with the normative hegemonic conception of what is considered as ‘good governance’ (Sørensen and Torfing 2009: 245). For example, the current (meta)governance of water privatisation, based on neoclassical economic arguments and ideas, has been supported by powerful economic interests, such as the globally influential network around the World Bank (Bieler and Jordan 2018: 940). This way, specific values, norms and principles can be discussed, formulated and applied in water governing processes (Kooiman and Jentoft 2009: 819).

The neoclassical school of economics is considered to have appeared around the 1870s based on the works of William Stanley Jevons, Leon Walras, Carl Menger and Alfred Marshall. Therefore, neoclassical economics is closely linked to the Marginal Revolution. The term ‘neoclassical’ was first coined by Thorstein Veblen in 1900 to describe Marshall’s approach in *Principles of Economics* as a continuation of the classical political economy approach<sup>20</sup> warranting the prefix ‘neo’ or ‘new’ (Tabb 1999: 91-92; Chang 2015: 121). Indeed, according to Tabb (1999: 91), the neoclassical emphasis on the allocation of resources can also be found in Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. However, classical political economy is essentially a surplus theory, which focuses on the value created by the conditions of (re)production whereas neoclassical economists view

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<sup>19</sup> The notion of ‘metagovernance’ is commonly attributed to Bob Jessop (1997) who considers it as a possibility for the capitalist state to exercise power by choosing among different modes of governance to circumvent potential failures associated with these governance mechanisms and their combinations (Sørensen and Torfing 2009: 245).

<sup>20</sup> That is, referring to the works of, most notably, Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Jean-Baptiste Say and Robert Malthus (Chang 2015: 117).

economics as the study of allocation of scarce resources among various competing ends wherein the value is determined by the interaction between supply and demand – i.e., scarcity theory (Martins 2014: xi-xvii; Tabb 1999: 91). Furthermore, Smith’s arguments were rooted in historical, institutional and comparative contexts whereas neoclassical economics excluded historically contingent analysis from economics and reduced it to arguments about efficiency under given conditions in order to produce deterministic outcomes (Tabb 1999: 91). In addition to these differences at the economic and social levels, Martins (2014: xvii) distinguishes a contested feature also at the ethical level as classical political economists understand human well-being as a multidimensional conception, neoclassical economists view well-being in utilitarian terms as subjective pleasure or utility.

The term ‘neoclassical economics’ was later popularised, largely by its very critics, to describe a wide variety of economic models, theories and policy stances (Lawson 2013: 947). Arnsperger and Varoufakis (2006) argue, however, that there are three so-called meta-axioms that underpin neoclassical economic theory; first, methodological individualism. Although many contemporary mainstream economists have tried to include considerations of context and social structure, Arnsperger and Varoufakis (2006: 7-8) maintain that the main explanatory power is, nonetheless, placed upon the individual agent (‘Homo Economicus’). Secondly, neoclassical economic theory adheres to methodological instrumentalism whereby individual agents are exclusively motivated by certain means to certain ends; individuals aim at maximising utility and firms aim at maximising profits to allocate scarce resources optimally and efficiently (Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006: 10; Weintraub 2002; Tabb 1999: 7). For example, the basic assumption underlying public choice theory is that individuals are always narrowly self-interested based on their endogenous preferences (Tabb 1999: 10; Chang 2015: 358). Therefore, neoclassical economic theory is essentially suspicious of individuals, in particular, of politically motivated individuals. Thirdly, Arnsperger and Varoufakis (2006: 10) argue that the axiomatic imposition of equilibrium submits to neoclassical economic theory. By focusing on states of equilibrium and the movement from one equilibrium to another without concerns for transitions or adjustments, limits reasons for an active government (Tabb 1999: 93). Random exogeneous events are theorised to produce real business cycle models. These cycles are then consistent with the competitive general equilibrium and allow for fluctuations without state interference (Tabb 1999: 169).

In fact, the disciplinary shift from ‘*political* economy’ to solely ‘economics’ is largely credited to the pioneers of neoclassical economics and the Marginal Revolution (Chang 2015: 121). However, the ‘removal’ of politics is a political end itself. Indeed, neoclassical economists have been

able to rhetorically link successful science to neoclassical economic theory, and thus economics to ‘pure’ value-free science (Weintraub 2002). According to Weintraub (2002), one of the reasons why neoclassical economics has successfully prevailed to this day, is, indeed, the ‘mathematisation’ and ‘scientification’ of neoclassical economics – to challenge it is to challenge science, progress and modernity. These neoclassical abstractions and theories are then manifested in practice, for example, in the way in which economists have advised developing countries to ‘get the prices right’; undo government regulations that interfere with the ‘free market’ outcomes; and to open national markets to the advantages of free trade<sup>21</sup> (Tabb 1999: 97). For example, the IFIs have encouraged the development of basing public services on private sector norms in many developing countries fuelled by language, such as ‘progress’, ‘efficiency gains’, ‘performance management’ and ‘participation’. However, this (meta)governance by the IFIs has resulted in bypassing formal political institutions “eroding public service norms like equality, public interest, human dignity and justice” (Meuleman 2008: 239). Hence, neoclassical economics constitutes a metatheory<sup>22</sup> whereby certain implicit rules instruct the practise of ‘proper’ economic theorising. These constitutive rules and assumptions are not debatable as they form the fundamental basis of neoclassical economic theory whilst explaining its prevalent discursive power (Weintraub 2002; Arnsperger and Varoufakis 2006: 12).

According to Fine (2006: 3), these ontological and methodological assumptions manifest themselves in the persistent lure of achieving equilibrium states as well as focusing on efficiency, laissez-faire ideology and the optimisation of the individual. Although some of these pretensions neoclassical economists ascribe to have been reversed, Fine (2006) argues that, in a way, neoclassical economics has become more flexible<sup>23</sup>; i.e., neoclassical economics have taken a broader scope of applications and theories under its wing, which, however, ascribe to the same ontological and methodological assumptions characteristic of neoclassical economics. Weintraub (2002) encapsulates how neoclassical economics have saturated all levels of society:

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<sup>21</sup> However, as noted, for example, by Chang (2015: 125) adherence to neoclassical economics does not necessitate support for free trade yet many neoclassical economists do.

<sup>22</sup> For criticism, see, for example, Lawson (2013). He argues that neoclassical economics is distinguishable, instead, due to its inconsistent tension between ontological awareness of social reality as an open historical process yet, nonetheless, relying upon taxonomic and deductivist methods (Lawson 2013: 974-975).

<sup>23</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s there was an attempt to critique some of these neoclassical assumptions in, what became known as, the Two Cambridges Capital Controversy led by Joan Robinson and the economists at the British University of Cambridge (Weintraub 2002; see also Martins 2014). However, it quickly became clear that what was at issue here were the different visions of what was considered as an ‘acceptable’ theory of distribution of income. During the controversy, a defender of the neoclassical production and distribution theory, Charles Ferguson, famously stated that the neoclassical premises are a “matter of faith” (Tabb 1999: 155). Ultimately, neoclassical economists simply laid aside their criticisms as it became the mainstream school of thought (Weintraub 2002). After the Controversy and the slow economic growth at the end of the 1970s, a new political understanding was created around lower taxes and privatisation (Tabb 1999: 158).

*“In planning for future electricity needs in my state, for example, the Public Utilities Commission develops a (neoclassical) demand forecast, joins it to a (neoclassical) cost analysis of generation facilities of various sizes and types (e.g., an 800-megawatt low-sulfur coal plant), and develops a least-cost system growth plan and a (neoclassical) pricing strategy for implementing that plan.*

*Those on all sides of the issues, from industry to municipalities, from electric companies to environmental groups, all speak the same language of demand elasticities and cost minimization, of marginal costs and rates of return.”*

*(Weintraub 2002: para 14)*

Although the extent to which the term ‘neoclassical economics’ explains and applies to current mainstream economics (also referred to as orthodox economics) is debatable<sup>24</sup>, for the sake of simplicity, this thesis will refer to neoclassical economics as the mainstream/orthodox economics that largely informs the economics practiced in universities, the private sector and various levels of governance.

### 2.3.1 Neoclassical Economics as a Theory of Justice

Arguably, a particular theory of justice can be derived from neoclassical economics<sup>25</sup>. This theory is based on the notion of Pareto optimality, according to which resources ought to be allocated until any further reallocation of resources will improve the welfare of one person only at the expense of someone else<sup>26</sup> (Coleman 1980: 512-513). Vilfredo Pareto invented the notion in order to solve the traditional measurement problem of interpersonal comparisons in practical utilitarianism: the difficulty in measuring pleasure or happiness across people in order to determine the effect of a given policy on total utility. The idea that one allocation of resources can be, so to speak, Pareto *superior* to another set of allocation of resources only requires that there is a net increase in utility – since at least one is made better off but no one is made worse off – regardless of the difficulty in measuring the *amount* of total utility (Posner 1980: 488). It follows, that under strong assumptions any competitive equilibrium is Pareto optimal or economically efficient<sup>27</sup> (Arrow and Hahn 1971: 187; Megginson and Netter 2001: 329). Since competitive equilibrium assumes perfectly competitive

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<sup>24</sup> Due to its broad operationalisation in current use, some scholars argue that ‘neoclassical economics’ has moved beyond its earlier definition and have called for abandoning the term altogether (see, for example, Colander 2000; Lawson 2013).

<sup>25</sup> This methodological approach wherein the microeconomic theory is applied to the analysis of legal rules and institutions is associated, in particular, with the economic analysis of law (Kornhauser 2017). See also Posner (2014) and Calabresi (1991).

<sup>26</sup> This argument has been put forth, in particular, by welfare economists who seek to extend the individualistic equilibrium commitments of neoclassical economics to explain, predict and judge behaviour on the level of the society as a whole (Salomon and Arnott 2014: 62). See also Sen (1993).

<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, Ronald Coase formulated the thesis in his paper *The Problem of Social Cost* (1960): in the absence of transactions costs, the free bargaining will produce the most efficient solution concerning problems with liabilities for damages regardless of the initial economic and social arrangements. This has later become known as the ‘Coase Theorem’ (Swygert and Yanes 1998: 259; Blaug 2007: 200).

markets without transaction costs, i.e., there are no externalities, it will tend toward Pareto optimality<sup>28</sup> (Calabresi and Melamed 1972: 1097). Hence, rather than representing reality, Pareto optimality creates an ideal standard against to which, according to neoclassical economics as a theory of justice, economies ought to be evaluated.

According to neoclassical economics as a theory of justice, an economy that allocates resources in a Pareto optimal manner is then the most economically efficient, and thus just. Indeed, advocates of privatisation tend to emphasise these Pareto optimality arguments since self-interested private companies motivated by maximisation of profits are seen as more efficient than any form of monitoring of public agents (Dorfman and Harel 2016: 407; De Fraja 1991: 311; Trebilcock and Iacobucci 2003: 1435). For example, the World Bank, tends to leave the supremacy of the private sector virtually unquestioned (Bayliss 2006: 144-145). However, the Pareto-efficient allocation of resources can only be attained under strong assumptions of at least perfect competition within a complete market system<sup>29</sup> (Sappington and Stiglitz 1987: 569; Hammond 1998: 240-241). Although this Pareto optimal economy remains *de facto* an unattainable abstract ideal, this normative aspect of neoclassical economics asks that the socio-political and legal institutions ought to, nonetheless, encourage Pareto optimality or economic efficiency through market competition as it drives prices down to marginal cost for the benefit of the society as a whole (Coleman 1980: 549; Trebilcock and Iacobucci 2003: 1430). Indeed, due to the existing transaction costs and distributional considerations, Posner (2014: 17) has argued that where markets fail the legal order ought to, albeit difficult, *mimic or simulate* the outcomes of competitive markets (Calabresi and Melamed 1972: 1103; Coleman 1980: 542). Following this concession, even in the case of market failures, privatisation ought to be supported since it can be made to mimic or simulate the outcomes of perfect competition.

Indeed, with regards to water privatisation, there are several aforementioned market failures: water supply infrastructures tend to be natural monopolies and have potential negative externalities that markets find difficult to deal with. Therefore, no extent of privatisation will make water privatisation Pareto superior as competition cannot be attained. Furthermore, regardless of the ownership structure, there is an asymmetry of information between the shareholders and managers of the utility company, which can result in laziness and wastefulness (Willner 1997: 30). In fact, De

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<sup>28</sup> These statements are also known as the fundamental theorems of welfare economics. According to the first theorem, “the competitive economy is always Pareto efficient“ under strong assumptions, whereas the second theorem states that every Pareto efficient allocation can be attained through competitive equilibrium (Stiglitz 1991: 2-3).

<sup>29</sup> Defined by the fundamental theorem of welfare economics together with the production of technology and dispersion of information within an economy (Stiglitz and Sappington 1987: 569; Hammond 1998: 240-241).

Fraja (1993: 17) argues, by employing the principal-agent model<sup>30</sup>, that efficiency is increased more, if the overall social welfare is the main motivation rather than profit since “part of the benefit of a cost reduction is ‘wasted’ on increased consumers’ surplus”. Consequently, water privatisation does not create a competitive equilibrium sought after by the particular theory of justice of neoclassical economics. In fact, as Sappington and Stiglitz (1987: 569) point out, government intervention is required, if there are externalities, natural monopolies or public goods (Trebilcock and Iacobucci 2003: 1431-1435). Although some economists argue that regardless of these market failures only limited government intervention is required to correct for these failures<sup>31</sup>, at least without alterations and concessions neoclassical economics as a theory of justice cannot be used to support water privatisation as such. By the same token, however, in accordance with the strict criteria of Pareto optimality, whereby no one can be made worse-off by a change, remunicipalisation of water is equally difficult to maintain.

