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Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without inspired contributions from its authors. Coming from a wide range of backgrounds as academics, practitioners and even art gallery holders, they each have a unique link with Ton, often linked to particular moments in history and one of the many themes recurrent in the work of Ton van Naerssen. We would like to thank each and every one of these authors for their contributions. Together their work very well represents the broadband of Ton's academic and personal engagement.

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‘Tales of Development: People, Power and Space’ has been written to mark forty years of commitment to the field of development geography by Ton van Naerssen. To understand the importance of his contribution to human geography and development studies we borrow his own words. In 1997 Ton van Naerssen wrote:

*I, for one, hold as basic belief [...] that human geographers who occupy themselves with the developing countries are most interested and engaged in matters of poverty, exploitation and dependency, and their counterparts emancipation and ‘empowerment’.* (Van Naerssen, 1997: xix).

Through 19 essays, all concomitant with Ton van Naerssen’s words by taking an engaged and academically critical perspective, this book reflects on a number of important themes. These themes concern: the role of critical theory and the need for academics to position their contributions in public debate; the importance of civil society for development; the implications of changing identities as related to an articulation of space; the role of globalization on people’s lives and livelihoods; and the significance of migration. In this manner this edited volume contains an insightful set of critical tales of development.

Ernst Spaan opens this book by elaborating on the themes recurrent in the work of van Naerssen over the years. These themes more or less constitute the backbone of development issues and this book.

The first theme covered by the book deals with ‘Critical Geography and Social Space’. Huib Ernste extensively reviews what critical studies and geography in particular means. Like many others in this book, he sketches the need to know the ontology of one’s theoretical starting point. This starting point is formed by the beginning of an academic career. Paul Hebinck takes this one step further by elaborating a critical perspective on land reform with the central argument that a sound understanding of social development and action requires going beyond structural models of development. De Haan takes a similar perspective by showing that in popular livelihood analyses there is little attention for spatial dimensions of development.

Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht and Rudolf Scheffer take us back to the seventies when development in the South was understood in terms of peripheral capitalism. Poor empirical evidence at that time made the authors leave Marxist inspired theories. But a confrontation with the situation in Zambia today makes them consider trying it again. Sef Slootweg narrates in his contribution about the soul searching within SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, which sought to recapture the relevance of its development aid interventions. In a perhaps somewhat unusual style, he depicts the usefulness of internal debates about measuring one’s impact.

The second set of chapters ‘Migration Trajectories’, deals with migration, and return migration. The latter is discussed by Tine Davids and Ruurd Ruben. They debate on the unhappy marriage between migration and development within the context of stricter controls of European states to control the influx of migrants. Martin van de Velde takes this discussion further by attempting to model migration, particular with regard to East-West migration patterns. One of the big
The theme ‘Acting on Globalisation’ discusses actions by groups and individuals to change the world. In their contribution Ankie van der Camp and Ben Janssen explain what art means in a global context. This chapter is significant in being more than a tribute to artists in Southern Africa by also attempting to carve out a relevant political space for social action. Frans Schuurman, in his typical style, critically positions development studies within the dynamic and changing context for development and academia. Therein development studies for whom, and for what, remain the key questions academics need to ask themselves. Bas Arts follows this argument of global acting through by taking us into the forest. His argument is that we need to move beyond global governance as a political practice to embrace the notion of politics of scale. Paul Hoebink debates the dynamics of foreign aid by addressing the critical issue of coherence. He argues that the debate lack on foreign aid continues to lack voices from the South. In his chapter he therefore discusses some of the Southern perspectives on the coherence of European policies vis-à-vis developing countries. The finally contribution to this theme is by Cor van Beuningen, who discusses the meaning of increasing scarcity of raw materials, energy and food for global economic relationships, leading to a possible redrawing of the geopolitical world map. He wonders whether we are we moving from a unipolar to a multipolar world.

The final theme of ‘Redefining Regions and Identities’ specifically deals with regional issues. Luuk Knippenberg en Saskia van Bruchem debate the relationship between development dynamics and democracy in Thailand. Bas Hendrix and Arnout Lagendijk discuss the meaning of regional development in the context of growing global integration and increasing global economic competition. In their view regional governance will become a key issue to consider in contemporary regional development. Paul van Lindert focuses on current trends of decentralisation and urban governance in Latin America. Although it is often maintained that traditionally local governments are the weakest link in the public sector, he argues how Latin America is showing a growing variety of promising and innovative initiatives at local levels that may lead to improved urban governance. The last contribution of Françoise Barten and Geert Tom Heikens describe the unprecedented challenge posed by rapid urbanization and the deepening inequalities in health conditions presently rising within and between urban settings in the South. Their plea is to arrest this development through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.
Themes and Motives
Tales of Development: Ton van Naerssen in perspective through themes and motives

Ernst Spaan

Introduction

After readily agreeing to write this introductory chapter for this *liber amicorum* for Ton van Naerssen, I realised that I had no easy task. Not only does Ton boast nearly 40 years of experience in the field of geography, resulting in an impressive amount of publications, his work is quite varied, covering a range of world regions and various themes in development geography. This includes topics such as development theory, regional development, industrialisation, rural development, urban planning and governance, health and environment, urban social movements and empowerment, development cooperation, globalization, tourism, international migration, migrant entrepreneurship, transnationalism and diaspora organizations. From my reading of several of his publications and through my experiences and conversations with him, in the following I try to piece together his development as a geographer and highlight some of his influences, key thinking and themes, albeit that this will always be somewhat fleeting and impressionistic. I can only hope this overview will do justice to him and to his original and valuable work.

Institutional embeddedness and developments

Ton van Naerssen studied Social Geography and Physical Planning at the Catholic University Nijmegen until his graduation in 1970. After working for the United Nations Organization for Technical Cooperation in Iraq as expert in regional planning he became research fellow at the Nijmegen Institute of Geography and Physical Planning in 1973. Ten years later he received his PhD in Social Sciences which was supervised by Kleinpenning and de Bruijne and based on a study on regional development and industrialisation in Malaysia.

Development geography in Nijmegen from the early 1970’s, to which van Naerssen greatly contributed, was never limited to the geography of The Netherlands, always having a much broader geographical horizon, therein taking a regional-geographical perspective (de Bruijne, 1997: 429). This is partly due to Jan Kleinpenning who, in 1965 started lecturing on the social geography of Spanish and Portuguese language countries. From the early 1970s on, attention was broadened to the underdevelopment and social geography of so-called Third World countries. In 1973 a specialized task group was set up within the Department of Geography to deal with issues of ‘underdevelopment’, a theme

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1 I would like to thank Frans Schuurman and the editors for useful comments on this chapter.
which had gained popularity among geography students (Kleinpenning, 1996: 2). Ton was part of the core staff of this group from its inception. In 1977 this group culminated into the unit Social Geography of Developing Countries (SGO), established under the leadership of Kleinpenning. In 1983 the original focus on developing countries, was expanded to underdeveloped regions in Europe (*Laag-Ontwikkelde Gebieden in Europe*-LOGE). In the 1990s, following budget cuts, institutional restructuring, staff changes and declining numbers of geography students, the specialized unit SGO was eventually phased out. By 1997 the unit had closed down, despite being assessed as excellent by an external committee in that same year. As a consequence, Ton remained the only lecturer in social geography at Nijmegen to cover the developing countries.

While his initial fieldwork experience as student was in Chile, Ton developed an interest in the issues of (under)development in Southeast Asia. Thematically he continued to explore issues around urban development and social movements. His work has left an undeniable mark on the research programme of the department. The various research projects initiated by the department in Southeast Asia often held the following characteristics:

- a strong emphasis on economic geographic issues
- a focus on regional analysis, planning and development policy, in particular concerning rural development (Indonesia), industrialization, health, urban public housing development and urban governance (Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines)
- a strong linkage with advocacy groups and civil society organisations in the field of development cooperation.

In 1997 van Naerssen became co-ordinator of the research programme ‘Urban and Regional Development’ and the master programme ‘Globalisation and Development’ at the Faculty of Management Sciences (FM), Radboud University Nijmegen (RU). He participates in the Faculty Research Programme ‘Governance and Places’ (GaP) and is attached to the *Nijmegen Centre of Border Research*.


