
16. Conclusions

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This book argues that global linkages, flows and circulations merit a more central place in theorisation about development. It is time for a ‘mobilities turn’ (Sheller and Urry 2006; Walters 2014) to challenge the sedentarist assumptions which are still underlying much of policy making and planning for the future. Discussions about how to stimulate local development usually end up in interventions focusing on enhancing locally available capital assets and capabilities within fixed and confined settings (‘the project area’). However, by now we know that ‘globalization connects people and places that are distant in space but linked in such ways that what happens in one place has direct bearing on another, even if the relationship between localities is not immediately obvious’ (Zoomers and Van Westen 2011: 379). Local development hence should be analysed from a mobility perspective: rather than depending essentially on local resources, in many localities livelihood opportunities are ever more shaped by positionality, and the way people are attached to and participate in translocal and transnational networks (Sheppard 2002). At the time of this writing towards the end of 2020, our mobility is largely frozen, and we find ourselves in a laboratory condition due to the Coronavirus crisis. This unique experience helps us to better appreciate what mobility means in people’s lives. Being confronted with the consequences of the local lockdowns globally, we are witnessing the importance of being able and unable to move in and out, and linking up with the outside.

In order to better understand local development in this context of a connected and mobile world, this book has focused on two types of cross-border flows, which are, in their own right, crucial triggers for local development and have been intensifying over the past decade: (i) flows of people and (ii) flows of capital. Along with time–space compression and the financialisation of global economies, flows of people/capital have rapidly increased, leading to large-scale and complex transformations of livelihood opportunities and landscapes. ‘The enclosure and sustenance of coherent local spaces increasingly depends on the capacity to secure effective individual and corporate engagements with the wide range of networks and flows’ (Simone 2001: 16). Along with the expansion of flows of people and capital, new development hubs and networks of opportunity have emerged, but equally have brought new border walls and enclosures. Local livelihood opportunities are being altered constantly and quickly, more often than not by factors from outside. There is a huge and widening gap between what is currently happening on the ground and Sen’s idealised notion of ‘development as freedom’ (that is, people’s capability to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value) (Sen 1999).

Focusing on the trends over the final decade, it is evident that internal and international mobility of labour migrants, students, consultants and businesspeople, but also

refugees and various groups of internally displaced people, has rapidly increased – or at least it has become more visible everywhere. The same is true for capital flows (foreign direct investments, trade, aid money, new charities, remittances, and so on), be it in an erratic and irregular way.¹ Together, they have contributed to large-scale spatial, political and socio-economic transformations, which have helped people to improve their lives but also led to growing inequality. Looking at the emergent geographies of local development in different geographical settings, as we did in chapters of this book, makes us aware that globalisation has widened opportunities and simultaneously forced people to face new restrictions, inequalities, vulnerabilities and risks. The world is increasingly a fragmented place with deepening levels of exclusion and ‘unfreedoms’, infringing upon the capacity of local people in pursuing or enjoying ‘development’.

The chapters of this book show that, given planetary boundaries and new and unexpected realities, our future will depend on finding new ways forward and coming up with innovative solutions. Policy makers, businesses and development practitioners as well as civil society activists and researchers are expected to team up to address the need for development as freedom in the environmentally sustainable and climate resilient world. The core questions are: how do we collectively redirect flows of people/capital towards inclusive and sustainable development? How do we address the need of excluded people not only to be included in decision making, pertaining to, for example, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also to generate their own solutions to their everyday problems, which need to be supported by those who have resources and power?

TRANSLOCAL PERSPECTIVES IN CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH AND POLICY MAKING

If we take the SDGs as what exemplifies the contemporary agenda for development studies and policies, the mobility focus makes us look beyond achieving specific goals and targets and into actual physical and social effects that the pursuit of the SDG agenda brings to various locales over time and influences the ongoing process of ‘globalization from below’ (Appadurai 2001). In this context, on the one hand, enforced by triple Covid–economic–climate crises and guided by the SDG-oriented new waves of intervention, we are beginning to witness a radical re-allocation of public finances and policy priorities towards more safe and healthy futures that ‘leave no one behind’ (United Nations 2018). More national and multilateral funding is being planned and implemented to contribute to the SDGs, migration and climate deals, and measures to tackle Covid-19.