Indeed, according to Salomon and Arnott (2014: 62), neoclassical economists aim at satisfying the Pareto optimality mainly with regards to efficiency in production and exchange, and thus excludes efficiency considerations in distribution – i.e., considerations about who can derive the greatest utility or pleasure from a particular allocation of resources. This can be seen, for example, in the way in which the World Trade Organization (WTO) is in charge of making decisions with regards to efficiency and growth whereas the World Bank and national governments are assumed to take on the role of distributional governance. In practice, since there are transaction costs, changes to the status quo are impossible unless at least someone is disadvantaged or the Pareto frontier<sup>32</sup> is moved forward<sup>33</sup>. Both of these points require making distributional choices and have distributional consequences (Swygart and Yanes 1998: 263; Calabresi 1991: 1212). For example, the privatisation

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<sup>30</sup> This model explores the relationship between a principal that delegates work to an agent that preforms that work. This relationship tends to arise in a situation of asymmetry of information whereby the interests of the two parties conflict and it is difficult or expensive for the principal to verify whether the agent is working appropriately (Eisenhardt 1989: 58).

<sup>31</sup> The so-called ‘market failure approach to modern welfare economics’ seeks to interpret these conditions under which the first fundamental theorem of welfare economics – competitive economy is always Pareto efficient – can be restored. Indeed, according to this approach even in the case of market failures only limited government intervention is needed to correct for these failures (Stiglitz 1991: 3). For example, Trebilcock and Iacobucci (2003: 1446) argue, that even natural monopolies could be dealt with private profit-maximising ownership yet within a regulatory regime. Indeed, they also point out that every regulatory regime has its own additional costs and imperfections.

<sup>32</sup> The Pareto frontier is determined by the existing transactions costs (including the problems of rationality and knowledge) and technology, and thus explains what is currently possible in a given society (Calabresi 1991: 1212).

<sup>33</sup> Since the Pareto optimal point is always reached immediately, other criteria of economic efficiency have been developed in order to loosen the strict requirements of Pareto optimality (Buchanan 1959: 129). These include criterion, such as the aforementioned Coase Theorem/bargaining and Kaldor-Hicks test (also known as the ‘potential Pareto improvement’ or ‘potential Pareto superiority’). For example, in accordance with the Kaldor-Hicks efficiency, a change can be Pareto optimal even if someone is made worse off as long as they are compensated for their loss (Salomon and Arnott 2014: 48; Coleman 1980: 513; Calabresi 1991: 1221).



process cannot separate efficiency from distribution issues; “the distribution of state assets and hence income in an economic society are directly influenced by the choice of privatisation methods and restructuring efforts”.<sup>34</sup> (Schüsselbauer 1999: 67). Consequently, focusing on efficient outcomes in the abstract – which are themselves unprecise and vague – can result in unequal and, paradoxically, even inefficient or unjust consequences in the real world whilst simultaneously ignoring the justice of the process and other factors contributing to human welfare (Salomon and Arnott 2014: 63; Goodland and Ledec 1987: 21).

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<sup>34</sup> However, as Hammond (1998: 257) points out, according to the second fundamental theorem of welfare economics, any Pareto-efficient allocation of resources is just “by means of complete and perfectly competitive markets in combination with lump-sum redistribution of wealth” whether or not this allocation of resources is distributively just.

### 3. Research Data and Methodology

*In this chapter, the thesis will explain how the main analysis was conducted. First, the research data of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) is presented. Furthermore, the way in which the data was collected and used, with the help of Atlas.ti, are more specifically described. Secondly, the first research method of content analysis is defined for the purposes of this study. Content analysis is used to answer the first two research questions: What sort of scarcity issues are identified in relation to access to safe drinking water? What sort of privatisation measures are proposed in PRSPs? Thirdly, frame analysis is introduced as a secondary research method to answer the last research question of what sort of frames are used to justify water privatisation. Fourthly, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the study are explained.*

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The research data collected for this thesis consists of 25 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) compiled by 25 low-income countries<sup>35</sup> under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank between 2010-2014. More specifically, the thesis will focus on content related to drinking water supply within these 25 country-specific-PRSPs. Poverty Reduction Strategy is an initiative started by the international financial institutions (IFIs) in 1999 to replace the highly criticised Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Craig and Porter 2003: 53; Fraser 2005: 317). PRSPs are prepared by the government of the member country in cooperation with the IFIs, the civil society and development partners, and then published by the IMF (Harvey 2008: 118). According to the IMF (2016), “PRSPs describe the country’s macroeconomic, structural and social policies” in order to promote growth, reduce poverty and associated financial implications. On the condition that low-income countries implement PRSPs, they receive debt relief and loans on concessional terms (Bohlers 2019: 6). As of now, over 60 low-income countries have published their own PRSPs (see, for example, IMF 2016). This study will analyse only PRSPs published after 2010<sup>36</sup> in order to focus on the most recent papers. In addition, the thesis will exclude Interim Poverty Reduction Papers (I-PRSPs), Annual Progress Reports (APRs) and Joint Staff Assessments (JSAs) since this study is only interested in the fully developed PRSPs that set the policies and proposals for implementation in the

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<sup>35</sup> These countries include Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Haiti, Kyrgyz Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. Two of these, PRSPs for Ethiopia and Ghana, have been split into two volumes, pushing the actual number of individual documents analysed up to 27 documents.

<sup>36</sup> This is based on the publication date recorded by the IMF. Few PRSPs report a different publication date as opposed to the one by the IMF, such as Nicaragua, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kyrgyz Republic, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo, and Bangladesh

water sector. During the data collection process, this led to a sampling of 25 country-specific-PRSPs listed in the **Annex 1**.

As opposed to SAPs, ‘participation’ and ‘ownership’ are fundamental features of PRSPs. According to the IMF (2000), PRSPs put an emphasis on “country ownership, partnerships, and a multidimensional approach”. In practice, however, participation within the planning process of PRSPs has been limited; only a few groups have engaged in the process whilst the narrowly defined agendas and proposals for policy change have been processed by the government in advance (Fraser 2005: 326). For example, macroeconomic policies and structural reforms, such as trade liberalisation and privatisation, have not always been up for negotiations (Craig and Porter 2003: 58). Furthermore, PRSPs require the approval of the IFIs, which act as gatekeepers to financial aid and loans. This has led to a similarity in policy objectives across the various country-specific-PRSPs implicit in the depoliticised, ‘rational’ and highly technical language (Fraser 2005: 326; Craig and Porter 2003: 66). Consequently, instead of reflecting the actual specialised conditions and country-specific policy proposals of each country, PRSPs reproduce ‘one-size-fits-all’ neoliberal approach that optimises “economic, juridical and social governance in order to create ideal conditions for international finance and investment” (Craig and Porter 2003: 54). Hence, by analysing PRSPs, this study can examine the dominant frames, which justify water privatisation in many low-income countries that are *de facto* being perpetuated by the IFIs and the current water governance paradigm. These frames, indeed, reflect the current development themes with regards to water management and governance.

The main disadvantage of using PRSPs as research material in this study relates to the status of PRSPs which at present is obscure – no PRSPs have been published since 2014 (Bohlers 2019: 23; see also IMF 2016). Although PRSPs have not been published in recent years, the IMF (2021) still requires that the Poverty Reduction Strategy requirements are met in order to receive IMF-supported financial aid. Nonetheless, PRSPs provide useful data to answer the particular research questions of the thesis. Justifications and ideas, that are the main focus of this study, do not transform quickly; ideas that were prevalent in 2014 are likely to be prevalent in one way or another today. Secondly, the research data conveys a message from the sender to the receiver; the political and economic influence of the IMF and the World Bank is historically significant in shifting policy objectives and proposals in low-income and Highly Indebted Countries (HIPC) since they are dependent on foreign aid and will adjust their policy objectives accordingly (White and March 2006: 27). This allows for the analysis of the guiding values, norms and principles of the current water (meta)governance paradigm. Thirdly, the simple advantage of using documents that are openly

available online is accessibility and the fact that it does not disrupt ongoing events or settings. Indeed, social phenomena do not change due to the analysis of the study, which creates a level of freedom for the researcher in gathering and analysing the data as well as a decreased risk of unethical research (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 161-162).

Since the number of PRSPs was rather large (n=25) and the scope of the Master's thesis is limited, the data was broken down by using the find-tool in the software application Atlas.ti<sup>37</sup>. Each country-specific-PRSP was skimmed through using the keyword 'water'. This keyword gave a scientifically significant number of 'hits' (varying from 17 to 460 hits per PRSP) as it was loose enough to cover many water-related segments whilst being specific enough to exclude all the other objectives and goals related to poverty reduction. For example, each country-specific-PRSP had at least one specific chapter focused on water either in the context of access to water and sanitation, water infrastructure or sustainable management of water resources. These chapters, in fact, compromise the main data of the study with the additional smaller segments or paragraphs on water in the context of, for example, management of basic services, environmental sustainability, agriculture, etc. Furthermore, tables and annexes related to water supply, introduced in some PRSPs, were also included in the data. Going through the data in this loose way, still limited the immensity of going through all 25 country-specific-PRSPs in detail with the required thoroughness and depth that is expected at this level of research. Hence, although PRSPs were broken down to chapters and segments to keep the study within bounds of practicality and quality, the full documents were always returned to during the analysis in order to avoid losing context and coherence.

### 3.2 Content Analysis

Content analysis can be regarded as one method among many or as a loose theoretical framework that can be incorporated into various different ways of conducting analysis. Indeed, content analysis is a systematic, flexible and reductive method, which can be viewed as sort of an overarching method of analysis that can be utilised by several methodological traditions that are interested in making "inferences from texts (and other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff 2004: 18; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 103). In content analysis the object of study is the social phenomenon, which is represented in the selected data. Content analysis allows for systematic and objective

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<sup>37</sup> Due to the vastness of the research data in contrast to the size and time limitations of the study, a software application was needed to help with the mechanical and management aspects of the analysis. This study used one of the most common coding software applications, Atlas.ti, since its license was readily available through the University of Helsinki website, and it was easy to use and understand (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 182).

analysis of documents that can include almost anything in verbal or visual format, such as reports, diaries, interview transcripts and videos (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 117; Schreier 2012: 3). Indeed, content analysis aims at increasing and heightening the information value about the phenomenon under study by creating meaningful clear and coherent information from the fragmented data without losing any important information arising in the data. This is done by breaking down the data, conceptualising and then reorganising it into a new logical whole (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 122).

However, content analysis has been criticised for reorganising collected data *into* results. This way, the study remains incomplete and possible findings are merely the result of restructuring of the collected data (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 117; Schreier 2012: 4-5). However, for example, Krippendorff (2004: 19; 47-77) argues, that the conclusions that are drawn from the research data do not just describe the data in a new way, but the content emerges in the process of analysing the data in its particular context. Indeed, the unique strength of content analysis is its emphasis on context, setting and interpretation in order to discover deeper meanings of the social phenomenon under study (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 92). Furthermore, content analyst ought to be reflective and acknowledge that – without endorsing extreme relativism – different interpretations of the same material can in some cases be equally valid. Although content analysis enables the description of the most important elements from vast amount of research data, it does that at the cost of losing the potential multiplicity of meanings of the data (Schreier 2012: 30). Hence, it is crucial to be fully aware of the shortcomings of the method whilst conducting the analysis.

Indeed, content analysis helps to focus only on the selected aspects within vast research material (Schreier 2012: 4). By analysing PRSPs largely through qualitative content analysis, the study can encompass more of the complexities of context in a flexible and purposeful way than with other methodologies<sup>38</sup> (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 91-92). Indeed, PRSPs offer a description of the problems and possible solutions in a non-standardised and pragmatic fashion that does not explicitly condone to any theoretical, ethico-moral or ideological commitments. Since the meanings are less obvious, qualitative content analysis is a suitable method for this study as it delves into complexities and processes that can be both manifest and latent, and thus require a certain level of interpretation (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 91; Schreier 2012: 29). Moreover, in examining why and how specific recommendations regarding water privatisation are justified, this study acknowledges that the

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<sup>38</sup> For example, predominantly quantitative and positive approaches limit the context into preordained operational variables that does not suit the aims of this study. Indeed, the proposed research questions explore the sort of complexities and dynamics that cannot be answered merely through quantitative methods (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 91).

‘inferential span’ is long – i.e., conclusions that are drawn from the meanings, that the research material is said to elicit, require rich interpretation (Schreier 2012: 184). Consequently, this study seeks to, on one hand, proceed carefully by spelling out the logic of interpretation in detail in inferring meaning from the research material. On the other hand, the last research question is corroborated with additional external validation; framing analysis will be used as a secondary research method.

The thesis will rely on content analysis in answering the first two research questions: What sort of water scarcity issues can be identified in relation to access to safe drinking water? What sort of water privatisation measures are proposed in PRSPs to tackle the identified water scarcity issues? Hence, the purpose of conducting content analysis is ultimately a descriptive one – bring about a systematic written description of the meaning of the data (Marshall and Rossman 2011: 68; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 122). This is done largely qualitatively. More specifically, the study will adopt the rough analytical steps outlined by Schreier (2012: 6): following the selection of research questions and research data, the study will, first, build a preliminary coding frame based upon the conceptual frameworks introduced in Chapter 2. Secondly, the research data will be divided into units of coding using the software application Atlas.ti. Thirdly, the coding frame will be tried out, and on this basis evaluated and revised. Fourthly, the main analysis will be done, which consists of comparing codes and deciding on the meaning of each unit of coding with regards to the main categories of the coding frame (Schreier 2012: 202-207). In addition, the frequency of which each unit of code is mentioned will be quantitatively counted yet qualitatively described. Finally, the findings will be explicitly interpreted and presented.

### 3.2.1 Frame Analysis

The introduction of frame analysis is commonly attributed to Erving Goffman (1974: 21) as a method for identifying the organising principles that make sense and give meaning to everyday situations or activities. Frames are socially shared and persistent ‘schemata of interpretation’ that work symbolically to create meaningful structure to the social world. This way, frames play a part in creating ‘reality’ (Linström and Marais 2012: 23-24). Hence, frame analysis shows how framing selects “some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993: 52). Indeed, communicated texts exert power that can be explored, thus helping to clarify different empirical and normative

controversies<sup>39</sup> (Entman 55-56). However, instead of looking at ‘frames’ as static and definitional processes, this thesis will adopt the approach that focuses on ‘framing’ processes put forth by Rein and Schön (1993) and developed further by van Hulst and Yanow (2016). This approach to frame analysis is more dynamic and politically reflective way to conceptualise frames and framing, in particular, with regards to “dynamic, power-sensitive policy and administrative issues” (van Hulst and Yanow 2016: 93). Framing becomes a multi-dimensional socio-political process including both maintenance and change that are carried out through sense-making, naming and storytelling (van Hulst and Yanow 2016: 97-105).