**Development geography van Naerssen-style**

It should be noted that ‘development geography’ as a separate academic discipline is not common; rather the research field concerned with the developing world is generally subsumed under regional geography or, more generally, under development studies. In this sense development geography is a typical Dutch phenomenon (van Naerssen, 1997). Within this unique academic
discipline Ton van Naerssen has developed his own specific view and field of work.

The critical development geography Ton van Naerssen stands for is manifested in his firm belief that ‘human geographers who occupy themselves with developing countries are most interested and engaged in matters of poverty, exploitation and dependency, and their counterparts emancipation and ‘empowerment.’’ (van Naerssen 1997b:xix). This constitutes the core of development geography. However, in his view such developmental issues are not restricted to the developing world, but manifest themselves in developed countries. Developmental issues are not restricted by national boundaries and problems with migrant integration and alienation cannot be understood without knowledge of underdevelopment in the countries of origin. Hence, studying these issues in the developed world is the task of development geographers (van Naerssen, 1997a:25). Because developmental processes such as economic diversification, agricultural commercialisation or globalisation, to name a few, attain different meaning and manifestations in different spatial contexts Ton advocates the comparative nature of development geography. Development geography, notably when it takes on a regional approach, makes it possible to study the way humans live, interact and transform the places and regions where they live, within the context of wider processes of socioeconomic development. Human geographers have the meaningful task to ‘stress the geographical evidence and only those with an open eye for regional specialisations can do so.’ Thus, not only does the subject matter of Ton’s interpretation of development geography encompass regions around the world, it is characterized by an open stance that takes into account regional differences and development issues of both the developing and the developed world, and focuses on possible linkages between these.

Furthermore, van Naerssen has the conviction that science is not value free and should be engaged with pertinent societal issues and contributes to the improvement of the conditions of the poor and vulnerable in society. This engagement manifests itself in the choice of his research themes and in his work for civil society and his public support for various critical manifestos.

**Capita selecta in Van Naerssen’s work**

Ton van Naerssen’s critical view on development was influenced by various historical events and fieldwork experiences. These include the Indonesian coup d’etat of 1965 with the subsequent purge of (alleged) communists, the Vietnam War, his first fieldwork experience in politically volatile Chile before 1970, and his work for the UN-Organisation for Technical Cooperation in Iraq. These experiences planted the seeds for his politicised, critical thinking on (under)development and the asymmetrical links between developed and developing countries (van Naerssen, 1997a:16). His engagement with Vietnam came back in a contribution for the Atlantic Commission (van Naerssen, 2005b). The works of Wertheim (1971) on Asia, showing an optimistic view on bottom-
up driven emancipation of the masses, and neo-Marxists (Amin 1970, 1976) and *dependencia* theorists (Andre Gunder Frank, Paul Baran), with their focus on imperialism, incorporation of peripheral areas and resulting processes of marginalisation and underdevelopment, have been influential for his early work and his interest in (urban) social movements and emancipatory processes (van Naerssen 1976; 1979; 1982; 1987a; 1987b; Meeuws *et al.* 1982). Later on, theorists such as Manuel Castells (1983; 2000) and Saskia Sassen (1991; 2001) left their marks too, particularly in his work on urban governance (cf. Hogenstijn and van Naerssen 2004; van Naerssen 2001d; van Naerssen 2001e). Development theory remained a major focus in his work (van Naerssen and Galen 1984; van Naerssen and van Driel 1992, van Naerssen 1979, van Naerssen and Schuurman 1983; Spaan *et al.* 2005; van Naerssen, 2006; van Naerssen *et al.*, 2008b).

In the 1970s leftist, neo-Marxist ideas and theory gained popularity among certain staff members and students in Nijmegen. Their ideas and research results found their way into journals such as *Zone, Politiek & Ruimte* (Politics and Space) and *Derde Wereld* (Third World) and in the publications of the Anti-Imperialism Working Group (*AI-Cahiers*), to which van Naerssen contributed. Thus, a study of imperialism and unequal development was published in this series (van Naerssen, 1979). Typically, one of the aims of these publications was to provide material for anti-imperialism advocacy groups (*aksiegroepen*) and contribute to the debate on capitalism and uneven development by shedding light on the international division of labour and asymmetrical relations between peripheral and developed countries.

Aspects of incorporation, spatial inequality and underdevelopment were thus prominent themes in his early work and in this work the ‘centre-periphery’ and articulation of modes of production concepts were often pivotal. Authors such as Friedmann (1966) and Raul Prebisch (1971) were influential in this respect. Friedmann (1996:xv) defined the centre-periphery model as ‘a conceptual model that divides the space-economy into a dynamic, rapidly growing central region and is periphery. The growth of the centre is viewed as being subsidized by the periphery’. This concept can be used for the analysis of sub-national regional development (and planning) and applied to the geography of underdevelopment or the relationship between developing and developed countries within the world system (Wallerstein, 1979, cf. Dietz *et al.*, *this volume*).

The influence of dependencia, centre-periphery and world-system theory is reflected in Ton van Naerssen’s structuralist perspective on articulated space (van Naerssen, 1979; cf. De Haan, *this volume*), whereby the development of the global economy is interpreted as constituting a system of regions, the modes of production of which became increasingly interdependent through a process of asymmetrical development between centre (developed region/country) and the periphery (developing region/countries). The regional approach to development shows in van Naerssen’s work on regional development and industrialisation in general and in the context of Malaysia (van Naerssen 1976; 1983; 1990; Meeuws., *et al.* 1982).

His PhD project thus focused on industrialization in Malaysia and the impact of this process on regional development and Malaysia’s position in the wider world economy (van Naerssen, 1983). Regional planning thereby became a main focus in his work, bringing him to other countries in the region, notably the
Philippines and Indonesia (van den Ham and van Naerssen 1990). Thus, during 1986-1988 van Naerssen acted as supervisor for a project concerning regional planning of the uplands around Lake Toba on Sumatra. This was a collaborative project between the Universitas HKBP Nommensen (Medan, Indonesia), Services Overseas (PSO) and the Department of Geography for Developing Countries (Nijmegen). From this project emanated a number of publications concerning regional planning and development in North Sumatra (Hagens and van Naerssen, 1990; Eijkemans and Van Rooij, 1990; Eijkemans, 1995; Spaan et al., 1995).

A major critique of structuralist theory with its emphasis on historical macro-level economic processes has been that it is too deterministic and abstract (see Hebinck, this volume). Specific socio-cultural and local contexts are often glossed over and individual actors are reduced to passive pawns endlessly shifted around a global chess-board. This ignores the way individuals are able to cope with, resist and even influence these (exploitative) processes of development. In reaction to structuralist theories the actor-oriented approach was propagated (Long 1992b) in which the role of human agency in development processes received much more attention, focusing on the ways in which individuals and communities wrought to achieve changes from below, i.e. through individual action and community based development projects (Long, 1992a).

The focus on ‘bottom-up’ development can be found in van Naerssen’s work on urban social movements (van Naerssen 1989; 1992; 1999), and later work on the role of diaspora organisations in development (Schapendonk et al., 2006; van Naerssen, 2008a). These publications illustrate van Naerssen’s belief in the possibility (and necessity) of social change ‘from below’. This is well illustrated with the following quote taken from one of his studies:

‘Much has been written about the problems accompanying rapid urban growth, such as the spread of squatter settlements and urban poverty, deterioration of the physical infrastructure and the increase in violence. Naturally, it is the poor in particular who are suffering from the worsening conditions in the cities. Yet in spite of the many problems they face, the poor also perceive cities as environments that offer opportunities to pursue their strategies for coping with poverty. Contrary to analyses based on ideas of the ‘culture of poverty’ (Lewis 1965), the poor are not merely passive recipients of urban problems. During the past decades, it has been demonstrated in many countries that the poor are able to organize themselves, for example by squatting land and building their own shelters’ (van Naerssen, 2001c:677)

After the International Habitat Year (1987), during which attention focused on urban poverty and associated problems of slum housing, poor public infrastructure and rural-urban migration, Ton van Naerssen published a reader with Frans Schuurman reflecting on collective action and issues of territoriality of urban social movements (Schuurman and van Naerssen, 1989). Such movements, whereby the urban poor organize themselves in a quest to influence and improve their physical environment, provide an alternative mode to top-down urban development policies. This reader was one of the first to present a comparative body of evidence on the existence and impact of such emancipatory social movements in various parts of the Third World. This publication was followed by a number of publications focusing on the specific situation of the urban poor, as a marginalised group, and their empowerment, in Metro Manila, The Philippines (van Naerssen, 1989; 1992; 1999).
This paradigmatic shift, together with the later debate on the eroding effect of globalization on the power of nation-states for governing global issues, put the limelight on the role of non-state actors in political and development processes (cf. Arts, *this volume*). Thereby analysis of processes of governance shifted to sub-national, local levels.