On the other hand, local people who are supposed to share the benefits of these reallocated investments, especially those in vulnerable groups, have not acquired a clear voice in debates on such re-allocation of resources. The plans are still formulated from outside, usually by investors and supporting governments preferring technology-based intervention. Governments in the Global South keep on providing

concessions for the investors who intend to appropriate land for monocultural production, biofuel production, mining and nature conservation. The concerted efforts for low-carbon transitions are leading to open concessions for new minerals such as lithium, which is in high demand due to smart technological innovation. The renewed interests in large-scale investments in hydropower dams as well as wind and solar energy in the context of climate change mitigation, especially in emerging economies such as China, Vietnam and Brazil, as well as continual urbanisation, are displacing people (Pham Huu 2015; Tanner and Allouche 2011). All these investments have large implications for local landscapes, as they subsequently create ripple effects for other areas that are usually not mapped in the context of *ex ante* project evaluation. Yet, these are not grasped fully in the efforts towards sustainable and inclusive development.

The gap between what is on the official agenda ('leaving no one behind' in achieving sustainability) and how people keep on being dispossessed and excluded from the project process persists, largely due to the conventional development project cycle. Environmental issues and the consequences for vulnerable groups are usually mentioned in environmental and social impact assessments (ESIAs) carried out by consultants before the approval of a project. Very often, community participation in the formulation of projects is limited and the wider and long-term implications for *other* communities that might be affected or the overall landscape change are not systematically assessed. Many projects require resettlement of local groups – the usual way of compensating local groups who will lose their land is by offering capital and infrastructure in new locations – while the livelihood reconstruction in the new locations involves much more effort than is currently assumed, since the new locations can be relatively isolated, or risky areas that are not climate resilient; or claimed by other groups already.

In addition, current policy debates on developmental issues often narrowly focus on how to maximise the positive impacts while minimising the negative consequences. In this context, local development impacts are described mainly in terms of income and employment generation; and here, the 'local' is conceived as spatially bound and small. For example, migration and land investment policy debates usually focus on the directly affected people, while not much attention is paid to bypassed groups. And, directly affected local groups are referred to as a local 'community', persistently described as a 'territorially fixed, small and homogeneous whole with shared norms' (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 633). In migration debates, local communities are often simply discussed as the home of the left-behinds or as the potential destination of return migrants. In the ongoing discussions about Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) – that is, a policy mechanism for local communities to be consulted about large-scale investment projects – local communities are seen as all-encompassing groups with common interests, able and willing to make desirable collective decisions such as when negotiating with investors. In stimulating local participation, the main attention is given to whether local people are informed, or receive a fair compensation in the case of any loss of assets. This is important, but continues to frame 'locals' as a passive recipient group, having to adapt to the requirements of

a modern world defined for them by others, rather than engaging in a critical debate about whether the type of investment made is in line with local people's priorities. As we have argued elsewhere (Zoomers and Otsuki 2017), in comparison with earlier debates about sustainable livelihoods in the context of development intervention or 'counter-tendencies' and local people's making of their own 'room for manoeuvre' (Arce and Long 2000), relatively little attention is given to questions such as whether 'development' matches people's aspirations and capacity, and which people within the communities influence the others. Local communities, even if they existed as homogeneous wholes, which is in reality never the case, are in fact increasingly fragmented due to differential impacts of influences from the outside as well as differences in the abilities of diverse locals to link to non-local opportunities.

In this context, we need to seriously envision new development intervention – community-based and participatory – and from 'bottom up', meaning we first generate a sufficient understanding of people's livelihoods; make an *ex ante* assessment of the full range of intended and unintended, expected and unexpected consequences for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the particular project; and pay attention to short- and long-run impacts of the intervention. The 'success' of future investments and policies – in terms of how environmental sustainability is ensured while socio-economic inclusivity is addressed in the process – in the context of climate change and Covid-19 depends on attuning policies to local priorities, circumstances and communication with decision-makers at all levels. Therefore, the focus should shift from individual investments and interventions to embeddedness of the investments and interventions in the existing social relationships, networks and landscapes. In practice, we call for a new approach, underpinned by the translocal perspectives, to promoting bottom-up development research integrated into policy and practice. Below, we outline ten principles for this approach.

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR THE BOTTOM-UP DEVELOPMENT POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

1. Use the Livelihood Perspective

The various chapters in this book, both implicitly and explicitly, have shown that local livelihoods are heterogeneous and dynamic, proving that the homogeneous community does not exist. The community is by definition heterogeneous; and vulnerable groups within it can have multilocal livelihoods. Every intervention will produce losers and winners in terms of livelihoods improvement; and the question should centre on how to deal with both beneficiaries *and* non-beneficiaries, as well as with people who play active roles in contesting interventions. The chapters show how interventions and projects have multiple impacts on the livelihood of people, which

comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and

recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. (Chambers and Conway 1991: 6)

In analysing the impact of different types of interventions, it is useful to make a distinction between different types of assets, and analyse how the intervention influences different assets' base. People then always act upon the influence and find their own solutions. Consequently, different livelihood outcomes can be observed, which are also the reflection of earlier experiences and strategic decision making.