Sense-making is the process in which problematic or uncertain situations can be made sense of on the basis of prior facts, values, theories and interests, and thus acted upon. (Rein and Schön 1993: 145-146). Hence, what is produced within this process is “both a model of the world – reflecting prior sense-making – and a model for subsequent action in that world” – what *is* becomes what *ought to be* (van Hulst and Yanow 2016: 98). Naming in the process of framing consists also of selecting and categorising; in fact, the power of selecting and emphasising some features of reality is as powerful as omitting others (Entman 1993: 53). In naming these selected features, language that reflects the actors’ understanding of the situation is used by usually drawing on different metaphors. Lakoff (2002: 62-63), for example, introduces the idea that certain moral issues, such as justice and fairness, are saturated by fundamental economic metaphor – i.e., bringing about quantitative reasoning and economic terms into the qualitative realm of morality. Simultaneously, in the process of naming and categorising selected features, storytelling takes place to present a more coherent narrative of the situation (van Hulst and Yanow 2016: 96). Binding these elements together through ‘narrative frames’ or plot lines into a logical whole is key in persuasive efforts and guiding action; framing via storytelling indicates discursive power (van Hulst and Yanow 2016: 101).

In answering the last research question of how water privatisation is justified a ‘signature matrix’, adopted from Gamson and Lasch (1981: 4-6), is used to do the initial identification and sorting of signature elements via two kinds of symbolic devices – rhetoric and argumentative devices. Rhetoric devices<sup>40</sup> included in this thesis are metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases and depictions, which aim at accentuating a given frame, and making it noteworthy and accessible. Argumentative devices – roots, consequences and appeals to principle – justify or support given

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<sup>39</sup> See also Tversky and Kahneman (1981) for their famous ‘Asian disease’ problem on framing effects.

<sup>40</sup> Visual images are excluded since only a few PRSPs had images and, furthermore, this study focuses only on textual meaning making.

frames as well as provide causality and basis for judging situations, events or positions (Creed et al. 2002: 39-40). In order to conduct a more in-depth frame analysis, the ‘signature matrix’ is followed by the operationalisation of the framing process scheme<sup>41</sup> introduced by van Hulst and Yanow (2016). Indeed, sorting out the underlying logics of frames and framing processes, and thus contextualising them can help to examine the implicit politics and ideologies of PRSPs as well as to illuminate how framing can be used as a discursive political strategy that tries to influence action (Creed et al. 2002: 34; Rein and Schön 1993: 147-148). The aim of frame analysis in this study is then to bring forth and analyse these framing processes that create, maintain and change dominant frames that are used to justify – deliberately or not – water privatisation.

### 3.3 Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

Although this thesis is largely conducted as a theory-driven analysis, there is space for theories and concepts to emerge from the data itself. Indeed, as noted by Marshall and Rossman (2011: 2), many qualitative researchers tend to rely on complex reasoning that moves dialectically between deduction and induction. In answering the first two research questions, the logic of reasoning will move more or less deductively. The analytical framework of physical and economic water scarcity is operationalised to separate between two different kinds of water scarcity issues. In addition, the privatisation continuum, introduced by Bakker (2014), is referred to in order to distinguish between various strategies of privatisation as well as the level of divestiture these different strategies entail. This way, water privatisation is reduced to different stages on the privatisation continuum, which are more accessible and easily detected from the research data. Indeed, the data will be analysed in a rather structured and organised manner by testing prior theoretical and conceptual frameworks by reference to largely predetermined categories (Marshall and Rossman 207-208). However, herein the flexibility of content analysis plays an important role as inductive reasoning is not excluded, and thus categories are also created and revised along the way. Similarly, the assessment of neoclassical economics as a theory of justice guides frame analysis in relation to the last research question. Instead of operationalising a systematic analytical framework, frames and framing processes emerge abductively from the data itself. Crucially, however, these emergent categories are, inevitably, also based on prior research and value-laden judgements (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 109).

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Müller (2020: 16).



This study is empirical in that it sets and asks empirical research questions, which this analysis seeks to answer with reference to the selected data. In fact, the sorts of questions being asked, and the sorts of research methods chosen for the analysis require reference to at least some level of empiricism. Indeed, the pursuit of answers to questions grounds qualitative content analysis empirically; answers to research questions imply truth claims that are supported either by direct observations or by plausible argumentation that is based on related observations (Krippendorff 2004: 32). This is done, however, whilst keeping in mind the subjective nature of ‘objectivity’ and ‘truth’. Interpretivist approaches, indeed, tend to be underpinned by more relativist ontological accounts (Müller 2020: 3; Creed et al. 2002: 48). Hence, this thesis understands the world as consisting of something that can be described as objectively ‘real’ yet, which can and is transformed through subjective interpretation of reality making ‘real world’ in this sense malleable. Consequently, the thesis seeks to analyse and make conclusions about the ‘real world’ whilst acknowledging its role as only one subjective interpreter with its own subjective ‘truths’ about the world and predetermined judgements. According to Creed et al. (2002: 51), the need for self- reflexivity is, indeed, not only a matter of methodological rigor but also a question of epistemology. The thesis seeks to conduct content analysis and frame analysis in a transparent and self-reflexive manner.

## 4. Prior Research

*Water privatisation has sparked surprisingly extensive discussion both in literature and scientific research. Due to the amount of research on the topic, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a detailed account of the wide variety of literature on water privatisation. Hence, this chapter, will focus on different frames found in the literature on water by, first, providing a rough overview of the broader debates around water privatisation – namely, economic goods versus rights. Secondly, studies conducted, in particular, using frame analysis are explored in order to introduce different ways in which water has been framed creating a basis for the frame analysis done in Chapter 5.*

### 4.1 Water Debates in Literature – Economic Good vs. Right

The literature on water privatisation can be roughly summarised as a debate between water as an economic good versus water as a right (Kumlin 2016: 8-9; Bakker 2012: 21). The economic perspective gained momentum, in particular, after the Dublin Conference in 1992 wherein one of the four Dublin Principles stated that: “Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good”<sup>42</sup> (ICWE 1992). This Principle derives from the fact that water is a scarce good. Therefore, if water’s economic value is recognised – according to the basic criterion of economic efficiency introduced in Chapter 2. – it is allocated and conserved more efficiently<sup>43</sup> (Meijerink and Ruijs 2003: 3-4). This current neoliberal governance of water focuses on “letting market-oriented price signals shape consumer patterns and assist with the recovery of production” (McDonald 2018b: 8). This way, the focus shifts from ensuring sufficient water supply to incentivising highest value use through, for example, establishing water markets<sup>44</sup> (Budde and McGranahan 2003: 95; Weiss 2012: 157). Indeed, many economists tend to view water privatisation (however, not the divestiture model) and cost-benefit analysis as ways to achieve more efficient water resource use (Winpenny 1992: 40; Young 2005: xii). However, some scholars, such as Savenije (2002; see also Savenije and van der Zaag 2002), consider water as an economic good whilst also recognising that it is not easily bounded by the market logic; the price of water cannot be determined by market forces, but it should have a price.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> However, right to clean water and sanitation are also acknowledged in the fourth Dublin Principles: “Within this principle, it is vital to recognize first the basic right of all human beings to have access to clean water and sanitation at an *affordable price*” (ICWE 1992, emphasis added).

<sup>43</sup> This basic criterion of economic efficiency also underpins the so-called ‘virtual water trade’. ‘Virtual water’ is a concept introduced by Tony Allan (2003: 111), which links “consumers in water deficit political economies with producers and resources in distant water surplus economies”. The concept is based on the Ricardian idea of comparative advantage yet in a narrower field (Allan 2003: 111).

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Perry et al. 1997.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Hanemann (2005) for the distinction between the value and price of water.

Proponents of right to water argue that since water is essential to sustain human life, it cannot be defined in narrow economic terms around the ability to pay. Human need for water is unique in this regard and non-substitutable (Bluemel 2004: 957-959; see also Gupta et al. 2010; Gleick 1998; McCaffrey 1992). In 2010, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, indeed, declared water as a human right (UN 2010). Following the declaration, Risse (2014) provided a philosophical argument for strong positive duties for the global community deriving from the right to water. Swyngedouw (2005) and Trawick<sup>46</sup> (2003), in turn, focused on critiquing water privatisation as standing in opposition to the right to water. In fact, the right perspective has been an effective discursive framing tool against justifications for privatisation and market environmentalism (Bieler and Jordan: 950; Bakker 2014: 484). Although proponents of right to water tend to favour state involvement, there is no inherent conceptual contradiction between seeing access to water as a right and private sector involvement in the water supply system<sup>47</sup> (Bakker 2014: 484; Budds and McGranahan 2003: 95). Therefore, scholars, such as Bakker (2012), argue that the ‘rights talk’ has failed in opposing neoliberal arguments for water privatisation<sup>48</sup> whilst others, such as Linton (2012), argue that seeing water within its broader pluralistic and relational legal frameworks can, in fact, lead to transformative negotiations over it<sup>49</sup> (Bieler 2020: 139). Consequently, justifications for water privatisation have been deployed by the economic good as well as the right perspective in the water literature.

Indeed, the increasingly prevalent view in water literature is to acknowledge the multiplicity of the role of water; according to Juuti et al. (2012: 192), water is a natural resource that is a human right but also an economic good, public good and socio-cultural resource. Bakker (2012: 28-29) has noted, that many proponents of privatisation have turned to support water not only as an economic good but also acknowledging its role as a human right. Previously, most of the proponents of human right to water have been various NGOs, academics and activists who see charging for water as leading to higher costs and higher profits for the increasingly global water supply system (Linton 2012: 46; Gilbert 2007: 1560). However, for example, the World Bank has started to promote the right perspective of water (see, for example, Salman and McInerney-Lankford 2004; World Bank

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<sup>46</sup> Trawick, however, explores the right to water in the context of water markets in the Peruvian Andes wherein water rights can be bought and sold similar to the logic of the ‘polluter pays’ principle.

<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the argument that privatisation *per se* inhibits the achievement of the human right to water is usually based on the assumption that privatisation is always accompanied by a full cost-recovery through user fees as opposed to subsidised privatisation that most private companies, in fact, favour (Budds and McGranahan 2003: 95).

<sup>48</sup> According to Bakker (2012: 36), the emphasis should be on collective property rights as opposed to human rights in bringing about change; water ought to be considered as ‘the commons’ (see also Ostrom 1990).

<sup>49</sup> See also Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan (2002).

2017). Although the concept of affordability is not defined in the Dublin Principles, Salman and McInerney-Lankford (2004: 9) emphasise the Dublin Principle as the *right* to water at an *affordable price*. According to Mehta (2000: 11), depending on the context different roles of water should be emphasised. However, she notes that in the global discourses the economic perspective has been given more weight over others. Indeed, the way in which water is conceptualised has important political implications on, for example, water privatisation (Bieler and Jordan 2017: 950).

## 4.2 Framing Water

Looking at how water has been framed in prior research, in particular, in relation to water management and governance, can help to contextualise existing water debates for the frame analysis done in Chapter 5. For example, Bohman and Raitio (2014) showed in their study how the perceived space for policy alternatives was largely limited by the dominant frames in a particular historical context. They looked at Ghana's urban water sector during the establishment of the state water utility Ghana Water and Sewage Corporation in 1965 and later during the reform process to increase private sector participation in the water sector in the 1990s and 2000s. The authors found two dominant frames: water for independence and development, and water for productivity. According to Bohman and Raitio (2014: 265), the former frame tended to blame external foreign and colonial powers as opposed to the victimhood of national governments whereas the latter frame, maintaining strong legacy at the World Bank, became gradually more dominant in Ghana as the blame was put on the managerial capacities of domestic public sector providing international water companies with new business opportunities. Indeed, the power of frames lays in their ability to reduce complexity by focusing attention on specific parts of a problem and omitting others, thus motivating different institutional arrangements and development strategies (Bohman and Raitio 2014: 264).

Applying frame analysis to examine 1745 newspaper articles from Central Europe relating to water supply, Weder et al. (2019) found that media discourses about water as a natural resource were largely dominated by economic frames. However, instead of problematising the issue of water allocations and potential scarcity, water was mostly framed as a public good largely lacking any counter-arguments (Weder et al. 2019: 59). Similarly, by studying the anti-austerity argumentation around the Right2Water European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), Parks (2014) found particularly dominant frames relating to water as human right and public good as well as the power of a direct expression of citizens. However, by drawing on frame analysis and sustainability frameworks to examine the conflict over small-run-of-river hydropower (SPH) developments that

have been pushed by the Turkish government, Konak and Sungu-Eryilmaz (2016) argued, that the Turkish government framed water as an economic private resource whereas the anti-SHP movement, including national and local environmental organisations, framed water as an ecological resource and public good. Furthermore, whereas the Turkish government framed rivers as a renewable energy source and the SHP developments as a source of employment and income, the anti-SHP movement framed rivers as part of the ecosystem and as a source of life as well as negatively framing the SHP developments as affecting the livelihoods of the local people (Konak and Sungu-Eryilmaz 2016: 811-817). In fact, the aforementioned water debate around water as an economic good versus water as a right was reproduced in various studies.