Thereafter, urban governance and planning became a prominent theme in Ton’s work. Within the research programme on Governance and Places (GAP) he focused on Healthy Cities in developing countries and urban governance and city planning in The Philippines. Exemplary for the latter is his study of Cebu city in The Philippines (van Naerssen, 2004; 2002), in which, while he examined urban governance and participatory development, while linking his insights to theories of globalization and global cities (the influence of Castells and Sassen being notable here). Hereby he showed the limitations of urban planning and governance and how these incite all kinds of processes of inclusion and exclusion. Here, as is the case in his work on healthy cities and migration (see below), van Naerssen makes the connection between local level processes and the actors involved in these, and economic, political and policy developments at more global levels. Yet, while he sees participatory approaches and empowerment as prerequisites for sound, realistic policies that seek to improve urban environments and living conditions, he warns against any application of uniform models; variations in local contexts, the strength and diversity of civil society, and levels of cooperation with governmental agencies in planning and decision-making, make this impossible.

**Environment and health**

There has been a traditional rift between physical and social geography, which shows up in the separate curricula and institutional setups at universities. Among Dutch development geographers, environmental factors have long been glossed over in the explanation of underdevelopment. However, more recently, more attention has been placed on ecological aspects of (under-) development, which has translated into more cooperation between the two sub-disciplines. In this sense van Naerssen took on the role of trailblazer in being one of the first to focus on the role of environmental issues in urban areas, and the ramifications of these issues for the vulnerable and poor (van Naerssen and van Rooijen, 1980; van Naerssen, 1990; van Naerssen, 1993; van Naerssen and Muller, 1993).

In the view of van Naerssen health issues are strongly linked to the environment. This became a prominent topic in his research. At a time that the severity of environmental and health problems of the urban poor, was beginning to become recognized, particularly following the WHO launch of their Healthy Cities Movement in 1986, van Naerssen was already working on a book project, together with Francoise Barten, containing case studies of several healthy city projects for the UNDP/WHO (van Naerssen and Barten, 1995; 1996; 1999; 2002; van Naerssen, 2001a). Therein the extent to which healthy cities programmes succeeded in putting health issues on the agenda of urban development policies was examined, and how civil society play a role in processes of policy formulation. On the basis of the cases discussed, van Naerssen and Barten advocated a participatory approach for municipal health
policies that fully engages grass-roots organisations in the formulation of project aims and their implementation (van Naerssen and Barten, 2002). Their work led to the initiation of the Nijmegen Urban Health Group, a group involved in applied research concerning issues such as urban health management, environmental epidemiology and occupational health.

From the perspective of the development of geography, Van Naerssen’s work on urban poverty, emancipation and health issues, went against the trend in the 1990s whereby within economic and urban geography more attention has been given to spatial analysis and structures instead of human issues, a trend lamented by some geographers (Kleinpenning, 2002).

Globalization, migration and transnationalism

Globalization has replaced imperialism as prominent catchphrase and issue in the present world: with an ever intensifying flow of capital, commodities, information and human beings, different parts of the world have become increasingly interdependent of one another. While migration is considered to be as old as mankind, in the current globalizing world, it has come into limelight, largely as a concern for policymakers, academics, migrant organisations and the general public (see Davids and Ruben, this volume). As van Naerssen and van der Velde (2008) note ‘Migration is a global issue that is here to stay. Dealing with increasing flows of migrating people is one of the major issues of the early 21st century’. The current political and academic debates concerning East-West migration in and to the enlarging EU and its effect on the labour market, public safety, social cohesion and governance attest to the importance and contentiousness of the issue.

The linkages between globalization, human mobility, issues of identity in the context of relations between countries of origin and destination (transnationalism), has become a prominent feature of van Naerssen’s work in recent years. In his view, globalization has led to a new type of immigrant who carries multiple identities and attachments, thus challenging the classical representation of immigrants:

‘The classical image of an immigrant is that he or she makes a home in a foreign place, adapts to another environment, and then assimilates the culture of the receiving country. Linkages and ties with the home country gradually fade away and what remains is perhaps the (unlikely) dream of returning upon retirement. If it was ever true, however, this picture has lost much of its relevance. (...) Globalization not only has led to an increase in long-distance migration, it has also intensified this transnationalism. Time-space compression, internet, and e-mail have brought “home” within easy reach wherever one stays in the world. This applies not only to international tourists, but migrants across national borders as well. The migrants of today carry their imagined communities with them to an even greater degree than before and actively use these new communication opportunities in constructing and maintaining their identities despite spatial dispersion.’ (Madsen and van Naerssen, 2002)

Van der Velde and van Naerssen (2008:145) distinguish two approaches within human geography to the study of (east-west) migration. The first, more quantitative tradition is mainly concerned with analysing and forecasting the volume of migration, the underlying processes and impacts on labour markets
and social welfare systems. The second approach, which generally employs qualitative methodology, deals more with governance, discourse and the process of de- and re-bordering within the context of human spatial mobility. Typically, van Naerssen joined this second, ‘social constructivist’ approach (van de Velde, this volume).

An example of his involvement in the second approach is the research on processes of (b)ordering and othering (van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002) and the linkage between cross-border migration, identity formation and the disjuncture between political and cultural borders (Madsen and van Naerssen, 2003). These processes deal with narratives on migrants and borders and the way these are conceptualised, de-constructed and redefined, under the influence of prevailing (policy) concerns, the actual configuration and dynamics of migration and individual level rationality and choice. It involves the marking out of and empowering of the self against an ‘other’ (whether an individual person or group) who is conceivable as inferior, deviant or threatening. Borders thereby become means with which to construct, sustain and enforce identities. The phenomenon of (b)ordering and othering, informed by the general publics and policymakers apprehension of large scale immigration and subsequent economic and societal impacts is thereby not limited to the EU but manifests itself in many countries around the globe, e.g. Malaysia (Spaan et al., 2002), Mexico (Martínez, 1994; Vila, 2003) and Africa (Adepoju and van Naerssen, 2008).

In the current globalizing world, characterized by increasing mobility of capital, commodities, information and manpower, the way migrant labour is incorporated in the receiving economies and society have become contentious issues. Factors considered important for the successful integration of migrants are their degree of access to formal labour markets in receiving countries, their inclination to entrepreneurship, and their ability to mobilize and sustain their social networks (cf. Maas, this volume). These are themes which have been taken up in recent work of van Naerssen (Spaan, Hillmann and van Naerssen, 2005; Sie and van Naerssen, 2004; Essers et al. 2004). Again, the perspective taken is not simply one of determining a subject’s position (in this case migrants) from a macro-level, but rather using a perspective that emphasizes how actors cope with, and seize opportunities, within the constraints of prevailing socio-political configurations.

The position of migrants in society is an issue of concern to Ton van Naerssen, fuelled in particular after the rise of the right-wing Fortuyn movement in the Netherlands, which sparked a heated debate on immigration and integration and xenophobic tendencies. Rather than focusing solely on problems of integration, he turns the spotlight on the contribution migrants make to countries of destination and origin. In addition, added to his publications discussing the economic activities of Asians in Europe, he worked on the issue of identity formation and the position of Indo-Europeans and Indonesians in society (van Naerssen, 2005a; De la Croix et al., 2007).