The livelihood perspective will also help us to see various patterns of upward and downward mobility related to particular interventions and processes of change, and see the variety in people's perceptions and agencies. Poor people, for example, being invited to become the beneficiaries of an irrigation program, might end up being excluded from taking part due to the lack of time and initial resources to participate in planning meetings. They might also respond differently to interventions than expected, dependent on their earlier experiences and perceptions, resulting in different patterns of upward and downward mobility in response to particular interventions.

2. Use the Landscape Perspective

Sustainability of livelihoods depends on landscapes in which the people are embedded and interact in their everyday life. Various chapters show how landscapes – in the socio-political and natural sense – and the (natural) resources they provide are used by different groups of people. These groups continuously negotiate their use and access to the landscape and its resources, based on their multiple needs, preferences and aspirations. This inevitably leads to trade-offs, and if we take the social landscape perspective, we can readily acknowledge these trade-offs and therefore try to understand them within their specific spatial and social (as well as political) contexts.

This means that in assessing the impact of interventions, we have to be aware that interventions may cause a change in the landscape and a shift in the use of natural resources. This influences ongoing negotiations, power relations, collaborations and conflict. For example, from the perspective of smallholder farmers, an irrigation project might be successful, but it might be problematic for pastoralists who lose their access to commons such as pasture and water. At the same time, such a project may attract newcomers to the landscape and create new scarcities when they purchase land or cattle (see Chapter 6). This means that, by observing landscapes, we identify a diverse range of values, goods and services. Any intervention will result in a shift in access to and control of resources by different groups. In this sense, every intervention is inherently political and might result in competing claims and shifting power relations.

By taking the landscape perspective, *ex ante* impact assessment of interventions can become more explicitly aware of the fact that interventions are never neutral but inherently political and will trigger new processes of redistribution and contestation. These processes should be also assessed as potential impacts.

3. Use the Translocal Networking Perspective

In taking livelihood and landscape perspectives, we obviously do not limit ourselves to the localised impact because the intervention does not operate spatially and temporarily in isolation. By applying the translocal network perspective, we pay attention to how localities are connected to each other. The chapters in this book have shown that local development opportunities are very much determined by what is happening in other places and vice versa. Localities can be connected directly, as a result of flows of capital, goods, people and information. Or, they can be affected indirectly as their relative positions vis-à-vis other localities change as a result of changing market prices, valuation of resources and alternative opportunities for local people prepared to move in the context of globalisation. Examples of processes contributing to the production of translocalities abound, varying from traditional city–countryside relations and nomadic transhumance between different ecological zones, modern production networks integrating different localities in a single value chain, twinning agreements between enterprises and municipal authorities, and attempts by migrants and diaspora organisations to contribute to the development of their home areas, to the linkages that are based on the reception of remittances, the accommodation of foreign tourists spending money locally, or people – and businesses – spending their money for the purchase of land and/or starting an enterprise. Thus, in assessing whether the intervention is meeting the project objective, it is not enough to describe the positive results for the target population: the emergence of development corridors – the materialisation of dynamics between places – and the travelling of development effects and rippling effect should be taken into account: a change in one place (one sector) will affect others (Zoomers and Van Westen 2011); on top of this, local dynamics are multi-scalar in the sense of being influenced by issues and interventions playing at the macro and meso level.

4. Anticipate and Accept Unexpected Consequences

Given the new vulnerabilities and extremes caused by climate change, the pandemic and political uprisings in various parts of the world under lockdown conditions, it will be more and more ‘normal’ for development interventions to be diverted from the original plan. In this sense, the ‘theories of change’, which anticipate the positive impacts of particular intervention based on various assumptions, require a participatory approach, allowing for constant adaptation and resetting of objectives in close communication with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in multiple localities within the landscape. A new normal should be established to emphasise that any project will not meet expectations and produce different sets of unintended and unexpected consequences. In order to anticipate the unexpected consequences, the development project process should be process- and agency-oriented (Brickell and Datta 2011), with much attention for expectation management and good communication to seek solutions to inevitable contestations.