Looking at water in a broader environmental context, Urquijo et al. (2015) used frame analysis to study justifications behind nine exceptional water laws that were passed in Spain during the 2005-2008 drought. Urquijo et al. (2015: 289) found, that so-called ‘creeping securitisation’ consisted of, first, “framing water issues in a context of overstated urgency to act in order to achieve a preset policy agenda”, and secondly, detrimental predictions of consequences of inaction. Similarly, Verduijn et al. (2012) studied recommendations by the Second Delta Committee, commissioned by the Dutch Secretary of Public Works and Water Management, to defend the Netherlands against expected impacts of climate changes, and found that although no crisis actually took place, by employing the framing strategies that created a sense of urgency and crisis the committee succeeded in translating policy recommendations into policy programmes. Both studies concluded that framing water issues as overly urgent and alarming succeeded in justifying passing laws and policies. Also, Vink et al. (2012) analysed frames that came up in the public policy announcements regarding water management and flooding in the Netherlands. Vink et al. (2012: 97) found two frames focusing on the detrimental effects of climate change proposing policies, on one hand, focusing on cooperation and consensus between stakeholders, and on the other hand, a depoliticised top-down mode of governance that asked for institutional reorganisation and centralisation and future-proof technical measures. The third frame, however, emphasised more moderate scenarios and a return to cooperative mode of governance.

## 5. Results

*This chapter introduces the findings inferred from 25 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) published in 2010-2014. Using content analysis and frame analysis the three research questions are answered: What issues are identified in relation to water scarcity? What privatisation measures are provided to tackle these issues? What frames are identified in justifying these privatisation measures? The first research question is examined by distinguishing between physical and economic water scarcity. This analytical framework introduced in Chapter 2. helps to determine the nature of the identified water problems. In answering the second research question, Bakker's (2014) framework of privatisation strategies helps to identify three privatisation themes: privatisation, commercialisation and liberalisation of governance. The last research question combines Gamson and Lasch's (1981) 'signature matrix' with van Hulst and Yarrow's (2016) framing process scheme. As a result, four frames or framings emerge: development frame, economic good frame, anti-government frame, and right frame.*

### 5.1 Water Problems

In order to answer the first research question of what problems were identified in relation to safe and affordable drinking water, issues discovered from the research data were coded, grouped and categorised into themes as seen in **Table 1**. Most of the issues in relation to water scarcity overlapped, and thus it was difficult to differentiate between themes as simply as done in **Table 1**. For example, lack of investments was reported in some PRSPs, such as Guinea and Tajikistan, to be also partly the result of payment collection problems as people were unable or unwilling to pay for water services. Similarly, for example, population growth, and the unsustainable and excessive use of water were complementary issues since water demand grew in conjunction with the size of the population, which frequently resulted in human-induced physical water scarcity due to overexploitation. Herein, however, these issues are considered separately mainly for analytical purposes. On the contrary, the theme of institutional capacity is viewed broadly including both the legal and regulatory environment as well as the individual human resource capacities. For these reasons, **Table 1** should not be read as an all-encompassing list of all the separate problems in relation to water scarcity. Consequently, it should merely assist in outlining the sort of themes that came about in the research data and, most importantly, indicate whether these themes relate to physical or economic water scarcity.

**Table 1 – Physical and Economic Water Scarcity**

Issues Related to Physical Water Scarcity	Issues Related to Economic Water Scarcity
Current and future effects of climate change	Lack of institutional capacity (lack of coordination, responsibilities and transparency; poor legal and institutional framework; and poor technical and human capacities in the water supply)
Population growth	Lack of investments
Seasonal and spatial water shortages	Inability or unwillingness to pay for services
Unsustainable and excessive use of water resources (Overdevelopment [e.g., hydropower and water-intensive irrigation]; pollution; and environmentally unfriendly practises and management of water resources)	Conflict of needs (e.g., between sectors and production processes; between consumptive and non-consumptive uses)
Lack of regional cooperation on transboundary waters	Vandalism of water supply systems

The principal result with regards to the first research question was that most of the water scarcity problems related to limited or inadequate access to safe and affordable drinking water – i.e., economic water scarcity. There were 142 codes identified as economic water scarcity and 78 codes identified as physical water scarcity. Eight (8) of the 25 PRSPs lacked any reference to physical water scarcity. In comparison, only Mali and Mozambique did not explicitly report problems with economic water scarcity. Nonetheless, both countries included targets to improve their water supply systems implying that there was also to some extent room for improvement in relation to access to water<sup>50</sup>. Physical water scarcity themes tended to accumulate on certain countries more than on others. However, although countries, such as Uganda, Togo and Tajikistan reported, severe physical constraints that resulted in the lack of water resources within their borders, no country stated that they could not meet their water needs solely due to the physical shortage of water. For example, Uganda (2010: 331) reported, that in 2002 only 1% of current renewable freshwater resources were being used for consumptive uses, such as domestic water supply, whereas 50% of Ugandan freshwater resources were used for non-consumptive uses, in particular, for hydropower. However, it concurrently estimated, at the time of the publication of its PRSP in 2010, that it will become a water-stressed country by 2017 (Republic of Uganda 2010: 26). Indeed, physical water scarcities were more or less accompanied by the lack of access to the resource.

Altogether 10 countries reported having ‘abundant’, ‘vast’, ‘substantial’ or ‘sufficient’ water resources. This included Guinea (2013: 29) as the “water tower of West Africa” and São Tomé

<sup>50</sup> For example, Mali (2013: para. 297-298) declared that the improved “access to potable water in a fair and sustainable way” was its main strategy to “respond to development need of the water sector”. Furthermore, it aimed to extend and rehabilitate the existing potable water supply infrastructure as well as to improve the allocation of water resources and optimise infrastructural investment costs of drinking water supply. Similarly, Mozambique (2011: 24) distinguished the need to “expand the access to and use of water supply and sanitation services in rural and urban/periurban zones”.

and Príncipe (2014: 52) as having “high water potential based on more than 50 watercourses”. Moreover, PRSP of Democratic Republic of the Congo (2013: 87) estimated that more than 52% of all the freshwater in Africa was located within its borders making it the world’s second largest pool of water after Brazil and its Amazon basin. Despite these vast water resources, many of the countries did, however, report both physical as well as economic water scarcity issues. In particular, uneven seasonal and spatial distribution of water intensified by climate change prolonged, for example, the dry seasons. In relation to economic water scarcity issues, Congo (2012: 8), for example, reported having “abundant water resources” of which “current deductions only concern a fraction of these resources” yet “the Congolese people still have difficulty obtaining water... A sizable portion of the population still relies on artesian wells (3.3 percent), rainwater (2.3 percent), streams and unprotected springs (17.1 percent)”. These results point to the fact that countries identified issues and problems with physical and economic water scarcity regardless of the natural volume of their water resources. Hence, a high natural volume of water resources did not directly imply lack of water scarcity issues.

#### 5.1.1 Physical Water Scarcity

The themes in relation to physical water scarcities that came about from the research data were, in order of approximate frequency, climate change, population growth, seasonal and spatial water shortages, unsustainable or excessive use of water resources, and transboundary water issues. All the identified physical water scarcity issues to some degree related to and/or were intensified by climate change. For example, Niger (2013: 69) distinguished the effects of climate change on the seasonal distribution of water as the Niger river’s peak flows, that runs through its capital Niamey and its major tributaries, had shortened from around February and March to around December and January and in worst cases even to November. Similarly, Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 10-11) and Bangladesh (2013: 8) reported, in their PRSPs, that the melting glaciers and almost full glacier extinction that was estimated to take place by 2100 would have significant effects on the countries’ current and future water resources. Moreover, this decrease in water resources was identified as a source of potential conflict, for example, in PRSP for Democratic Republic of the Congo (2013: 108). Indeed, together with the degradation and scarcity of water resources, it was frequently reported that climate change would intensify and increase the number of natural hazards, such as droughts, flooding and strong storms. This was particularly acute in Bangladesh (2013: 210), which reported that due to its already difficult geophysical location, topography and high population density these natural hazards would affect on average million people every year.



Two other highly reported physical water scarcity themes were population growth and the uneven distribution of water resources across time and space. As mentioned, these two themes were closely interlinked with the issue of climate change. Seasonal and spatial water shortages were intensified by the consequences of climate change by continuing to displace the hydrological regimes and prolonging dry seasons concurrently with increased water demand due to high population growth. Several PRSPs, such as those of Benin, Burundi, São Tomé and Príncipe and Uganda, reported having cyclical water shortages due to the uneven seasonal and spatial distribution of water resources within their national territories. As reported by Tanzania (2011: 16), the water supply coverage in its capital Dar es Salaam, at the time of the publication of its PRSP in 2011, had remained at 68% since 2005 as the water production could not keep up with the 8% population growth rate. Similarly, for example, Uganda and Bangladesh noted that the volume of water per capita had been decreasing due to the rapidly increasing population. Whereas in Malawi (2012: 72) this greater water demand manifested itself equally in both rural and urban areas, Haiti (2014: 6) reported that this demand was exceedingly more pronounced, in particular, in urban areas due to the spontaneous and rapid urbanisation.

*“Natural resources like land and water are limited and their per capita availability is diminishing due to rising population on the one hand and also due to excessive use of common pool resources on the other hand. Excessive and indiscriminate use of our natural common pool resources has degraded them to an unusable state. The degradation of natural resources reduces the well-being of people; especially the poor and women suffer more, as they depend much more on natural common property resources for fuel and water.”*

*(People’s Republic of Bangladesh 2013: 400)*

The third theme of unsustainable use of water resources also interlinks with the aforementioned physical water scarcity issues. The ramifications of greater demand and degrading water resources “has often been in the form of non-optimal and unsustainable use of the resource” (Republic of Ghana 2012: 47). According to PRSPs for Lesotho and Malawi, poor construction and operational practices of various human, industrial, commercial and developmental operations put water resources under constant stress and threat of environmental pollution. As pointed out by Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 5), agriculture is the main freshwater consumer in the country rounding its water intake up to 93%. However, these water resources for irrigation and agricultural water supply purposes were used inefficiently and the water losses were excessive. Furthermore, Nicaragua and Bangladesh reported, that the population growth and with it the extending agricultural frontier has

led to polluted water resources<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 5) reported, that “this sector is developing outside the environment saving growth principles and has low production capacity, low efficiency and [low] ability to adjust itself to changing climate context”. Furthermore, unsustainable and excessive use of water resources was related to the last theme of lack of regional cooperation on transboundary water resources in countries, such as Uganda, Bangladesh and Kyrgyz Republic. These physical water scarcity issues followed from poor cooperation of shared waters, such as regulation of river flows by upstream countries.

### 5.1.2 Economic Water Scarcity

One of the main issues that saturated the discussion around the lack of access to water in almost all PRSPs was the difference between economic water scarcity in rural and urban areas. Economic water scarcity themes found from the research data – lack of institutional capacity; lack of investments; inability or unwillingness to pay for services; conflict of needs; and vandalism – were much more acute in rural and peri-urban areas. The most significant theme of economic water scarcity was the lack of institutional capacity, such as deficiencies in the sectoral governance in terms of planning, coordination, monitoring and regulation as well as the lack of technical and human capacities. For example, lack of intersectoral coordination was an issue brought up in PRSPs for countries, such as Ghana, Benin, Burundi and Tajikistan. On one hand, Uganda (2010: 286) reported that there was a lack of clear separation between different institutional roles. On the other hand, Ghana and Burundi distinguished the fragmented sectoral approaches and procedures as the main source of weak sectoral coordination<sup>52</sup>. These problems resulted in confusion about responsibilities, which constrained policy drafting and implementation. In Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 78) this resulted in incomplete and loosened regulations around the safety of drinking water sources<sup>53</sup> whereas in Bangladesh (2013: 226) the number of inappropriate policies, rules and procedures created an extensive regulatory burden in the delivery of public services.

Furthermore, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Kyrgyz Republic reported, related institutional problems with poorly managed decentralisation and devolution process

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<sup>51</sup> For example, the groundwaters in large parts of Bangladesh had an issue with arsenic contamination following the installation of private shallow tube wells that irrigated the rapidly expanding rice farms (People’s Republic of Bangladesh 2013: 8-9).

<sup>52</sup> For example, in Burundi (2012: 128) the National Environmental Commission, which was supposed to assist the Ministry for the Environment in its coordinating role, had never been in operation.

<sup>53</sup> These looser requirement and regulations were in place, in particular, for businesses in the service sector whereby the safety threshold had lowered for “both the population and the environment” (Kyrgyz Republic 2014: 78).

that aimed at making local communities responsible for the supply of basic services, such as water delivery and supply. Indeed, PRSP for Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 77) reported, that it had “no structures with sufficient capacity at oblast or rayon level to provide the water supply systems with service and maintenance”. Similarly, Guinea (2013: 25) recognised, that decentralisation was difficult for the “local communities without technical, financial, human and material resources to assume”. Indeed, the shortage of skilled personnel was reported by countries, such as Tajikistan, Uganda, Malawi, Niger, Guinea, Ethiopia and Kyrgyz Republic. Furthermore, Uganda and Guinea distinguished, in their PRSPs, that the emerging yet weak local private sector players in the water sector also lacked ‘structure’ and ‘professionalism’. These problems with the lack of institutional capacity resulted in inadequate maintenance of water supply systems, including collection, treatment and distribution of water. Problems with aging or deteriorated equipment and water networks that tended to have high technical loss rates and poor service quality were reported by Congo, Nicaragua, Kyrgyz Republic and Uganda<sup>54</sup>. The inadequate maintenance of water supply systems also resulted in the lack of monitoring, and thus water safety concerns in countries, such as Togo and Kyrgyz Republic. For example, in Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 77), due to the insufficient institutional structures of rural organisations responsible for the drinking water supply, parts of the pipelines had become fully inoperable.