Although the theme of international migration and development is not altogether new in development studies, in recent years the debate on the impact of large scale population migration on the development of migrant sending countries has regained impetus, partly as result of the attention the World Bank has put on the volume of remittances and its potential role as source for development. To counterbalance the economic bias in this debate, in two readers
published on the issue (Spaan and van Naerssen, 2005, van Naerssen et al., 2008), attention was drawn towards the social-cultural, institutional and political dimensions of the migration and development nexus, next to the economic linkages. A recent research project funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs was that on ‘International migration and national development: Viewpoints and policy initiatives in the countries of origin’. This resulted in an international conference and subsequent publication (Adepoju et al., 2008).

**Bridging academia and wider society**

Rather than confining himself to theory and academic treatises, Ton van Naerssen has clearly transgressed the boundaries of academia to bridge the gap with wider society. From early on in his career he involved himself with solidarity and advocacy groups, and with NGOs working in the field of development cooperation, in a bid to contribute to a better world. Examples of research conducted by van Naerssen in this field are his involvements with development cooperation in Southeast Asia (e.g. van Naerssen 1981), his work on migration and the role of diaspora organisations in development (van Naerssen 2008), and his various consultancies (e.g. van Naerssen, 1991; 1995). This consultancy work included, *inter alia*, themes such as water management (van Naerssen, 1991), NGOs (van Naerssen, 1995), urban development (van Naerssen, 1996), young development professionals (Hounkonnou and van Naerssen, 2003) and the ‘Healthy Cities’ programme (UNDP/WHO, 1995-2000). Furthermore, Ton van Naerssen was active on the (advisory) boards of various academic institutes, NGOs like Oxfam-NOVIB, and editorial boards of scientific journals (TESG, Derde Wereld), next to being member of professional associations such as the Organisation of Dutch Development Geographers (part of the Royal Dutch Association of Geographers KNAG) and the Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES).

**Final remarks**

Throughout his career, Ton has dealt with a wide range of themes and he has thereby gained research experience in various parts of the world. The space available here only permitted me to highlight a few facets of his work. However, despite his work in various areas of the world (e.g. Latin-America, Sub-Saharan Africa, East and Southeast Asia), his regional specialization has always remained Southeast Asia (or, perhaps more accurately: the Malay world), with an emphasis on The Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. His work in Southeast Asia has mainly focussed on regional development, urban governance and social movements, and more recently migration and development.

A defining characteristic of his work is its *interdisciplinarity* through a wide range of topics. He has not confined himself to what one might call ‘economic geography’, but also linkes up with other disciplines in both theory and subject matter, which is perhaps what might be expected of a social geographer. Indeed, as van de Velde (*this volume*) observes, progress in science depends in part on a willingness to cross disciplinary borders. Thematically, spatial aspects of
demographic and economic development feature in Ton’s work, but he has expanded this focus to incorporate issues such as the empowerment of marginalised populations, urban health, the role of civil society in development and planning, ethnic entrepreneurship, identity formation and transnationalism, using insights taken from various disciplines.

Ton van Naerssen’s academic work cannot be seen in isolation from his societal and political engagements; his work always had the intention of focusing attention on issues of poverty, underdevelopment, exploitation, political conflict and social justice, but always sought to provide options to resolve these issues. His academic career is concerned with practical issues in development cooperation and is linked to the grass-roots through work for NGOs and migrant organisations. This engagement with largely institutionalised segments of civil society is a typical dimension of the kind of development geography Ton practised, in research or in more practical involvement with squatter movements, farmer, migrant or environmental organisations.

In conclusion, I have shown that Ton van Naerssen has remained faithful to his conviction that development geographers must deal with issues of poverty, exploitation, dependency and ways how to combat these: by emancipation and empowerment. More generally scientific researchers, in his view, should not practice in a void but always be geared towards applying their insights for the benefit of society, notably the more vulnerable and less privileged, both in the developing and developed world.

Ton is not the kind of person to boast about his achievements —whether scholarly or more practical. However, this book attests to the way he has inspired geographers, other social scientists and development practitioners in their subject matter and thinking. It is good news for all of us that Ton will continue doing research, inevitably providing further contributions to the benefit of science and society.

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Critical Geography and Social Space
Critical geography in post-modern times

Huib Ernste

Introduction

Many young academics, having their first research experiences in the field of human geography, often struggle with finding a suitable theoretic framework for their research. One part of this struggle is the ambition to make their research matter in a practical, societal context (Massey, 1984). How can one derive practically and politically relevant conclusions from one’s own research? From this perspective, it often does not seem to be enough to just understand current practices. It is also felt as a necessity to make some kind of recommendations for change to create a better future, or at least have the feeling that one’s research leads to something. This ambition is usually deeply rooted in the motivational structure of human geographers, even if they are not always very explicit about it. Human geographers, somehow, tend to want to improve the world, to put their understanding of the world to some use. It is therefore also no coincidence that human geography has always been closely linked to different realms of applied science. This has always been a very strong tradition in geography, especially in the Netherlands¹. On the one hand, this practical ambition can be associated with a critical stance towards existing societal practices. This critical attitude is also the basis of what is called ‘critical geography’ (Bauder and Engel-Di Mauro, 2008²). On the other hand, the close relationship between applied research and powerful external principals, is sometimes also seen as direct threat for a free critical attitude in research (Fuller and Kitchin, 2004).

Another part of the struggle of finding a suitable theoretical framework is linked with the multitude of different theoretical approaches one can choose from, and the lack of own experience with most of them. In recent times it has often been claimed that there are no dominant research paradigms anymore (Feyerabend, 1975), that we live in a multi-paradigmatic world (Weichhart, 2000) and that we lack specific criteria on how to choose a suitable approach for one’s own research. Increasingly theoretic approaches are irrational scientific fads rather than that they are reflected and deliberate choices. As fashions they are the children of their times (Peet, 1998). In the current ‘postmodern’ times this seems to be more so than ever before. Under these circumstances many young scholars choose their specific theoretical approach on the basis of the (unreflected) inspiration they get from these approaches or the social acceptance they can gain from it. And who would blame them? Only if one experiences the changes of time, and the related changes in fashions and approaches one can seriously look back and consciously reflect on the specific differences and

¹ For a more historic overview of the development and different approaches in Dutch human geography see also (Ernste, forthcoming).
² See also: ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies: www.acme-journal.org
similarities between these approaches and on the historical contingencies of their fate.

From this perspective, I briefly would like to reflect, in this contribution, on how to be critical and how to make human geography matter in the current, postmodern times. I will roughly follow the development of critical geography from its early beginnings to its current state in postmodern times, and loosely add my personal reflective comments and questions to it. Finally I will derive some personal conclusions on how it is possible to be constructively critical today and in the future. Maybe this can even serve as source of inspiration for young scholars searching for their theoretical position on the research questions they face.

The origins of critical thinking

In the 1970s, two new approaches, behavioural geography and humanistic geography, of which the latter subsequently formed the basis of the action-theoretical approach in human geography (Werlen, 1992), emerged as a direct critique of the spatial analysis approach which was developed in the years before. Spatial analysis was inspired by a positivist and empiricist approach in human geography and focussed on the explanation and representation in quantitative models of aggregate patterns in space and in spatial interaction. Spatial analysis, as such, is largely abstracted from individual human behaviour and human actions which might play a role behind these spatial patterns. Both behavioural geography and action-theoretic geography gave primacy to human agency - although each in a different way - rather than to aggregate patterns of flows and human activities. The first adhered to the positivist approach but focussed on individual human behaviour and the cognitive information processing mechanism behind it. The spatial situation in which people behave was still seen as the main stimulus for and the main structural force behind spatial human behaviour. The second, however, was much more inspired by phenomenological and existential philosophy and assumed the origin of spatial human action and experience in human intentionality, instead of only in the situation. In this view the individual human being is perceived as a self-directing, creative force. For the action theoretic approach in human geography, society and all its spatial patterns is the sum of individual decisions and choices.

