



**Leading question: can Dutch Entrepreneurs empower Africa?**

A highly controversial issue in International Business thinking is formed by the involvement of – often large - foreign multinationals from rich countries in poor host economies. Many of these companies are reproached for abusing their powers to the detriment of often weakly governed host economies. This applies to host economies in general, but to African economies in specific. The book ‘Doing Business in Africa’ introduced analytical frameworks to develop a systematic and strategic approach towards the opposite: how to empower local communities, by introducing an inclusive approach that is in the interest of local communities. The extent to which companies deal with a large number of strategic and normative tensions defines their room of maneuver in host economies and their strategic success to gain a license to operate and earn a sustained income. The text of the book was written in 2013. It is open-access available on this website. The analytical frameworks remain relevant, but the empirical and contextual data require upgrading. The company strategies of Dutch multinational have evolved over time and the national context of all African countries can now be linked to the SDG agenda.

This has been the challenge that groups of bachelor students from the universities of Leiden (Humanities), Delft (technical studies) and Erasmus (economics and business studies) have taken up: to draw strategic posters in which the strategic frameworks introduced in the book are applied to recent developmental challenges in Africa. They made these posters in a very short period of time (2 weeks) as proof of the practical, heuristic and theoretical applicability of the basic frameworks. They were asked to answer one leading question on the basis of publicly available information: can company \*\*\*\* empower Africa through its international activities? They develop a research-oriented poster by using the following components that are all further elaborated in the book ‘doing business in Africa”:

### **1. Analysis**

[a] Position: where is your company in Africa (what main host economies are they active?)

[b] Activity: what are they doing there (trading, production, sourcing)

[c] Issues: what risk issues do they encounter in these activities: operational, strategic, sustainable;

[d] Licenses: identify the four licenses they have to develop in these activities at levels 1-4 (see SDG book, Part III):

- Level 1: license to exist
- Level 2: license to operate

- Level 3: license to scale
- Level 4: license to experiment

[e] Specify specific IB-related challenges in prioritized countries:

- Managing distance dimensions: administrative, cultural, political, stakeholder distance
- Define Risk-responsibility trade-offs: operational-strategic-sustainable
- Prioritize home-host issues: what is the SDG context in these host countries (positive/negative performance)

[e] How are they trying to approach these challenges through networks African style (Ubuntu):

- Specify their present partnering approach: what partnership portfolio, what issues, what partners? How are they using the SDG agenda for local alignment?

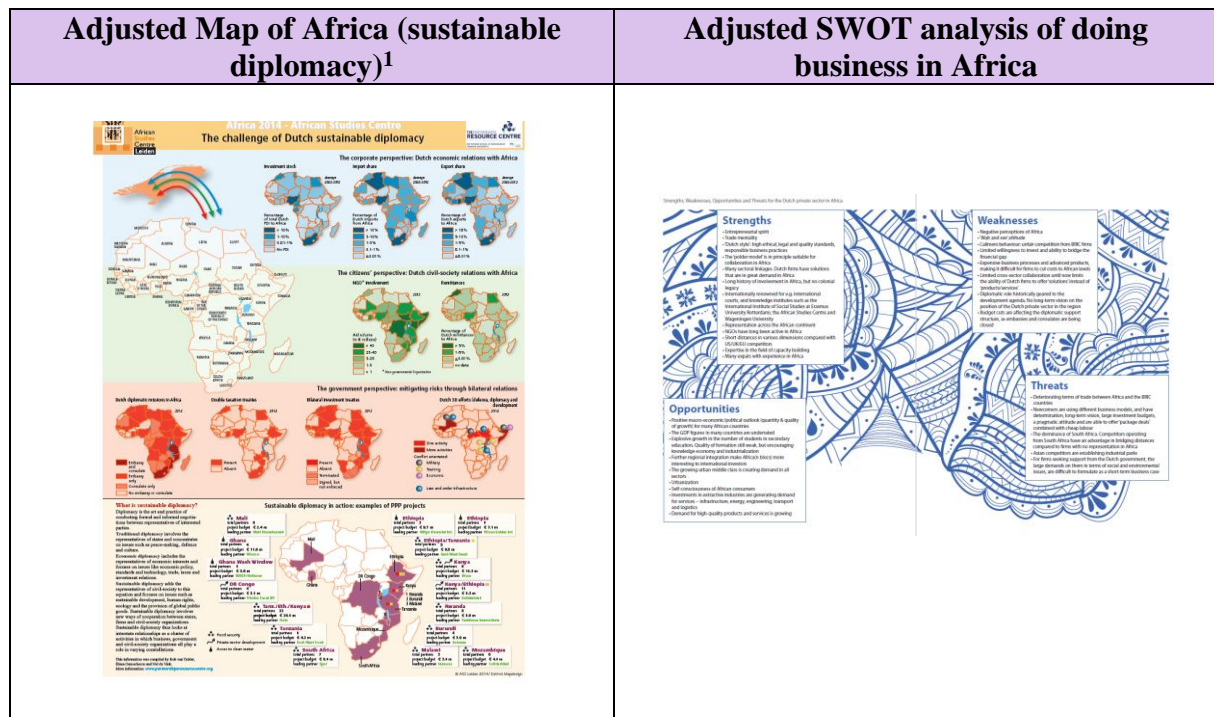
## 2. Advice

[g] What would be your advice: How can they improve their partnering approach?

- towards the company and their business partners?
- towards NGOs (associated with the company)?
- towards the Dutch (home) government and the African (host) governments?

The posters that are included on this website show the results of their endeavor

Two techniques used in the class-room to create common frameworks for company specific analysis:



<sup>1</sup> The principles of ‘sustainable diplomacy’ for Africa are elaborated and mapped in Van Tulder, R. and Dietz, T. (2019) *Sustainable Diplomacy – principles and practices*, PrC/ASC memorandum