*“For its part, Togolaise des Eaux (TdE), which is the primary water distribution operator in urban centers throughout the country, lacks adequate means and resources for successfully carrying out all the tasks and responsibilities placed upon it by the institutional environment. In addition, there is a lack of transparency of responsibilities between TdE, on the one hand, and the Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation Sector Development Fund (FODESEPA), which has a poorly defined role and which is managed in part by TdE management, on the other. As a result, the institutional environment has not been conducive to mobilization of the financial resources which the safe drinking water sector needs in order to maintain and develop service for urban populations.”*

*(Togolese Republic 2010: 47)*

The second theme in relation to access to safe and affordable drinking water related to lack of investments, which PRSPs for countries, such as Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Niger and São Tomé and Príncipe recognised as one of the most significant impediments in maintaining and increasing water supply systems in their countries. This theme also interlinks with the lack of institutional capacity since capacity building tends to require sufficient financing. Furthermore, in Uganda (2010: 283-286), the fact that there was already a relative shortage of water

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<sup>54</sup> However, for Nicaragua (2010: 42) the reason for high technical loss rates in the water sector was partly due to the lack of maintenance but also partly due to the frequency of tremors and earthquakes.

in terms of physical water scarcity, required that in order to increase water coverage the country needed higher per capita cost technologies, which could not be attained due to the insufficient funding and limited financing options. Burundi (2012: 114) identified the low water rates as the main obstacle in order to mobilise resources toward increasing the supply of water systems. Similarly, in Tajikistan (2010: 46) collecting payments from water users, sanitation, housing and municipal services was inadequate partly due to the lack of a proper “rate policy designed to ensure the profitability of providing these services”. However, instead of lacking domestic or foreign investments for maintaining these public services, according to PRSP for Tajikistan (2010: 46), these investments were, however, not used in an effective manner within the respective sectors implying problems again with the institutional environment of the water sector.

*“Infrastructures are not managed in such a way as to guarantee the sustainability of safe water supply services. The beneficiaries of these services do not always pay their bills, resulting in serious deficiencies in water infrastructure maintenance in rural areas. The persistence of this problem impairs the performance of planned programs to expand water works.”*

*(Republic of Burundi 2012: 115)*

As mentioned, the lack of investments was in some countries related to the third theme of lack of payments from users of water services. Whether the inability and/or unwillingness to pay for water services was viewed as an impediment to increase required financing, and thus to maintain and extend the services or whether the inability and/or unwillingness to pay was viewed as an economic water scarcity issue itself differed among the countries. PRSPs for Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Uganda and Bangladesh distinguished the low purchasing power of the population, and thus the inability to pay for safe drinking water as an economic water scarcity issue. Paying for access to water was difficult, in particular, for the low-income communities and other vulnerable social groups as noted in PRSPs for Guinea and Bangladesh. Again, PRSP for Tajikistan (2010: 46) implied, that these issues and problems related to the inadequate institutional environment of the water sector since the problem of the inability to pay was also expounded by the lack of clearly defined and transparent policy that would provide social assistance to water related payments toward targeted social groups. As usual, the lack of investments as well as the inability and/or unwillingness to pay were concentrated, in particular, in rural areas, which were generally poorer than urban areas.

The last two themes – the conflict of needs and vandalism – in relation to economic water scarcity were reported much less frequently compared to the themes identified above. The former was concerned with the conflicting water needs of domestic consumption, such as water for

drinking, food and hygiene, and the important economic roles that water plays, such as a communication channel, source of electric power, and a factor in agricultural and industrial production (Democratic Republic of the Congo 2013: 87). Although majority of PRSPs had sections dedicated to water use in different production processes many of them did not recognise this as an issue of economic water scarcity. For example, Rwanda (2013: 21-44) distinguished the increasing demands of the commercial agricultural sector that put pressure on the water resources management, yet it gave preferential access to “electricity, water, roads, and land to priority sectors of the economy and/or large investors”. However, PRSPs for Tanzania and Togo, for example, recognised the potential conflict of needs between the ecosystem needs and the needs of domestic, industrial, business and agricultural consumers. The latter theme relating to vandalism and the lack of awareness, was only reported by Malawi and São Tomé and Príncipe as attributing to the lack of access to safe drinking water. Indeed, PRSP for Malawi (2012: 73), reported that more than 30% of all the non-functionality of the water infrastructure in the country was the result of theft and vandalism of the water supply systems.

## 5.2 Privatisation Measures

As mentioned in Chapter 2., privatisation is conceived as representing a continuum on which different measures are located. Hence, to answer the second research question of what sorts of privatisation measures were proposed or recommended in order to alleviate these water scarcity problems identified above Bakker’s (2014) framework on privatisation was adopted and modified for the purpose of operating as a useful analytical tool to identify different privatisation measures proposed in the research data. First, it has to be pointed out that the great majority of measures suggested to alleviate different physical and economic water scarcity issues and problems, were other than privatisation measures, such as capacity-building including training personnel; rehabilitating old and building new water supply infrastructures taking into account, in particular, rural areas and low income households; adopting water-saving irrigation measures; improving water catchments and rainwater harvesting; adoption of improved monitoring, information systems and research for safe drinking water; and increasing and allocating public investment efforts towards the social sector including water supply. Furthermore, some countries had plans to subsidy water for low-income families to increase access. Secondly, although the privatisation measures represented only a small minority of all the various measures to tackle water related issues and problems almost all countries had at least one mention of different privatisation strategies: privatisation, commercialisation and liberalisation of governance.

In addition to the range of different targets and strategic objectives to solve the water scarcity problems related to safe and affordable drinking water, 18 out of 25 PRSPs explicitly mentioned some sort of privatisation strategy – divestiture model and/or PPPs – to tackle these issues and problems. Altogether approximately 51 codes were identified as privatisation strategies. In addition to these 18 PRSPs at least Guinea-Bissau, Kyrgyz Republic, Mali, Senegal and Ethiopia forthwith recommended measures related to commercialisation and liberalisation of governance in their water sectors. Respectively, about 67 codes were identified as commercialisation strategies (including 24 codes for environmental economic valuation that was first supposed to be considered as a separate privatisation measure) and about 83 codes as liberalisation of governance strategies. Only two countries, Lesotho and São Tomé and Príncipe, did not suggest any water privatisation measures (including commercialisation and liberalisation of governance). However, São Tomé and Príncipe (2014: 30) stated that it considered privatising the energy infrastructure to make energy and water supply more competitive and efficient. Lesotho (2012: 146), in turn, recommended development of integrated land and water resource management programmes as one of its strategic objectives and actions. Yet, it remained unclear whether PRSP for Lesotho meant the IWRM approach in the manner encouraged by the Dublin Principles and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which would fall in this analysis under the strategy of liberalisation of governance. These strategies will be analysed in order of the ‘level’ of privatisation yet in a reverse order of frequency.

### 5.2.1 Strategies of Privatisation

Although, the majority of PRSPs proposed privatisation measures to tackle water scarcity issues, only Congo explicitly explained what sort of model of divestiture it recommended for its water supply system; PRSP for Congo (2012: 32) proposed a variety of different models through which privatisation can be accomplished, these included either management, lease or concession contract for which the private sector involvement and the extent to which private sector assumes responsibility of the water sector varies. Despite the lack of clearly spelled out models of divestitures, PRSPs for countries, such as Mauritania, Tanzania and Uganda, proposed more specific action plans in order to involve the private sector in the water sector<sup>55</sup>. For example, PRSP for Uganda (2010: 289-290) listed, first, the formulation of a PPP framework; secondly, diversifying the financing options for water

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<sup>55</sup> Tanzania (2011: 101-102), for example, included in its action plan the importance to ensure that the PPPs are pro-poor and develop inclusive markets for the poor. Furthermore, it also encouraged the investments, in particular, by the domestic private sector.

infrastructure; thirdly, providing education and training for local private sector players to develop capabilities; and finally strengthening the contractors' association. Furthermore, private sector participation and partnerships were desired, in particular, in the provision and delivery of water services; development of the sector; and management, operation and maintenance of the water supply systems. Assuming responsibility for these activities implies either shorter term service and/or management contracts whereby certain operation and maintenance responsibilities are transferred to a private company or longer term lease and/or affermage contracts whereby the responsibility for all functions are under a private operator.

*“Government is often constrained in mobilizing the required financial and technical resources to cope with the rising cost of financing the infrastructure deficit. Hence, it is the objective of the GSGDA [Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda] to actively promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to address the financing and capacity issues to ease the burden on the budget.”*

*(Republic of Ghana 2012a: 23)*

One of the main reasons stated for the desire to involve private sector in the water sector was the need for private investment and financing. Indeed, as Bangladesh (2013: 40) noted, water resources development is extremely costly, and thus it stated that it seeks PPPs “whenever possible”. It also reported that PPPs and private investments have been highly successful in rendering efficient delivery of different utility services (People’s Republic of Bangladesh 2013: 231). For example, Rwanda (2013: 40) stated that water availability in the rural areas could be extended with the help of private investments. Indeed, the strain on government budget that could be relieved through private investment was mentioned frequently in relation to private sector participation and partnerships by countries, such as Ghana, Tanzania and Bangladesh. In addition to the need for financing, PPPs were often considered also as one of the key elements in addressing institutional capacity issues and promoting good governance (People’s Republic of Bangladesh 2013: 231). These contracts between the government and the private sector that transfer the maintenance and expansion investment responsibilities or even the full responsibility of constructing the infrastructure from scratch on a private company imply models of divestiture of concession or BOT type of contracts.

### 5.2.2 Strategies of Commercialisation

Many of the privatisation measures, however, proposed in PRSPs, remained vaguer; many of the proposals merely ‘promoted’ and ‘encouraged’ the involvement of the private sector in the water

supply infrastructure or wanted to ‘strengthen’ and ‘enhance’ private sector participation and partnerships in the water sector. Furthermore, in Haiti (2014: 3-4) there was “a persuasive experiment” in the “process of operation in the sector of drinking water” whereas in Rwanda (2013: 54) the private sector management in the water sector was being “further explored alongside increased public investment”. In other cases, such as in Benin and Nicaragua, the private sector was a desired partner to participate in the development and consultation of new strategy efforts. Indeed, various PRSPs emphasised the need to create an enabling environment for the private sector participation and partnerships. According to PRSP for Tanzania (2011: 101), these measures to improve the environment for scaling up private sector involvement in the public utilities and infrastructure included, for example, fiscal incentives, government guarantees, land titling and ownership measures. Furthermore, Mauritania (2011: 130) included the sustainability of investment and efficient managing of water infrastructures as the two main actions to promote PPPs in the water sector. PRSPs for Congo, Tajikistan and Bangladesh also noted the importance of creating an environment that could attract local and foreign private investments. For example, Congo (2012: 281) stated, that the public utilities, including water supply, should be restructured in such a way as to “reduce costs and attract IDEs”.

*“One of the priority tasks of the “water supply, sanitation, and housing and municipal services” sector is to strengthen private business efforts and attract investments (task ii). Accordingly, there are plans to analyse the attractiveness of the sector from an investment perspective in order to evaluate the prospects for privatization or restructuring of facilities in the sector; proposals will be prepared with regard to providing state support for activities in this sphere.”*

*(Republic of Tajikistan 2010: 47)*

Furthermore, many PRSPs announced the implementation of various public reforms in the water sector yet without going into detail what these reforms specifically entailed. However, for example, Togo (2010: 99) outlined a plan to modernise and reconstruct the public administration in order to become more effective and improve the provision of public services. More specifically, it decided to create a public asset management company to take over the “programming and carrying out investments” in the water and sanitation sector (Togolese Republic 2010: 47). Many of the reforms introduced commercial principles as well as market-based performance indicators and incentives, such as cost recovery, demand-side measures, rate adjustments and the ‘polluter-pays’ principle. For example, cost recovery measures were proposed by countries, such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Niger, Burundi and Bangladesh. According to PRSP for Ghana (2012a: 156), cost recovery ensured the sustainability of water projects and promoted equity. Furthermore, Bangladesh (2013: 231)



considered “allowing profit-operations of providers of water and sanitation services in Pourashavas and urban slums”. Demand management measures and performance evaluation were also proposed in order to promote more efficient and sustainable water use. The improvement of performance criteria and evaluation of the water sector were sought, for example, via the instalment of water meters, creation of water management monitoring and evaluation systems and improved water databases.

### 5.2.3 Strategies of Liberalisation of Governance

Consequently, these reforms and restructuring of the public sector involved the outsourcing of state oversight and responsibilities. Indeed, the last strategy of liberalisation of governance can be seen as either a step toward private sector participation or as a by-product of privatisation measures as state responsibilities are delegated and decentralised to smaller scale government authorities or to non-state actors. For example, Benin (2011: 104) stated, that public institutions ought to focus mainly on “planning and overall monitoring” and “subcontract implementation to grassroots organizations, the private sector and NGOs”. Similarly, in Burundi, Ghana and Kyrgyz Republic the government was assumed to continue to take responsibility of the supplementation and implementation of existing coordination and cooperation structures whilst the ownership and maintenance of the drinking water services were delegated to the communities, communalities and/or Water Users’ Associations (WUAs). Although all the countries were not necessarily seeking to transfer ownership of water supply systems to non-state actors or local authorities, more than half of PRSPs sought to outsource the infrastructure management as well as to decentralise decisionmaking processes to NGOs, the private sector, and/or WUAs and local communities. For example, the Bangladeshi government (2013: 234) outsourced its oversight in water quality control mechanisms to laboratories developed at Upazila (district) levels. Indeed, the majority of PRSPs proposed measures to increase the participation of multiple stakeholders at various levels in financing, management, renewal of equipment and/or monitoring of the water supply systems (Republic of Benin 2011: 60).

*“Bottom up demand responsive planning, sustainable development through Local bodies, increased involvement of NGOs, CBOs and women groups, gradual increment of community cost-sharing and introduction of economic pricing, assigning priority to under-served & un-served areas, poverty alleviation, promotion of private sectors, arsenic mitigation, human resources development, strengthening & improvement of existing technologies through research & development activities, protection of environment, climate change and global warming etc. have been the key issues addressed during preparation of the plan.”*

*(People’s Republic of Bangladesh 2013: 237)*

These measures reformed government priorities toward the creation of WUAs; establishing partnerships between the authorities, NGOs and communities; strengthening the collaboration of between these stakeholders; empowering and building capacities, such as technical and management capacities of all the players in the water sector. The decentralisation and delegation of decisionmaking processes to multiple stakeholders and the liberalisation of governance in the water sector also relates to the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach, which emphasises the multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance of water resources. Indeed, at least 12 PRSPs mentioned the inclusion of the IWRM perspective in relation to the sustainable use and management of water resources. In addition, for example, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Malawi incorporated other forms of integrated water and land resources management principals in their PRSPs, which seemed to resemble similar processes as in the IWRM: “sub-sector specific priorities are to improve utilization of water resources by interconnecting different sectors and users, ensure fair and equitable utilization of water resources taking into consideration existing demand and future generations’ needs” (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2011a: 77). As Rwanda (2013: 54) points out, however, these measures can be sought together with increased public expenditure in safe and affordable drinking water supply.