5. **Move Away from Assumption-based Intervention to Evidence-based Policies and Interventions**

In order to engage with development processes and agencies of people to develop capacity to generate their own solutions, the development planning needs to acknowledge complexity and the wickedness of problems as a point of departure. In the words of the United Nations (2018: 4): ‘The pledge to leave no one behind is seldom disputed in principle, but the complexity of its practical implementation is often insufficiently acknowledged.’ In envisioning sustainable and inclusive development, we have to be aware that the complexity and trade-offs between objectives can only be properly grasped with empirical data gatherings, through research on existing livelihoods and characterisation of landscapes and translocal networks. These data can easily overturn assumptions, often created in a particular sector of development. The development interventions and research must be holistic and cross-sectorial, linking food, migration, health, employment, energy and infrastructure, and so on, and reflecting synergies between different sustainable and inclusive development goals. In this synergetic development planning, gender, race, ethnicity or generational attributes of people on the ground should also help policy makers and researchers to establish cross-sectorial analysis and collaboration.

6. **Think of Longitudinal Research and Intervention**

The same impacts observed at one point in development intervention can change over time, as people’s livelihoods and landscapes naturally change and so do the nature and extent of translocal networks. Therefore, long wave orientation is a necessary step, thinking of observing various consequences of development intervention for the next generations. For example, for the SDGs, the immediate temporal limitation of achievement of goals is set as 2030 – but many environmental as well as social consequences can only be understood beyond a decade from now. Yet, many projects have a projected period of three to five years. How do we keep on observing the situation, collecting evidence and analysing the impacts in an indefinite period of time, as people’s lives develop along the way?

One often-overlooked dimension in development research and planning is to more effectively engage in political-administrative processes of decentralisation. Local authorities are often carriers of national agendas, which, in turn, are frequently dictated by international donors. At the same time, they may resist the top-down instructions that contradict their citizens’ needs. The local governments could lead the shaping of migration flows and routes, map out the change in landscapes by controlling investment flows, and ensure emergent new development chains are embedded in the local context. While they may be pushing the ‘business as usual’ agenda for local growth, they could potentially form a forefront of innovative zoning of nature conservation, agribusiness and human settlement areas by establishing relationships between infrastructures, natural environment and spatial planning for people’s livelihoods. The problem is that they are underfunded and invisible in the

so-called public–private partnerships (PPPs) or multi-stakeholder partnerships that are increasingly popularised as a method of intervention today, and we need to rethink how to frame the actors of intervention in establishing longitudinal engagement.

7. Clarify Roles and Implications of ‘Business for Development’

In the current neoliberal political environment, the SDGs as well as other international development agendas advocate market-led approaches by promoting PPPs. Originally indicating collaboration between the government and a company interested in investing in new development projects, PPPs enable governments to acquire necessary finance to implement their development plans while traditional donors and development banks save their budgets by turning development projects into profit-making ventures. The businesses increasingly conduct impact studies by hiring consultants, negotiate with local governments to acquire concessions or decide on compensations. When the contestation happens, they take a ‘corporate social responsibility’, supplementing public services in the absence of the government. Compared to the government, which is expected to deal with its predefined administrative boundary as its physical area of action, private businesses can transcend boundaries through their capital and labour flows. They could facilitate the different governments’ collaboration and engagement with managing various flows and create new partnerships based on the development chains that they create through their investments. However, much of the investment decisions are detached from the governmental planning process, even when the label is given to a project as a result of the PPP. Their responsibility is also monitored less as they do not have the official legitimacy to the people and landscapes where they operate: after all, they are only accountable to their shareholders. In this sense, we need to be vigilant to the implications of businesses’ increasing involvement in development intervention, acknowledging the possibility that the businesses are not best equipped to pursue public objectives.

8. Take Citizen Science Seriously to Follow Dynamics of Change

In order to understand local realities based on people’s aspirations and livelihoods and follow longitudinally the dynamics of change, we need to mobilise people and their organisations themselves. Professional civil society organisations can work as watchdogs over the interventions by the government and businesses, or sometimes they replace both the government and the private businesses where they do not have strong influence in providing basic services to citizens. But after all, citizens themselves are the most capable actors to take the necessary action that transcends the project boundaries. Influenced by various flows – of investment and migrants – they can shape new flows by moving, staying put, engaging in new livelihoods or taking collective actions. As a way for them to put their experiences into a form of knowledge that can be communicated to the government, businesses and other researchers, ‘citizen science’ should be taken more seriously and the development intervention

should be reshaped to support the citizen agenda in its process. The chapters of this book have shown some of the possible examples in irrigation strategies or resettlement projects that could be taken up by planners.