Soon both behavioural and humanistic geography were criticised, from a more structuralist perspective because they supposedly failed to take into account the material context in which human actions took place. Structuralism in general claimed that individual activities could only be understood with reference to impersonal social forces and to rules and logic of (hidden) social structures in society. Within the social sciences this structuralist approach found its origin in the work of Durkheim, Comte, Montesquieu, Althusser, Lévy Strauss and foremost in the work of the (Swiss) linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1966). It

Saussure claimed that, at that time, the conventional view of language as a neutral medium for representing the world was wrong. Traditionally the meaning of a word was determined by the relation this word had to a specific concept in human mind, which in turn would derive its meaning from the correspondence to the existence of an object in the real world. In contrast Saussure conceptualised language as a complex system of signs whose meanings lie in the arbitrary
aimed to discover the universal laws that govern the functioning of social forms and which are founded in unconscious mental structures. It was proposed, that ‘underlying the social surface, with its seeming contingency, randomness, and individual freedom, are universal structures that operate independently of individual will to create order and social coherence. Indeed, the self or individual is, in this perspective, little more than a vehicle for the unconscious structural codes to enact their logic’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 218).

It is often forgotten, that these intellectual perspectives also have a history and a geography of themselves (Blomley, 2008). In this case, for example, the structuralist movement is strongly rooted in the French context. Parallel to a nationally centralised government and power structure, the French intellectual culture is also centred around a few great universities and research centres led by dominant general ‘patron-scholars’, as Seidman (1998, p.214) calls them, who are expected to draw on a broad (disciplinary overarching) scientific body of knowledge in order to engage in social and political developments. Intellectual debates in the French culture have, therefore, always been strongly politicised and focussed on the cultural conflict between a more humanistic and structuralist world view. The typical French focus on the structuralised aspects of daily life can be understood from its specific French institutional context. Even the short upturn of humanistic and existentialist approaches in the after WWII, inspired by the war resistance movement, can be explained as the reconstruction of national pride and structural power (Kurzweil, 1980). Structuralism gave expression to a particular French view of the world at that time. General de Gaulle promised neither reform nor revolution but rather a stable growth-oriented society focussed on rebuilding the economy and national culture. In addition, the emerging super-powers of the United States and the Soviet Union seemed to offer few possibilities beyond manoeuvring within a fixed structural framework. ‘With the heroic spirit of existentialism dimming and with the revelations of the horrors of Stalinism dampening the ideological [and revolutionary (HE)] vigour of the French Communist Party, structuralism took central stage’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 219).

Without taking into account the implicit historical and geographical contingencies of this kind of thinking, in practice, geography picked up several ideas from a wide variety of these structural thinkers. Foremost, the historical materialist thinkers - Marx, Althusser and Lefebvre - played an important role. They proposed that the world can only be understood with reference to the historically unfolding political and economic relations that structure social life. Accordingly, the world is shaped by deep structures of capitalism in which class relations reproduce and sustain people’s behaviour and are the driving forces of history. Short (Hubbard et al., 2002, p. 44): the prevailing mode of production of material life [the (economic) structural base, HE] determines the general relationship between different signs. So words and concepts get their meaning in the particular ways in which they differ from other words and concepts in a specific language system. Meanings are thus not fixed but based on social constructions and conventions about these relationships. The meaning of the word ‘man’ is, for example, not determined by any intrinsic properties that summon up the concept, but rather because it contrasts to the way the word ‘woman’ is used. Thus, language systems are dynamic, social structures which shape our thinking, our saying and our doing. From this structural point of view, society can be seen as a kind of super-language (Seidman, 1998, pp. 216-218).
character of the social, cultural, political and other processes of life [the (cultural) superstructure, HE]. Thus Marx thought that it is not people’s consciousness that determine their being but, on the contrary, the social-economic being that determines their consciousness. ‘For Marx, there is no such thing as an individual human nature – the kind of person one is and the kind of things one does are determined by the kind of society in which one lives. This theory is inherently teleological, in the sense that it sees events as stages in the movement towards a preordained (and socially just) future, and functional in the sense that it subsumes the individual to the logic of the capitalist system’. This capitalist system was based on the unequal (power) relations between the bourgeois owners of the means of production and the exploited proletariat. On the one hand, the class of labourers was responsible for creating the added wealth, or surplus value, through their labour. On the other hand, this crucial contribution also put them in a position to collectively bring down the capitalist system and make it inherently unstable. These kind of class differences also had a clear spatial aspect, separating the elite from the exploited and making capitalism into an imperialist enterprise securing the continuing supply of cheap labour (Harvey, 1982; Castree, 1999).

By the identification of class differences and the inherent alienation of the labourers as a driving force of modern capitalism, Marxist inspired structuralism also contains a clear humanist and critical thrust. It defined human beings as structurally seeking liberation from alienating labour conditions and striving towards developing and unfolding human capacities and creative potentials (Ollman, 1976). As such, structural Marxism focussed on the emancipation of the proletariat and on a critique of existing capitalist structures. But at the same time, it also assumed capitalist structures and the way towards full emancipation as pre-given and following an ‘iron law’:

‘History is an immense natural-human system in movement, and the motor of history is class struggle. History is a process, and a process without a subject. The question about how “man makes history” disappears altogether. Marxist theory rejects it once and for all; it sends it back to its birthplace: bourgeois ideology’ (Althusser, 1976, pp. 83-84, quoted in Peet, 1998, p. 123).

Or as Kevin Cox (2005, p. 21) paraphrased Karl Marx: ‘People make history, but not under conditions of their own choosing’.

**Critical theory and critical geography**

Critical theory, in general, and critical geography, in particular, were formulated in the early 1970s as a direct response to structural theories of those days. ‘Critical theory as developed by the original Frankfurt School attempted to explain why the socialist revolution prophesied in the mid-nineteenth century by Marx did not occur as expected’ (Agger, 1991, p. 107). Representatives of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, such as Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, tried to develop a new understanding of capitalism which would take into

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4 The term ‘ideology’ as used here resembles the currently more fashionable term ‘discourse’ in the sense that it is seen as a system of ideas and representations and a system of meanings that dominate people’s minds, their thinking and doing.
account the transformed situation in the emerging twentieth century (Horkheimer, 1972). They thought that capitalism was developing coping mechanisms, against its own contradictory powers and against a possible proletarian uprising, thus continuing and reinforcing its domination in modern society. In their eyes, this domination was based on a combination of external exploitation and internal self-disciplining of the labour class. People internalise certain values and norms that induce them to participate effectively in the capitalist system. More concretely, people believe that they can achieve modest individual improvement in their situation by complying with certain social norms, which, at the same time, make more structural social changes less probable. They thus exchange their substantive interests in liberation of exploitative relations for the freedoms of consumer choice. In today’s terms if people can enjoy the purchase of the newest iPhone and cheap flight to the Maldives, they will continue to play their role in the capitalist system. The critical school thus identified a number of cultural, political and ideological mechanisms which stabilised and even deepened the dominance of the capitalist system. They held the combination of the enlightenment ideology with the positivist ideology particularly responsible for this increasing dominance by the system (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972). While enlightenment helped to demystify the structural powers of religion and mythology, it also made the positivist science into a new mythology and ideology in the sense that through this new ‘religion’ people everywhere are taught to accept the world ‘as it is’, as a quasi objective scientific fact, instead of what it could be. Positivism suggested that one can perceive the world without questioning the assumptions about the phenomena under observation and thus that knowledge simply represents the world as it is. Positivist thinking leads to an uncritical identification of reality and rationality, and to the inability to view the world in terms of its potential for being changed, beyond simplistic and reduced patterns and cause-and-effect relationships (Jay, 1973). Even Marxist theory, in the eyes of the Frankfurt School, was, in that sense, too positivist and too reductionist and failed ‘to secure an adequate ground in voluntarism, instead falling back on the fatalism of positivist determinism’ (Agger, 1991, p. 110). In contrast to structural Marxism, the Frankfurt School concluded that human beings make their own history, instead of being exclusively subjectified by the structural capitalist mode of production.