### 5.3 Framings to Justify Water Privatisation

To examine how water privatisation is justified in the sampling of 25 PRSPs, a frame analysis was conducted by operationalising and incorporating Gamson and Lasch’s (1981) ‘signature matrix’ with van Hulst and Yarrow’s (2016) framing process scheme. By doing this, four (4) principal frames or framings were distinguished and ordered in terms of prevalence in **Table 2**: development frame; economic good frame; anti-government frame; and right frame. These frames are named based on their main motivation for water privatisation. Although these frames or framings were let to emerge largely abductively during the process of analysis, whenever new frames were identified, the prior literature was returned to in order to examine whether similar frames were being operationalised elsewhere. Hence, as the frame analysis proceeded, existing definitions were also considered and incorporated into the study whenever applicable. This was done in order to avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’ and further complicating the existing operational definitions of frames in the context of privatisation of natural resources (Linström and Marais 2012: 27-30).

**Table 2 – Justification Frames for Water Privatisation**

Metaphors	Exemplars	Catch-phrases	Depictions	Roots	Consequences	Appeals to principle	Sense-making	Naming	Storytelling
<b>Development Frame</b>									
Socio-economic development is a linear upward movement	Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	Sustainable development; poverty reduction; economic infrastructure; present and future generations' needs	Water privatisation depicted as an instrument for development	PRSP countries are lacking behind in development achieved by the developed countries	Water privatisation contributes to socio-economic development	Western notion of teleological progress Principle of sustainable development	Developing countries need water privatisation for economic growth and development	There is no apparent conflict between economic growth and sustainability	Privatisation is a key instrument to achieve superior Western-style, yet sustainable, economic development that leads to peace and prosperity
Economic development is waging a war or racing			Water scarcity depicted as an obstacle to development			Precept of one-size-fits-all Poverty reduction		Developed countries vs. developing countries	
Well-being as productivity and wealth			Socio-economic development depicted as sustainable					Development vs. under-development	
<b>Economic Good Frame</b>									
Water is an economic good	Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)	Rational management of water resources; scarcity; conflict of needs	IWRM approach to water management depicted as rational and proper	Water resources are scarce.	Water privatisation allows for treating water resources as economic goods	Tragedy of the commons Principle of scarcity and shortage Law of supply and demand Law of marginal utility Precept of rationality	Water resources must be sufficiently valued to avoid their irrational use	Water as religious, aesthetic and/or communal value not recognised Consumptive vs. non-consumptive uses Rationality vs. irrationality	The greatest utility from scarce water resources is achieved through privatisation since markets allocate these resources in the most rational and efficient way
Water infrastructure is a mechanism of the economy			Water resources are depicted as scarce					Valued vs. undervalued	
Water needs are measured on a scale			Water users are depicted as consumers					Scarcity vs. abundance	

**Table 2 - Justification Frames for Water Privatisation (continued)**

Metaphors	Exemplars	Catch-phrases	Depictions	Roots	Consequences	Appeals to principle	Sense-making	Naming	Storytelling
<b>Anti-government Frame</b>									
State is a medical patient Private investments are rare-earth elements Economy is climate Decentralisation is communal harmony	Past experiences of successful privatisation operations in other sectors and/or countries Past experiences of poor public water governance and management	Good governance; capacity building; public-private partnership; PPP-model; strategic partnership; participation; empowerment	Public investments are depicted as inefficient Water privatisation is depicted as efficient Private sector and NGOs are depicted as modern, youthful and professional	Government is corrupt, inefficient and financially constrained	Water privatisation reduces government responsibility to supply water	Anti-government sentiment Principle of balancing the budgets Freedom from state interference Principle of local collective action	Government has failed to supply water to its people	Nature of water infrastructure as a natural monopoly not recognised Government vs. the people Government vs. private sector, NGOs and local communities.	Privatising water to the people obviates rigid and corrupt government to focus its limited resources in improving the investment climate
<b>Right Frame</b>									
Water is a right Right-holders are victims Rights are universal	Nicaragua's presidential mandate of human right to water	Human right to water; universal accessibility; access to water for all	Right to water depicted as fair, equitable and affordable Right to water depicted as benefiting the most socially disadvantaged people	Legitimate right to water has not been met	Water privatisation increases access to water	Western notion of human rights Moral universality White mans burden	Water privatisation helps to meet peoples right to water	Duties to provide access to water not recognised Accessibility vs. inaccessibility Poor vs. rich	Privatisation increases access to the universal right to water for the poor and vulnerable

All the documents were, first, roughly coded based on the type of justifications they gave for water privatisations. Secondly, based on this initial coding, the codes were grouped and categorised into tentative frames, which were then combined and dissected by regularly returning to the texts and ‘testing out’ these emergent frames. Finally, these tentative frames were refined into the four principal framings examined in further detail below. Indeed, one or more of the four principal frames were represented in all 25 PRSPs that were analysed. In terms of access to safe drinking water, only PRSPs for Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, Lesotho and Mali were guided more or less by a single framing<sup>56</sup>. As mentioned above, regardless of the lack of explicit water privatisation measures in PRSPs for São Tomé and Príncipe and Lesotho some of the identified framings were, nonetheless, found in their PRSPs in the context of water supply systems. Although all of the four principal frames had their own distinctive packages of integrated elements, and thus could be distinguished from one another, these frames or framings largely overlapped within the documents. Indeed, these artificial yet distinctive frames built upon each other and created an even firmer foundation for justifying water privatisation.

### 5.3.1 Development Frame

Development Frame underpinned on some level all PRSPs as these documents were written for the very reason to receive debt relief and IFI-provided loans for the promotion of socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Similar development goals were also promulgated by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which all of the 25 countries also incorporated into their PRSP frameworks. Hence, beyond access to safe drinking water, Development Frame was explicitly manifested in all PRSPs. As seen in **Table 2**, water privatisation was justified more or less on the basis of framing these measures as required steps or stages along singular linear upward movement of economic development sought for by all PRSPs. Indeed, the inherently Western idea of progress is deeply embedded in the language of PRSPs as ‘economic growth’ and ‘modernisation’ can ‘propel’, ‘leverage’ and ‘accelerate’ the “transition into a middle-income country” (Republic of Ghana 2012: 13). In relation to this well-known conceptual metaphor of progress, economic development *along* this linear upward ‘path’ was conceptualised frequently as a war or race between countries; developing countries, in particular, ought to ‘urgently and aggressively invest’ and ‘mobilise resources’ in order to ‘boost competitiveness’ and ‘optimise performance’. Indeed, this race

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<sup>56</sup> In terms of their water supply systems, PRSPs for Kyrgyz Republic and Lesotho were guided by economic good frame whilst the development frame guided the justification for water privatisation in PRSP for Mozambique. Respectively, the right frame dominated in PRSP for Mali.

among countries along the progress ‘path’ creates *ranks* of different countries on different developmental stages. By employing this language, the Development Frame reproduces the dichotomous and largely fictitious distinction between a group of countries already economically developed and those still midway along the path.

*”Access to good quality infrastructure services is an indicator of both economic development and social welfare and an essential instrument for modernizing the economy. It is, therefore, an end in itself and a means to achieving the shared growth and prosperity envisioned by the “Future Path.” Indeed, access to roads, energy, water, and telecommunications is a key indicator of the quality of life. At the same time, these services are essential production inputs and thus components of the production factor, transaction, and distribution costs that determine national competitiveness. They also make it possible to connect economic operators with domestic, regional, and international markets and thus relieve the isolation of people living in pockets of poverty.”*

*(Republic of Congo 2012: 26)*

Furthermore, morality of economic development was framed through the metaphor of well-being as productivity and wealth. Access to water was justified based on increased ‘productive capacity’ and ‘productivity of the population’. For example, in Guinea (2013: 25) “insufficient access to safe drinking water” prevented particularly women and girls “from doing other work that could bring in income”. Similarly, in Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania and Togo access to water and water supply systems were “perceived as major sources of inequality and inefficiency with regard to contribution to economic growth” (Republic of Senegal 2013: 8). Indeed, water infrastructure in PRSPs was depicted as ‘economic infrastructure’ or ‘productivity enhancing infrastructure’ – i.e., an instrument for economic development. Beyond its usefulness in meeting safe drinking water needs of the people, water infrastructure became an integral part of the larger progress metaphor toward well-being as wealth and productivity. For example, PRSP for Burundi (2012: 126) noted that “water resources are mainly used for domestic purposes and minimally for development activities” implying a moral imperative to further maximise “the contribution of water to economic growth”. Hence, water privatisation was justified to encourage private investments ‘in areas with productive potential’. The relationship toward private investments in the Development Frame was, indeed, twofold; private investments were desired both to develop economic infrastructure, including water supply systems, and the increased “supply of public goods in this area will leverage private sector investment” (Republic of Rwanda 2013: 40). Private investments were, indeed, framed as a gateway to socio-economic development and further private investments.

*“The MDGS II budget framework will be geared towards creating and enabling environment for private sector development and improving economic infrastructure such as energy, road networks, water systems and telecommunications.”*

*(Republic of Malawi 2012: 12)*

In addition to being depicted as ‘effective’ and ‘expeditious’, development and economic growth were predominantly depicted as ‘sustainable’, ‘equitable’ and ‘inclusive’. In the context of safe drinking water, the water supply systems ought to be developed “to improve quality of life and to accelerate development of the country in a sustained manner taking into consideration of poverty alleviation, promotion of private sectors, arsenic mitigation, human resources development, protection of environment, gender issues, climate change and global warming” (People’s Republic of Bangladesh 2013: 236). However, this depiction simultaneously separates it from the developmental stages of the traditional Western notion of progress that do not historically include the principles of sustainability. Hence, there is a conflict between ‘traditional’ economic growth and sustainability, which was latently highlighted in the development goals of PRSPs. However, instead of explicitly addressing this conflict between what *is* sought after and what *ought* to be sought after in relation to economic development, the Development Frame tries to encompass both – if not opposing, at least mutually exclusive – views through the operationalisation of ‘sustainable development’. Sustainable development was, indeed, a catchphrase as well as an appeal to principle found in all 25 PRSPs. Indeed, without employing this language of sustainable development, this framing would not be as morally appealing as a justification for water privatisation in terms of development and economic growth.

### 5.3.2 Economic Good Frame

In contrast to the Development Frame, Economic Good Frame is not incorporated into similar explicit quantifiable goals. However, the extent to which PRSPs addressed water and other natural resources in economic terms suggests at how widely the Economic Good Frame saturated justifications for water privatisation in all 25 PRSPs. Indeed, the framing is named by its main conceptual metaphor – water is an economic good. It is both a means and an end itself since, according to the framing, treating water as an economic good or commodity introduces market forces into new areas whilst conserving and preserving the scarce resource. This metaphor is embedded in the language of PRSPs since water is conceptualised as ‘natural capital’, ‘national asset’ and ‘economic resource’ as well as ‘undervalued’ implying that water’s “economic potential has not been fully tapped” (Kingdom of Lesotho 2012: 13). Indeed, water resources are widely framed in terms of

economic laws and concepts, such as the law of supply and demand; expecting ‘profit’ or ‘profitability’; avoiding ‘losses’ and ‘transaction and distribution costs’; and seeking ‘cost-effectiveness’ and ‘cost-recovery’. Furthermore, there are numerous exemplars of the aforementioned IWRM approach that argues for valuing water as a finite economic commodity. As mentioned above, almost half of PRSPs applied the IWRM approach to their water resources planning and management. Indeed, alongside the Development Frame, Economic Good Frame also dominated in framing justifications of water privatisation in PRSPs.

Following the framing of water as an economic good or commodity, the Economic Good Frame found in PRSPs, identified two related conceptual metaphors: conceptualising water infrastructure as a mechanism of the economy, and ‘balancing’ and ‘reconciling’ water demands as a scale. According to the former, basic services, such as water supply systems, are frequently understood as key ‘production inputs’ or ‘components of the production factor’ that can be ‘optimised’ as mechanisms of a machine. This framing justifies water privatisation as required tweaks to keep the economy going as a well-oiled machine. According to the latter, increased and diversified demands are conceptualised as weights on a scale that ought to be balanced in order to find ‘equilibrium’ between “domestic, industrial, business and agricultural consumers [and] ecosystem needs” in the context of, if not scarce, at least finite water resources (United Republic of Tanzania 2011: 55). The metaphorical scale implies that these needs can be measured as having equal ‘weight’, and by satisfying the other needs the opposing needs increase in proportion. Indeed, water management and governance – in particular, the IWRM approach – that can “conserve the water and related resources and ensure sustainable and integrated water use thereby promoting equity and avoiding potential water use conflicts” was depicted as ‘rational’ and ‘proper’ (Republic of Uganda 2010: 333-334). Indeed, 13 PRSPs encouraged some form of ‘rationalisation’ of water consumption and use. Hence, water privatisation can introduce market forces to balance this ‘conflict of needs’ as a rational calculation of equal values.