9. Use a ‘Learning Lab’ Approach to Connect Local Knowledge Institutes and Governments

Taking citizen science seriously involves research infrastructure that can lead researchers to keep on following the local dynamics. In order to convince the policy makers to *not* omit people who are not easy to fit in the categories, frames and boundaries, we need to create a tangible structure where different citizens’ experiences with development projects can be shared and documented. As such a structure, we should consider adopting a learning-lab approach to systematically observing, listening and paying attention to what is not said or appeared to be important at first sight. We then bring out different perspectives and visions to the development interventions as what has been learned in the process. Most effectively, the learning lab can be established in local universities or research institutes or schools where different citizens can gather regularly and discuss their experiences. The lab can also travel around different locales in collaboration with village- or community-level councils and organisations. The support for local universities can be made within the context of development intervention policy in order to strengthen the budget and human resources to maintain such an infrastructure of knowledge exchange and co-creation. Furthermore, we can conduct more comparative studies by gathering different cases mapped out and documented in this process.

10. Integrate Bottom-up Development Thinking into Educational Curriculum

The future of development – sustainable and inclusive development – depends on the younger generation of researchers, citizens and practitioners who will take bottom-up research and intervention seriously in their practice. In particular, students from the Global South and North should more consciously learn from each other, to co-create their research plans and activities, and exchange their experiences. In particular, in our Covid-19 world, ways that development studies and practice are pursued cannot take mobility for granted. At the same time, we are also witnessing the power of social media and online interactions, and involvement of young people in political debates and movements to make a change. Our students are digital natives, and they can play a greater role in understanding and envisioning sustainable and inclusive, *translocal* development in collaboration with citizens and researchers from around the world. We are also aware of the risks that such exchange could expose: inequality in the university resources between North and South will be more apparent in this process. But this is precisely the point of exchange, so that more resources could be mobilised for the universities and their education and research infrastructures in the Global South and new citizen sciences flourish in every corner of the world to

follow the consequences of development intervention, even when it takes time for the intervention to change. At least, we should envision the future of development that is sustainable and inclusive in our collective production of knowledge for development studies and practice.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In the context of globalisation, discussions about ‘local development’ that is sustainable and inclusive must be framed in terms of bringing development interventions in line with people’s capabilities and local priorities (Otsuki et al. 2017). In the conventional livelihoods approaches, these ‘capabilities and local priorities’ were often measured as a set of capitals that people need to accumulate at the household level. Today, in our newly articulated geographies and landscapes, sustainable livelihoods depend on the collective ability of people to become part of the translocal network that enables citizens to establish effective connections with outsiders who are willing to share their capitals and benefits. In other words, livelihood opportunities are to a large extent determined by translocal relations, one’s embeddedness in development corridors and development chains (Zoomers and Van Westen 2011) and the ability of local people and institutions to engage with these external forces in such a way that they can reap the benefits. This is ultimately a matter of the degree of local control – in a social, economic, political and territorial sense. The citizens are not there only to be informed of investors or governments’ decisions: they are the ones who inform the investors and governments to give consent to their plans and strategies to develop their territory and landscape in sustainable and inclusive ways. Of course, if their decisions become conflictive with a wider sustainability and social inclusion agenda, the negotiations should take place, involving a wide range of actors who can mediate the conflictive views on ‘local development’.

Even with lockdowns and associated change in policy orientation, we cannot stop globalisation driven by technology. The already-built transnational and translocal relationships have long shaped places, development trajectories and livelihood possibilities in distinct ways. Relational dynamics are thus even more important in determining whether local people can benefit or not from the inflow of new actors, capital and technological innovations. Whether local people are able to benefit from international migration and/or investment flows will depend greatly on positionality and their ability to link up and finding the ‘right’ investor willing to come and settle and share benefits. Local development is increasingly a matter of dealing with outsiders, having the capacity to negotiate, being capable of consensus-building and forcing outsiders to fulfil promises and expectations. Interactions (and hence also impact) are unpredictable (Dovey 2012) and local resilience depends on people’s capacity to act quickly and cope with the unexpected. To help this process of capacity-building and development, we emphasise the importance of citizen involvement with local researchers and further translocal research and development cooperation. The current lockdowns or restrictions of mobility are not the end of the journey of global devel-

opment – but the start of a new trajectory forcing us to rethink normal practices and how to shape new futures – that are bottom-up, inclusive and resilient to climate and future pandemics.

NOTE

1. As for capital, reliable records are not available. Foreign direct investment reached peaks in 2007 and 2015, and was down in-between and has been down since. Global currency exchange is measured for only one month every three years, and suggests ongoing growth. But this does not cover flows in the same currency (dollars, and so on) across borders (OECD 2020).

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