A further important step forward was made by the second generation Frankfurt School critical thinker Jürgen Habermas (1984) who tried to reconstruct critical theory to find a better balance between the (positivist) knowledge gained from causal analysis and knowledge gained from critical self-reflection. He acknowledged that next to the anthropologically deep seated technical interests in domination of nature and the material reproduction other practical interests also play an important role in any human practice (Peet, 1998, p. 92), namely socio-cultural reproduction, especially through the mechanism of intersubjective understanding5. He thus conceptualised the process of rationalisation in a much broader way, comprising not only technical-instrumental, but also moral-practical and aesthetic-expressive dimensions of rationalisation. Rationality, conceived in this way, would then also bear the potential for critical reflection

5 As I have shown elsewhere, it can be argued that these additional aspects of human practice are also firmly anthropologically rooted (Ernste, 2004).
and would also enhance and extend the project of modernity, towards a better future. In his theory of communicative rationality, making use of theory of speech acts, he also detailed the idealypical but contra-factual societal mechanisms of communicative rationalisation of these different kinds of knowledge. In doing so, he shifted the focus of critical theory, from a more substantive and essentialistic view on differences within society to a more procedural view on the mechanisms to criticise and reconcile these differences (Zierhofer, 2002). Habermas thus shifts critical social theory from the paradigm of consciousness to the paradigm of communication, as in all Western philosophy, enabling workable strategies of ideology-critique, community building and social-movement formation (Agger, 1991, p. 110). The task of critical theory then is to critically look at the real processes, and explain why and how they divert from the communicative rational ideal and criticise them from this procedural point of view. In this way Habermas did not only offer a broad theory of society, but also a vision of a good society and a template for constructive critique of oppressive practices. Nevertheless, no specific societal classes or positions are privileged in Habermas’ critical theory and the historical and geographical contextuality of the different frames of knowledge are recognised.

Again, we can notice that the critical theory of the Frankfurt school is closely related to the historical and geographical conditions in Germany. Their focus on the human agency, instead of on societal structures, can be traced back to German idealism and (neo-)Kantian traditions (Therborn, 1978, pp. 88-89), but, especially for the second generation Frankfurt School scholars, such as Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, is also rooted in the catastrophic experience of the Second World War in Germany, which made clear that, in the interest of humanitarian values, there is and must be space for critical resistance against the overwhelming power of fascist political institutions (Reese-Schaefer, 1990). In the face of these experiences it is almost seen as ethically reprehensible and irresponsible to assume the ‘death of the subject’ and, on the contrary, a moral obligation to search for ways through which a better world could be created peacefully. At this point the scholars of the Frankfurt School continued to rely on the central idea of ‘rationality’ as formulated and identified as a core concept in the capitalist system by Max Weber (1978, 1958) in a German idealist fashion. Taking this contextuality into account, one could of course ask in how far these theoretical viewpoints – the French structuralism and the German idealism – although formulated as universal grand narratives, should not instead be valued from their respective contexts as small and local narratives. ‘To be “critical” means different things in different places’ (Blomley, 2008, p. 290).

With Jürgen Habermas’ non-essentialistic critical theory, a step was also made in the direction of what Joe Painter (2000) designates as a more pluralistic critical human geography, which shares not only the interests of Marxist geography in relations of inequality and oppression, but also includes many other

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6 It is important here to acknowledge that Jürgen Habermas never assumed that this communicative rational ideal actually existed. He only noticed that empirically, human beings to a certain degree in their interactions, always assume this communicative rational ideal while in reality many disturbing factors occur. This ideal-typical framework, however, makes it possible to reflect critically on this real situation and to identify the real causes of systemic domination of the one-sided technical and economic rationality in capitalistic societies.
kinds of oppression, which do not need to be of a material nature (Cox, 2005, p. 6). In general, one could characterise critical geography as the endeavour not just to understand the world from a geographical perspective, but to also change it by combining science and politics. This kind of critical geography is often differentiated from applied forms of geography that uncritically serve the interests of the state or business (Fuller and Kitchin, 2004, p. 5; Pain, 2006, p. 253). The emergence of these critical approaches is closely related to the political and social changes that occurred at that time. The post-war social calm abruptly came to an end in Paris in May 1968 when student revolts ignited a sweeping cultural shift, in which moderate democratisations of traditional institutions did not suffice anymore. It was a general revolt against any kind of authority. A totally different kind of society was demanded. This was not limited to universities and students were soon also supported by blue-colour workers which resulted in a general strike on May 13. As a consequence, France came to a virtual standstill. Although the revolt ended quickly, the cultural movement ignited continued in vigour and developed critical perspectives on consumerism, sexuality, gender, the typical middle-class family life, environmental degradation, third-world famine, colonialism, the cold-war, etc. etc. After 1968 France was no longer the same. In addition, new theories of society were needed. Social activism and the experience of fast changing institutions and cultural values made structuralism look irrelevant. Existentialism lacked a convincing social and political theory. Althusser’s Marxism neglected all the differences which were not class based (Seidman 1998, p. 220-221).

Although France was one of the main hot spots of this movement and as we will see further below it also invoked a typically French response, this movement also spread across many other Western countries. It was against this backdrop that human geographers were increasingly dissatisfied and demanded that geography come up with a much more relevant contribution to the many social problems. Geography should matter! However, ‘[…] geography at the time appeared to be populated by practitioners who were constructing models and theories in splendid ignorance of the problems of those living in the world beyond the “ivory towers” of academia’ (Hubbard et al., 2002, p. 46). In this situation, the focus shifted from the pre-given determining material side of society to culture as an autonomously shifting and unstable system of meanings through which people make sense of the world. Similar to Habermas’ insights, culture is not seen as the dependent of economic processes anymore, but as the very medium through which social change is experienced, contested and constituted (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987, p. 95 quoted in Hubbard et al., 2002, p. 60). Critical geography was not limited to the examination of the role of capital in shaping society anymore, but focussed on a whole series of different dimensions of power and difference, which are held responsible for all kinds of social, economic and spatial differences. In this guise, critical geography subordinates the economic to the cultural and the material to the ideal, as well as structure to agency. Fragmentation in society, according to Kevin Cox (2002, p. 7-8), is now assumed to take a different form: ‘The particularities of context,
combined with the will to power, forms the humus for the construction of distinct social worlds, for Difference, and the identification of seemingly multiple Others to exclude and marginalise’. Exploitation, he continues, as well as any practices of exclusion and discursive construction of others, is not seen as a necessary feature of capitalism, but as typical features of particular places at particular times, depending on the circumstances. As such, critical geography lacks a unitary theoretical framework and almost dissolves in the genuine but rather non-critical general interest of geographers in processes of spatial differentiation. This development coincides with the development of the typically French post-structuralist thinking to which I will turn in the following section.

**Critical theory in post-modern times**

The development of post-structural theories was directly related to the upsurge in the late 1960s in France. As Seidman (2002) convincingly shows the post-structural thinkers emphasised rebellion and deconstruction rather than social construction: ‘Like their activist counterparts on the barricades of the streets of Paris, these Parisian intellectuals offered few proposals for a good society beyond slogans and rhetoric’ (p. 221). In the same way, it is difficult to identify a coherent post-structural theory of society. What is usually designated as post-structuralism is a rather eclectic collection of theoretical positions, of which most authors would not even identify themselves as post-structuralist. Post-structuralism, as it developed in France, was clearly rooted in French structuralism and some would even say that it actually is its consistent extension (Frank, 1989; Münker and Roessler, 2000, p. ix). Post-structuralism, for example, shares with structuralism a strong anti-humanism. The autonomous, rational self is replaced by discursive structures without a subject or agent. In the post-structuralist view, it is language which forms individual subjectivity, social institutions and the political landscape. Meanings are derived from relations of difference and contrast in the dominant discourse. Similar to the classical structuralist approach, society is explained by reference to (discursive) structures which can not be changed by an agent in a deliberate way. People are thus determined by prevailing societal structures\(^9\). However, post-structuralist thinking clearly differs from the classical structuralist approach in the sense that they do not assume a fixed and universal structure to exist. On the contrary, they emphasise that discursive structures are inherently unstable, unremittingly on drift, and dependent on the specific historical and geographical context\(^10\). This contingency and subjectivity of discursive structures also makes it highly

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\(^9\) Most post-structuralist thinkers, similar to structural-functionalist theorists such as Parsons and Luhmann, see the subject as vanishing in the self-governing technical and semiotic relational networks. In our current media dominated world the subject is lost in the ecstasy of communication and is imploding into the masses (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 128). Jameson (1984) characterises the subject as fragmented, disjointed and discontinuous, while Deleuze and Guattari (1987) celebrate the schizoid, nomadic dispersions and finally the pulverisation of the modern subject.