*“The implementation strategies for potable water supply are to ensure a dependable and sustainable water supply based on demand and efficiency measures. Sustainable and feasible technologies will be implemented to improve the rural water supply coverage. Active management and operational mechanism of existing water facilities will be ensured. Water economy measures will be developed and implemented for existing water schemes and, before they are constructed for new schemes. Additional implementation strategies will aim to satisfy water demand at the household level while taking account of the country’s capacity. This strategy will use criteria based on socio-economic criteria to assure consumers of an equitable and efficient distribution, and utilization of the water in excess of the basic demand. A strategy will be pursued to prioritize low cost schemes and projects that will be implemented through loans, implement measures such*



*as cost-recovery in urban water supply, and build capacity at all levels of water resources management.”*

*(Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: 2011: 78)*

Since scarcity of water resources was framed as the causal starting point of the Economic Good Frame, justification for water privatisation measures was framed in terms of allowing for economic valuation of water through economic laws, concepts and pricing, such as user charges and water rates. These water rate systems, that many PRSPs suggested, sought to, however, recover only the costs of operating and maintaining water supply systems. Moreover, these water rates were supposed to be “affordable and targeted to vulnerable groups” (Republic of Burundi 2012: 115-116). Nonetheless, basic economic principles, such as the concept of scarcity, the law of supply and demand and the law of marginal utility evidently guided the Economic Good Frame. These principles are supposed to naturally govern the markets and allocate resources efficiently on the basis of the greatest utility. Since these resources were framed as scarce, according to the narrative of the Economic Good Frame, these resources will be priced accordingly thereby diverting their frivolous and irrational consumption to more rational use, thus *naturally* conserving and protecting these resources. Indeed, collective irrational overuse of the water resources was framed as the inevitable consequence of water use that is not sufficiently valued. Hence, water privatisation measures are deemed, if not compulsory, at least essential in order to avoid the ‘tragedy of the commons’ that appeals to the moral principles of the Economic Good Frame.

### 5.3.3 Anti-government Frame

The management and governance of water supply systems was framed more or less in all PRSPs as polarisation between government and alternative water operating entities as seen in the **Table 2**. These alternative entities included, for example, NGOs, the private sector and local water managing communities, such as WUAs. Depicting the government as inefficient in its use of investments as well as lacking skilled personnel, interagency coordination, transparency, accountability and responsibility for the management of water supply systems polarised this framing further. On one hand, the public sector was poorly governed and lacked financial resources and, on the other hand, water development was too costly. In majority of PRSPs, the Anti-government Frame was balanced, however, with simultaneous increase in public expenditure. Yet, the government was frequently conceptualised as a well-known metaphor of the medical patient as *someone* having to ‘recover’ and ‘relieve’ from their ‘weight’, ‘strain’ or ‘burden’. Respectively, government budget was

conceptualised as a physical ‘constraint’, ‘obstacle’ or ‘impediment’ to be overcome. Furthermore, the Anti-government Frame was strengthened via examples of failures of the public sector in providing basic services to its people. For example, in Democratic Republic of the Congo (2013: 84-85), persisting conflicts “stimulated the population to learn how to take care of themselves without depending much on public authorities.” Moreover, narrowing down the government’s role and outsourcing some of its responsibilities through water privatisation measures was framed to mean more ‘freed up space’ within governments’ finite means and resources to be used in other areas of importance.

Named and categorised as the opposing end of this polarisation between government and alternative water managing entities in the Anti-government Frame were the private and non-governmental sectors, which were depicted as more professional, modern and efficient. These sectors had the technical skills and financial capacities needed to overcome budgetary constraints of the government. Furthermore, different privatisation measures were regarded not only as improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of water accessibility but also in the protection and conservation of water resources. Exemplars of different successful privatisation measures either in other sectors – such as energy, education, health, telecommunications and transportation – or even in other countries were framed as testimony of the inability of the public sector to provide these services adequately without strategic partnerships with the private and non-governmental sectors or decentralisation processes. Indeed, this Anti-government Frame distinguishes two related conceptual metaphors around private investments; first, private investments were highly valuable rare-earth elements that the government must ‘attract’ and ensure their ‘security’ and ‘securitisation’. In Tanzania and Uganda, for example, investments by the domestic private sector were particularly encouraged. Secondly, the well-known metaphor of economy as climate implies that once the ‘environment for scaling up private sector participation’ is improved, investments, left to their own devices, will grow organically as plants in a preferable climate where enough water and nourishment-rich soil is provided.

*“Within the framework of national recovery, several lines of development are envisaged. Although the state cannot delegate its powers in the area of public safety and justice, for instance, it is thought feasible to have recourse to private partners in some sectors without negative effects on the public interest. Such an approach is particularly appropriate and timely in the areas of establishing and operating equipment and infrastructure. Experiments have been made outside of Haiti. Private investors and operators have built and managed ports, airports, waste collection and treatment facilities, facilities for producing and distributing drinking water and energy, to name only a few. Within Haiti, a persuasive experiment is in the process of operation in the sector of drinking water, while others already exist in sectors such as energy and telecommunications.*”

*Use of private capital for certain projects answers at least two criteria of usefulness: on the one hand, it allows the public sector to concentrate its human and financial resources in its preferred domains, while improving performance in those domains, and on the other hand, it stimulates private investment and reduces the need for financial resources to be mobilized by the taxing system, or by official development assistance (ODA). In this context, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance is currently organizing an entity for promoting and managing public/private partnerships.”*

*(Republic of Haiti 2014: 3-4)*

The Anti-government Frame identified in this study, manifested in PRSPs not so much as suspicion toward the tyranny of centralised and hierarchical power but as an inherent inefficiency, rigidity and inadequacy of the government. As mentioned above, decentralisation of water supply systems to different local levels was consistently suggested as a privatisation measure in the majority of PRSPs. Furthermore, this decentralisation process was conceptualised as a form of communal, even familial, harmony whereby local water users were ‘empowered’ to ‘participate’ in the ‘autonomous’, ‘mutually beneficial’ and ‘harmonious intersectoral coordination’ of the water supply sector. This ‘intercommunal’, ‘multi-village’ and ‘community-based’ decentralisation of the decisionmaking process promoted sustainability of the water resources. This idea of conserving and protecting water resources more effectively was further strengthened by framing the “decentralized approach and delegating ownership of safe drinking water services to the communalities” as ‘eco-citizenship’, ‘solidarity’ and ‘social responsibility’ (Republic of Burundi 2012: 115). These adaptive, harmonious and nearly organic qualities were not relayed to the decisionmaking processes of the governments found in PRSPs. One notable exception, however, was Kyrgyz Republic wherein the lack of coordination and regulation in the water supply systems of drinking water followed from decentralisation, which resulted in major water safety concerns. Nonetheless, in the context of agriculture, PRSP for Kyrgyz Republic (2014: 124) stated, that irrigation systems “will be gradually transferred for ownership or long-term management to WCA/federations”.

*“To the extent possible, public institutions must focus on the planning and overall monitoring of the activities carried out, and subcontract implementation to grassroots organizations, the private sector and NGOs. The private sector will be invited to participate in the development strategy effort through in-kind and financial contributions to the programs aimed at the poor. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) will also be promoted in the areas of design, funding, building, management and maintenance of projects serving the public interest. The sectors typically or potentially concerned include those of drinking water, wastewater treatment, sanitation, transport, energy, telecommunications, tourism, health and education. The adoption of PPP is basically motivated by the need for increased effectiveness in the use of public funds and for better value for money in certain services of general interest. With regard to the funding of infrastructure investment, PPP relaxes State budget constraints by involving the private sector in risk-taking. Recourse to private capital reduces the need for public borrowing.”*

*(Republic of Benin 2011: 104)*

The superiority of the competition-induced efficiency of the free market is traditionally incorporated into the anti-government sentiment. The Anti-government Frame identified here considered as its causal starting point the heavy budgetary constraints of the government. The public sector was financially and technically too weak to provide safe drinking water to the people, and thus different forms of water privatisation measures had to be explored for financing and capacity building. In particular, low-income and Highly Indebted Countries (HIPC), due to their economic circumstances, ought to focus on saving and balancing their budgets instead of increasing public expenditure. Indeed, the Anti-government Frame, found in PRSPs, emphasised the polarisation between the government and ‘the people’ instead of the government and the markets. The former dichotomy allows to justify water privatisation whilst omitting the discussion about market failures. Instead, the narrative revolves around the question of whether ‘the people’, framed to consist of water managing entities outside the public sector, can assist in providing access to water via different privatisation measures as the government has failed to do so. Hence, freedom from state interference is not only framed in terms of traditional *laissez faire* but more importantly in the form of communal ownership and participatory decisionmaking.

#### 5.3.4 Right Frame

Although the universal access to safe drinking water is embraced as a justified goal by all PRSPs, the right to water was explicitly recognised only by Nicaragua, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. Furthermore, Nicaragua and Guinea were the only countries that emphasised their commitment to, in particular, the human right to water in their PRSPs. Despite the lack of manifest dominance in PRSPs, the Right Frame was identified as its own distinctive framing since it, nonetheless, was deeply involved in justifying water privatisation measures beyond the exact ‘rights talk’. The main conceptual metaphor in the Right Frame was, indeed, water as a right – according to which the framing was named – that people hold as an entitlement. This metaphorical right does not entitle people to specific water resources but instead more abstractly to ‘equitable distribution’ to ‘protection’ and ‘access’ to water. In relation to this, these rights are conceptualised as ‘universal’ providing access to water ‘for all’, ‘the general public’ and ‘the people’. Outside the context of water, the Western conception of moral universality of human rights underpinned the Right Frame’s appeals to principle. This human right principle was expressed in all PRSPs (except Haiti and São Tomé and Príncipe) whilst, its more stringent counterpart, *duty* was not recognised. Framing access to water as a right particularly based on a principle as influential as the human rights doctrine, diverts the focus from duties that these

rights entail. Framing justifications for water privatisation in terms of rights avoids the need to specify the duty-bearers.

*“Emphasizing the importance of the sector, a presidential mandate elevated the human right of access to drinking water and sanitation to the category of a roundtable, which was established in June 2009 and has the mission of updating the Sectoral Drinking Water and Sanitation Strategy, based on the proposals for urban and rural water and sanitation strategies developed by the national water authority (ENACAL) and the Social Investment Emergency Fund (FISE). This will result in a new Urban and Rural Water and Sanitation Strategy that prioritizes the equitable well-being of citizens in harmony with the proper use and good management of the resource. Consultation will be conducted on this proposal with Citizen Power Councils, international donors, the private sector, and social and labor movements.”*

*(Republic of Nicaragua 2010: 63)*

As mentioned above, the lack of access to water was an issue more or less in all PRSPs. Accordingly, the *right* to water was also depicted as unmet implying that “much work still needs to be done to create lasting improvements in public access to this basic service” (Islamic Republic of Mauritania 2011: 129). Furthermore, the Right Frame identified here, conceptualised rights-holders largely as victims suggesting a lack of agency and a need of assistance; indeed, people who had the right to water were, in particular, ‘vulnerable people’. Hence, by employing the Right Frame all action and decisionmaking regarding people’s water needs as rights could be transferred to an externality. Although the right to water was depicted as ‘fair’ and ‘equitable’, it was also described as ‘affordable’. However, particularly the most vulnerable people cannot always afford water or can afford it in much lesser quantities than others albeit being, for example, subsidised water. Furthermore, not all in need of subsidised water are eligible for it. Hence, the Right Frame identified here does not imply right to free water but instead right to affordable water – whether this results in fair and equitable access to water is not addressed. Yet, according to the Right Frame, if water privatisation can increase efficiency gains, and thus increase access to water in a fair and equitable manner – for those who can afford – water privatisation is justified.

## 6. Discussion

*This chapter will discuss the meanings and implications of the above findings, and how these results apply to the broader literature explored in previous chapters and prior research. This will be done by briefly summarising the key findings; assessing the meaning of these results by drawing upon water literature and the neoclassical economic as a theory of justice; and making inferences about water privatisation in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to the global context and the (meta)governance of water by the international financial institutions (IFIs). Indeed, the larger implications of the results are discussed and how these findings contribute to the justifications that are made for private sector involvement in the water sector.*

The 25 PRSPs provided a useful sampling that was diverse enough to produce rich research material presenting different contexts yet similar enough particularly in their water privatisation proposals that allows for careful generalisations. Indeed, with regards to the problems related to access to water, it was found that water scarcities were mostly economic rather than physical. Simply put, the main problem was uneven and/or unequal access to water. In fact, many countries reported in their PRSPs that they enjoyed rather abundant water resources within their borders yet simultaneously suffered from water scarcities. This is supported by the literature on ‘global water crisis’ that maintains that defining water scarcities can be a political issue rather than a ‘natural’ biophysical issue of physical shortage of water. Indeed, as Bakker (2014: 471) concluded, the scarcity problem is better described as multitudinous local *economic* water scarcities. The themes that were found in relation to either physical or economic water scarcity were highly interdependent. Themes under physical water scarcity were climate change; population growth; seasonal and spatial water shortages; unsustainable and excessive use of water; and lack of cooperation on transboundary water. Whereas the themes under economic water scarcity were lack of institutional capacity; lack of investments; inability or unwillingness to pay; conflict of needs; and vandalism. Although these themes were considered largely independent of each other in the preliminary analysis of the results, they were undeniably interwoven and could not be assessed separately, for example, from a policymaking point of view.

From the perspective of neoclassical economics, which emphasises the allocation of *scarce* resources among competing ends in the most optimal and efficient manner, it was found that water resources do not, in fact, adhere to the scarcity theory that neoclassical economics is based on. Although water resources are finite by nature, and thus can in this way be depleted, the results suggest that water resources do not at least readily fit under this theory whereby the value of the resources is determined by private competition and the interaction between supply and demand. In this context, it was interesting to find that, regardless of the lack of physical water shortages in PRSPs, except in

PRSPs for Uganda, Togo and Tajikistan (wherein the lack of absolute freshwater resources alone was not, however, dire enough to prevent satisfying the water needs of the people), some sort of water privatisation measure was provided as a solution in almost all PRSPs. Indeed, the discrepancy between problems identified with access to safe drinking water and privatisation proposals provided to tackle them imply slightly similar points that were made in assessing neoclassical economics as a theory of justice: regardless of the inconsistency between a real life problem and the ideal world existing merely in economic theories, the legal order ought to at least mimic the *potentiality* of Pareto optimality in the form of privatisation of water supply systems to create (ideally) perfect competition of (ideally) scarce resources.

As was argued in the studies conducted by Urquijo et al. (2015) and Verduijn et al. (2012), framing water scarcity as urgent and alarming issue by language, such as ‘global water crisis’, ‘blue gold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ and even ‘water wars’, justifies passing water laws and policies that would not necessarily be as readily accepted. Framing water as a ‘crisis’ makes it easier to push for otherwise questionable policies. However, similar alarming language was not found in PRSPs analysed in this thesis. Perhaps, this was due to the fact that PRSPs in general adhere to highly technical language that is depoliticised and ‘rational’. Indeed, in the assessment of PRSPs, in Chapters 3., it was argued that PRSPs provide narrowly technical ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions to fit the technical problems they define. Indeed, whereas problems related to water scarcities were more varied, the solutions in terms of privatisation measures, however, were rather similar. These measures were specified into three categories: strategies of privatisation, strategies of commercialisation and strategies of liberalisation of governance. This similarity between the solutions to increase access to water across widely different countries and contexts is supported by the discussion around ‘global water crisis’; there is a tendency to merge water crises into one global water crisis with only a few technical solutions, which, in the selected PRSPs, were represented by the three strategies of water privatisation measures.

Also, an interesting result regarding privatisation measures was that the ‘highest’ level of private sector involvement, i.e., privatisation strategies, were the least frequently proposed privatisation measures in PRSPs. Instead, commercialisation and liberalisation of governance strategies were proposed more often. Although these differences in frequency were minimal, the fact that there have been numerous failures with different water privatisation measures around the world, as Lobina (2017) and McDonald and Swyngedouw (2019) reported, and the remunicipalisations of water have been increasing since the 2000s suggest that the interest toward ‘higher’ level of private

sector involvement has been diminishing. Moreover, the interest toward full divestiture model – which has only been experimented by a handful of countries, mainly England and Chile – has never been the central interest of cities nor private companies. Consequently, this thesis aims to argue that instead of implying changes in ownership, the privatisation measures suggest an on-going organisational and institutional shift from ‘state hydraulic’ to ‘market conservation’ mode of water management and governance whereby the state restructures itself to assimilate private sector ways of thinking and ‘doing business’. Indeed, the ‘public’ is already highly guided by the market logic whereby the difference between privatisation and public sector control of water supply systems becomes largely irrelevant. Hence, although the state is still a powerful actor itself, it has also aligned its interest according the prevailing hegemonic (meta)governing values, norms and principles of neoliberalism and neoclassical economics.

With regards to the main question of the study that looked for justifications behind water privatisation, four frames were identified in PRSPs that to differing extents justified these water privatisation measures. These frames were development frame, economic good frame, anti-government frame, and right frame. It could be further specified that development frame and right frame mostly provided answers to *why* water privatisation was justified whereas economic good frame and anti-government frame mostly focused on answering *how* water privatisation was justified. However, these frames and framings do not fit neatly into these categories, and all do describe the many sides of the privatisation question. These frames depict a seemingly larger governmental and ideological shift away from Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) to post-Washington Consensus and PRSPs by the IFIs. In terms of water privatisation, this shift manifested in the ‘strategic retreat’ of privatisation commenced around the turn of millennium. Indeed, as Craig and Porter (2003: 54) maintained in Chapter 3., PRSPs reflect a ‘Third Way remorphing’ of previous neoliberal approaches whereby cities around the world are experiencing a ‘shallow expansion’ of water privatisation in conjunction with simultaneous ‘strategic retreat’. Indeed, as this thesis will argue, these same neoliberal normative hegemonic conceptions of ‘good governance’ that guided SAPs are merely discussed, formulated and applied in new ways in PRSPs whereby water privatisation became justified on the basis of neoclassical economics as a theory of justice; *water privatisation is just since it allows for valuing water as an economic good outside government interference, which results in sustainable development, thus fulfilling right to water.*

Economic good frame and anti-government frame focus on framing water privatisation as rational, and thus more or less a ‘value-free’ policy measure. These framings suggest to some



extent a ‘removal’ of politics from the issue of privatisation, which is, however, inherently political. Indeed, suspicion toward the government relates to the broader suspicion toward politics and politically motivated individuals found in the assessment of neoclassical economics as a theory of justice. Indeed, as Bakker (2003a: 330-331) noted, one characteristic that distinguished the current ‘shallow expansion’ of water privatisations was the criticism toward state legitimacy and state indebtedness. As was found in Konak and Sungu-Eryilmaz’s (2016) study, the Turkish government framed water as an economic good and private resource, which assisted in the hydropower developments of the country increasing employment and income. Indeed, water became framed as an economic good outside of the public sector control by the government itself – pointing again at the influence of the current water (meta)governing paradigm that the state has also increasingly aligned its interests with. As (Fine 2006) argued in Chapter 2., since neoclassical economics as a theory of justice has paradoxically succeeded in appropriating the realm of value freedom, it has become the flag post of rationality guiding not only economics but all areas of life. In fact, the important element of neoclassical economics as a theory of justice has been its ability to adapt to widely different situations and applications.

The ostensible lack of value judgements relates to the ‘value-free’ notions of science, progress and modernity that are not traditionally contested since they are *rational*. This way, the economic good frame together with the development frame provides a strong justification for water privatisation as the only rational measure to climb the only rational ‘path’ to progress. In the process of frame analysis, the study initially identified between two separate tentative frames: economic growth frame and a more people-centred human development frame. This was due to the heavy emphasis found in PRSPs on the social benefits that water privatisation measures would accrue to the people and to the overall social development of the countries implementing PRSPs. This is somewhat similar to what Bohman and Raitio (2014) found in their study of framing water in Ghana as water for independence and development, and water for productivity. The authors found that framing water shifted in Ghana in the 1990s and 2000s towards productivity, which also coincides with the introduction of SAPs and PRSPs. Similarly, this thesis quickly acknowledged that this separation did not hold any longer since the social benefits were tightly linked to economic growth. In fact, instead of imagining true alternatives, the same ‘path’ of progress – which is based on national incomes whereby developing countries remain representative of the ‘bottom’ – was emphasised yet with an additional requirement of sustainability. Water privatisation was an inherent part of development, which in itself was not questioned – development is undeniably a virtue since it is rational.

Indeed, whereas during the Washington Consensus SAPs were much more explicit in their neoliberal approach to development policies and the ‘path’ to progress, PRSPs cushioned these policies with more socially and ecologically acceptable language, which was also pointed out in Chapter 3. Although the prior literature on water tends to consider framing water as a right as opposite to framing water as an economic good, both of them, however, can be used to justify water privatisation measures as Bakker (2012) maintained in Chapter 4. Indeed, the right frame, found in PRSPs, justifies water privatisation on the grounds that it can provide water for all. In fact, in terms of appeals to principle, the right frame might justify water privatisation even more successfully than the economic good frame; rights-based arguments act as highly compelling justifications, in particular, after the human right to water was established in 2010. Therefore, the right frame and economic good frame together can provide a powerful framing for water privatisation as a justified means to fulfil the rights of people to fair and equitable access to water since it is the only rational way to manage scarce water resources that are essential to meet the basic needs of people. Hence, the same neoliberal project and policies based on neoclassical economics and Pareto optimality, are justified by drawing on innovative language and new frames and framings of water privatisation.

The four frames together were more or less embedded in the neoclassical economics as a theory of justice, thus validating the initial hypothesis of the study. Thereby, water privatisation is the most efficient, and thus just way to allocate water resources since it creates a competitive equilibrium whereby water resources become allocated in a Pareto optimal manner. However, if we take the principle of Pareto optimality seriously, it does not follow from this argument, however, that water privatisation measures as such deliver to this end. This is, first, due to the fact that Pareto optimal competition cannot be achieved without alterations and concessions since Pareto optimal allocation of resources takes place solely at the level of ideal world, which is customary for neoclassical economic theorising as argued in Chapter 2. Indeed, competition does not naturally follow from privatisation. Secondly, the peculiarities of water privatisation *per se* makes it difficult to align with Pareto optimality – water supply systems are prone to market failures that neoclassical economics find difficult to cope with. Perhaps, the (meta)governing principles of water privatisation have sought to circumvent the ‘uncooperative commodity’ by rather emphasising strategies of commercialisation and liberalisation of governance; hence, focusing on making the socio-political and legal institutions as favourable to water privatisation as possible without transferring ownership. Consequently, this persistence of the neoliberal project demonstrates the influence of neoclassical ontological and methodological assumptions that as Weintraub (2002) argued fall into all areas of life regardless of these discrepancies between the real and ideal worlds.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that water privatisation was justified in 25 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) through the development frame, economic good frame, anti-government frame and right frame. These frames were based on the same neoclassical economics as a theory of justice that dominated the previous neoliberal policies of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s. However, whereas SAPs were more explicit about their neoclassical ontological and methodological assumptions justifying privatisation, PRSPs implied these same assumptions and theories of justice under highly technical rational language that was made more acceptable, for example, by drawing on sustainability and rights-based arguments. Hence, although the values, norms and principles of the current water (meta)governance paradigm were more or less the same, these were discussed in new ways in PRSPs to the extent that *water privatisation is just since it allows for valuing water as an economic good outside government interference, which results in sustainable development, thus fulfilling the right to water*. These water privatisation measures were proposed as a solution to water scarcities, which were mostly complex economic water scarcities. These measures further blurred the boundaries between ‘public’ and ‘private’, thus aligning water management and governance techniques according to market logic and ‘market conservation’. This way, the ability to imagine alternative conceptions of ‘good governance’ for the current water (meta)governance paradigm, which is based on neoclassical economics as a theory of justice, becomes narrower.

The aim of the study was to describe how and why water privatisation has been justified in PRSPs. In particular, the specific – explicit and implicit – frames and framing processes embedded in PRSPs were the main objects of the study. The findings and conclusions, summarised above, were arrived at through largely qualitative content analysis and frame analysis of 25 PRSPs published in 2010-2014. After providing a thorough account of the key concepts and background literature used in this study, the research data was introduced and described. Next, the prior research consisting of academic literature and scientific research papers were examined, first, by looking at the broader debates within water privatisation literature, and secondly, by providing an overview of similar studies of frame analyses on water. In Chapter 5., the study conducted the main analysis of PRSPs. This consisted of answering the three research questions presented at the beginning of the thesis. Some preliminary discussion was also provided at this stage before proceeding to the main discussion of the results and their implications within the broader context of previous water literature and the neoclassical economics as theory of justice.

## 7.1 Limitations and Further Research

As mentioned, the main limitation of the study relates to the timeliness of PRSPs. Although PRSPs provided a great body of research material in terms of their practicality and accessibility for the purposes of this thesis, it remained, nonetheless, more or less outdated since the last PRSP was published in 2014. This limitation was acknowledged early on during the research process, and thus the possibility of using additional papers, such as the Technical Focus Papers (TWPs) published by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) (2021), was also considered. However, it soon became clear that any additional papers besides PRSPs would extend the study beyond the scope of a Master's thesis. Also, delimiting the number of PRSPs to ones published only after 2010 – from the potential 60 papers to 25 – inevitably reduces the extent to which strong inferences can be drawn about how water privatisation is justified in PRSPs to the broader water (meta)governance by the IFIs and the member states. Furthermore, in implementing the criteria of good scientific practice there is always room for improvement. In particular, with regards to the frame analysis, which requires a higher level of interpretation, the findings are always up for scrutiny in terms of validity and, indeed, someone else could have opt for different set of frames and framings.

Despite of these limitations, the study succeeded in heightening the understanding about the justifications behind the push for water privatisation and producing valuable descriptive information about how water privatisation has been justified particularly in low-income countries. Indeed, the initial study plan was to contrast water privatisation efforts in South Africa and England by comparing their White Papers on the issue of water privatisation. However, this plan was quickly moved aside due to simple accessibility issues regarding the research material. This juxtaposition of water privatisation between a developed and a developing country could have further emphasised the role of the state in a world of tangled hierarchies and complex interdependences influential in discussing values, norms and principles of water (meta)governance. A study of a larger scope could further enhance this research plan, and thus contribute to the literature on the role of the state in water privatisation and to the broader context of, on one hand, the potential conflict of interests and, on other hand, harmony and compliance of (meta)governance employed by the state, markets and networks.

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**Annex 1. – List of Selected PRSPs**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Country (N=25)</b>	<b>Document (N=27)</b>
2010	Nicaragua	<i>Updated National Human Development Plan 2009-2011.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Tajikistan	<i>Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2010-2012.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Togo	<i>Full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2009-2011.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Uganda	<i>National Development Plan.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
2011	Benin	<i>Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy GPRS 2011-2015.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Ethiopia	<i>Growth and Transformation Plan Volume I.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
		<i>Growth and Transformation Plan Volume II.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Guinea-Bissau	<i>Second National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Mauritania	<i>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Mozambique	<i>Poverty Reduction Action Plan (PARP) 2011-2014.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Tanzania	<i>National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty II.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
2012	Burundi	<i>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper PRSP-II.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Republic of Congo	<i>Congo National Development Plan.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Ghana	<i>Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) Volume I.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
		<i>Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) Volume II.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Lesotho	<i>National Strategic Development Plan 2012/13-2016/17.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Malawi	<i>Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
2013	Bangladesh	<i>Sixth Five Year Plan.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	<i>Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Guinea	<i>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: PRS III (2013-2015).</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Mali	<i>Plan for the Sustainable Recovery of Mali 2013-2014.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Niger	<i>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Rwanda	<i>Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy 2013-2018.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	Senegal	<i>NSESD 2013-2017: National Strategy for Economic and Social Development.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
2014	Haiti	<i>2014-2016 Three-Year Investment Program and its Framework.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	The Kyrgyz Republic	<i>The Kyrgyz Republic Sustainable Development Program 2013-2017.</i> Washington, DC: IMF.
	São Tomé and Príncipe	<i>Second National Poverty Reduction Strategy II (2012-2016).</i> Washington, DC: IMF.