\(^10\) The post-structuralist thinkers agreed with Saussure (see footnote 3) that meanings are determined by relations of difference, but in contrast to structuralism, assume that these meanings are not fixed but are in constant flux.
political and contested. While in structuralism one would try to discover the general social structures, without examining its political implications, in post-structuralism it is exactly the political dimension of the establishment of discursive meanings, which are of central interest. Derrida (1976), for example, claimed that ‘whenever a linguistic and social order is said to be fixed or meanings are assumed to be unambiguous and stable, this should be understood less as a disclosure of truth than as an act of power, the [implicit] capacity of a social group to impose its will on others by freezing linguistic and cultural meanings’ (Seidman, 2002, p. 222). For example, the way one thought about immigration and integration in the 1970s in the Netherlands was not something of one’s choosing, but was at that time ‘in the air’ and determined how people reacted to foreigners and how integration was institutionalised. Looking back, one would now characterise this as the ‘multi-culti’ age. Today, a totally different political regime seems to rule, in which immigrants are comparatively more marginalised and ‘multi-cultural society’ is seen as a curse (Scheffer, 2000; 2007). According to post-structural thinkers this is not to be seen as the result of a rational process of deliberation but rather as the effect of shifting discursive meanings, which determine one’s thinking and doing. The subject, in their view, is to be conceptualised as radically de-centred and seems to disappear in discursive relations (Zima, 2000).

Post-structuralism aims not so much at construction of social order, but rather at deconstructing seemingly closed patterns of meaning, and linked social orderings by uncovering its ambiguities, its contingency and by tracing it back to a will for power. As such, this was a strategy of subversion of any kind authority and discursive force. On the one hand, it thus carries a strong critical surge. On the other hand deconstruction is not a project of reversing the value or position of discursively marginalised social groups. It only questions the validity of any kind of hierarchy and authority. Derrida e.g. never formulated a social and moral vision that could guide the deconstructive project. Deconstruction therefore remains a very limited critical strategy as it does not really aim to change hierarchical societal structures. This is also the basis of Habermas’ critique of post-structuralism. He accuses it of being inherently conservative (Frank, 2005; Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 246f; Wolin, 1987) because its lacks any criteria for making choices and thus for igniting a transformation of reality. ‘The critical spirit of post-structuralism is not joined to a positive liberationist programme’ (Saidman, 2002, p. 225). The post-structural project, as Lyotard (1984, p. xxv) states, is mainly aimed at disrupting traditional or totalising conceptual meanings and conceptual innovation. Its value lies neither in producing liberating truths nor socially useful knowledge, but rather in making people more aware of differences, ambiguities, uncertainties and conflicts. It therefore ‘refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable’ 11. Many critical thinkers would say that this is too shallow to serve as a critical project which aims at improving the fate of those who are oppressed or dominated. The repudiation of humanism by post-structuralist

11 In this respect, despite the dismissal of the subject, most post-structuralist theory is highly subjectivistic. They privilege a subjective politics of performativity, spontaneism and anarchism, which fits the events of May 1968 in Paris. They celebrate desire, fragmentation, and libidinal ways of being while disqualifying intersubjectivity, reason, social identity, and harmony (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 290).
thinkers, without reconstructing its core values, strips the subject of any moral responsibility and autonomy and makes a moral language in the interest of repressed people impossible. Political action then can also not be legitimised (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 291). Of the many post-structuralist thinkers only Laclau and Mouffe seem to have attempted to reconstruct a liberal politics, although it is uncertain whether their approach strengthens liberal capitalism or radical democracy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

In this brief contribution I could not go into more detail although there is much more to say on the subject. In general one can conclude that post-structuralism has great difficulties in formulating a positive notion of the social, of community or solidarity, and post-structuralism also seems to lack an adequate theory of agency, of an active creative self, mediated by social institutions, discourses and other people (Best and Kellner, 1991, p. 283). This makes it difficult to keep up critical attitudes without becoming entangled in all kinds of contradictions (Weichhart, 2008). For practical critical geography as far these issues are concerned, have hardly seemed to be a real problem which is, as stated in the introduction of this contribution, probably due to a lack of reflection and to a rather selective-eclectic human geographic praxis (Gelbmann and Mandl, 2002) in which not the whole post-structuralist theoretic building is taken on board or taken in full consequence but rather only parts of it as a kind of selective-toolbox for critical analyses (Gibson-Graham, 2000). This, however, as I have tried to show in all its brevity, also leaves many flaws and contradictions which are still to be solved. It will be up to our human geography students of the future to further explore the possibilities of a deepened debate about the possibilities to critically make geography matter and to look for what is next, after post-structural geography (Dixon and Jones III, 2004) and it will be the task of critical geographers such as Ton van Naerssen, to teach them, how to do so.

References


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Land reform, scripts and social space: emergent properties in rural South Africa

Paul Hebinck

Introduction

This paper seeks to come to grips with what happens on land reform farms in contemporary South Africa. Understanding and conceptualising land reform is not only important for the ordering and interpretation of empirical data, but a good, empirically well grounded view of land reform may also help identify areas for improvement. When I began to engage with my own data, those of my South African students (Modishe Mosike, Limpho Taoana, Malebogo Phetlhu, and Francois Marais) and the current literature about land reform in South Africa, one of the conclusions was that only some of the phenomena and situations that we encountered could be explained by theoretical literature. A range of practices (i.e. emergent properties) led us to pursue other avenues to explain our data about the dynamics of land reform. This chapter explores one of those avenues and looks at the notions of ‘script’, ‘arena’ or social space as potentially useful theoretical concepts for examining and unpacking land reform.

The iterative search for an analytical framework is part of a journey that started a long time ago and which owes much to my interactions over the years with Ton van Naerssen, particularly at the time of my early intellectual development. I was part of a cohort of geography students in Nijmegen who were introduced by Van Naerssen to the early beginnings of critical development theory. At the time the dominant modernist theories for explaining the particularities of development processes in the South were being critiqued. Our understanding of developments was gradually enriched with centre-periphery perspectives and later (neo-) Marxist theories including unequal exchange and dependency theories (van Naerssen, 1979). Van Naerssen argued that there were other and more relevant tales of development; tales that required different epistemologies if we were to understand unequal social and spatial development in the South. Gradually we were put on a critical theory path leading us to read books like André Gunder Frank’s *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. I was particularly impressed by Samir Amin’s *Développement Inégal*. My first publication *Kongo en de Tam-Tam van het Kapitaal* [Congo and the drums of capital] was the product of that intellectual engagement and dealt with the articulation of modes of production theory applied to the Congo (Hebinck, 1978).

Unlike today geography was in those days a discipline that did not interact much or well with anthropology and rural development sociology. The exposure to new thoughts, epistemologies and methodologies took place after most of our
cohort had graduated and had branched into careers as practitioners, teachers, policymakers or academics. For me, ending up in academia, this meant a second journey, but one which surely would not have been possible with the first.

A theoretical positioning: neo-liberalism, political economy, script and space

The search for a more appropriate analytical framework began with the conceptualisation of land reform as a state or planned intervention that is designed and implemented to facilitate social change. This was what the South African State set out to do after Apartheid was dismantled. A range of policy documents led to the acceptance of the White Paper on South African Land Policy (DLA, 1997). This document was formally published in 1997 but certain aspects of land reform were already implemented as early as 1993. Empirical research documenting experiences with land reform in South Africa (Walker, 2005; Wegerif, 2006; James, 2007; van Leynseele and Hebinck, 2008) and elsewhere (for Peru: see Long, 2004 and van der Ploeg, 2008) already pointed at an primary important ingredient for alternative analytical framework: the State cannot prevent social actors transforming and translating land reform policies in ways different from how they were planned and designed by its institutions and experts. Land reform as ‘seen by the State’ (Scott, 1998) is subject to reworking and redesigning. Land reform cannot properly be understood by following linearly how policy objectives, with the use of the prescribed means and instruments, are translated and implemented in a given context.

Land reform in South Africa, and most probably elsewhere as well, poses a set of questions that can only be answered by pursuing a paradigm shift from so-called (post-)structural approaches of social transformation to more actor-oriented types of analysis (Long, 1977, 2001). The practice of land reform requires that we consider other factors; factors that are beyond the reach of structural, linear perspectives of social change.

In the next subsections I explore the usefulness of the notion of script. The use of script is subject to debate as a result of the work by James Scott (see Greenhouse, 2005). The angle I pursue here is that the notion of script is useful only when understood not (simply) in (post)structuralist terms. It is imperative to analyse a script in such way that one is able to capture multiple outcomes and realities or heterogeneity. Following this route enables us to unpack land reform for what it perhaps really is: complex, ambiguous, contradictory and involving a myriad of social actors each with their own views, strategies, interests and cultural norms and values.

Understanding land reform as a script in this mode of interpretation entails at the same time positioning vis-à-vis the paradigmatic perspectives that are dominating the current debate about land reform in South Africa: a neo-liberal perspective and the radical political-economy school of thought. Although these are from almost opposite ideological positions, there are striking similarities between the two schools of thought. Despite the fact that different concepts are employed, they share a structural and linear interpretation of processes of (rural) transformation progressing along predetermined trajectories: from traditional/feudal societies to modern/capitalist societies (Long, 1977, 2001).
They consequently share the view that development unfolds like a teleological script that is one with a predetermined outcome. They differ, however, on the dynamics of (smallholder) agriculture. Whereas a neo-liberal perspective would emphasise the virtues of the small family farm model (van Zyl et al., 1996), political economists point out that this would facilitate class formation rather than promote social equality in the rural areas (Sender and Johnson, 2004; Bernstein, 2003, 2007).

**Neo-liberal perspective**

The neo-liberal approach stipulates the need for market assisted land reform coupled with expert views on how agriculture should look like in the future (Deininger, 1999). Land reform is to be implemented as the script has laid out: assisted and stimulated by the market and related market reforms as well as training of (emergent) farmers in more sophisticated ways of farming. If this script is indeed followed, then land reform will be successful. Casting it in actor network concepts (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1993): land reform is successful as long as the configuration of the several elements (e.g. land reform grants, business plans, post-settlement support) that together constitute the plan is maintained.

The State has taken a leading role in initiating and implementing land reform. But land reform is more than just an economic modernisation project; it as much as a political project to increase the political participation of communities with a view to facilitating access to the State and its resources, distributing land more equally and providing employment for the rural poor. Land reform thus combines the transformation of land ownership with an ongoing modernisation of agricultural production. Such a development script hinges on the knowledge and qualities of the agricultural expert system consisting of private consultants, agrarian scientist and agricultural researcher and a continuous State support to ensure the continuation of a modern agriculture which is firmly embedded in the global economy. Land reform will be successful if it follows and executes such a script. The reality is that land ownership, in many cases, is nominally transferred to land reform beneficiaries without any effective change in current land use and production patterns. The policy directive to stimulate Public-Private-Partnerships follows the same rhythm and dynamics and may be positioned as preventing dramatic changes in land use. This has been referred to as the ‘same car, different driver’ principle strongly supported by the ‘telephone farmer’ lobby (van den Brink, 2003:20). Furthermore, since 1994 when land reform began to be implemented, private consultants2 have played a key role in the design and implementation through compiling feasibility studies and writing of management and business plans. The consultant’s role is to assess the economic feasibility of the ‘project’ and to draft a plan for knowledge transfer (implicitly assuming an absence of knowledge among the beneficiaries). Thus in this way experts and their knowledge play a role per excellence in the ordering of the future of modern agriculture in South Africa. Characteristic of the expert system and State policy directives is paternalism; it prescribes land use by fixing land reform.

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2 It appears that most consultants where former employees of the various Department of Agriculture. They resigned after 1994 and became private knowledge brokers. This is explored in some detail in Hebinck and Fay (2006). James (2007) also points at rather similar continuities. This is an aspect, however, of the expert system that has not received sufficient critical attention.
subsidies to forms of land use that fit with the category ‘commercial agriculture’ (see also James, 2007). In most instances, however, the sophistication of the business plan is not synchronised to the needs and wishes of beneficiaries; hence implemented plan often does not correlate with the approved plan (Marais, 2008; Mosike, 2008). This signals in turn that land reform is not necessarily unfolding in the ways designed by the experts. A conservative commentator like Philip Du Toit (2004) uses this as an entry point to list and document the ‘scandals of land reform’. Lahiff (2007), however, rightfully points out that post-settlement support, which have been influenced by the market-led approach, up until now serves to discriminate against the very poor.

Political economic perspectives
Bernstein (2003, 2007) has argued that over the years the focus of political economic analyses of agrarian questions has shifted from an understanding of these as a question of capital to questions of labour. The emphasis is now on an essentially fragmented labour force which pursues strategies in its struggle for re-production through various combinations of wage earning and self-employment (agricultural and non-agricultural petty commodity production). These multiple livelihoods, of course, are typically differentiated by social relations of gender, generation, and ethnicity. The promise that land reform would transform the structural basis of racial inequality or that it would create conditions for an improved re-production of labour has remained unfulfilled. During the first decade of post-apartheid, land reform has fallen far short of both public expectations and official targets. The radical, political economy perspective (Lahiff, 2007; Hall, 2004, 2007) ventilates the argument that land reform has so far failed and that it unfolds in such a way that the class basis of rural society remains unchanged. Land reform has pursued a limited de-racialisation of the commercial farming areas rather than a process of agrarian restructuring. Most fundamentally, land reform has not yet provided a strategy to overcome agrarian dualism in the country.

The recent shift in land policy, from a focus on the rural poor to emerging black commercial farmers, is consistent with changes in macro-economic policy and reflects shifting class alliances (Hall, 2004, 2007). For authors like Bond (2000), land reform turns out to be an ingredient of strategies of the new elite assisted by the State to gain access to key resources within the context of a globalising economy. Driver (2007) refers to the South African land reform programme as a ‘pet project’ of the World Bank to wipe out the peasants farmers by only promoting entrepreneurial ways of farming. He points, like many other observers, to the fact that the programme is rather slow and South Africa has been unable to meet its own targets. It is ethically and ideologically wrong to expect victims of apartheid to contribute financially to buying back land previously alienated (“not punishing white farmers for stealing land”, Driver, 2007:64, op cit.). The market orientation will not assist the poor. Furthermore, he argues, land reform is entrenched in a global capitalist ideology of individual property rights, which by its very nature discriminates against the poor, marginal

3 There is a remarkable continuity here with the Glen Grey Act of 1894 that evolved into Betterment Planning practices that dictated and attempted to change land use patterns in the ‘native reserves’. 
groups, and women. Greenberg (2003) concluded that the nature of the existing land reform policy is not different from the policies of the apartheid government due to the fact that commercial agricultural sector through the agribusiness lobby (AgriSA) still plays a major role in policy development, which means that land transfer to, and support for, black farmers is occurring under the influence of white and black emergent, commercial farmers. Land reform and agrarian policies are strongly condemned for benefiting new and old elites while ignoring the marginalized and poorer sections of society (Jacobs et al. (2003; Davis et al., 2004; Greenberg, 2003; Wegerif, 2004; Lahiff 2007). The latter certainly includes rural women (Hall, 2007).

Although there is certainly evidence that elite formation is taking place through the formation of Private-Public-Partnerships clause in the land reform programme (notably through the emphasis on Black Economic Empowerment), that other aspects of elite capturing takes place, and despite the fact that the World Bank has played a key role in the design of the programme, it is empirically and theoretically inadequate to understand such outcomes of land reform as inevitable, as masterminded by the State, World Bank and the elite. The outcomes of land reform are far more complex and diverse than such teleological explanations of land reform predict.

Land reform as a development script
Land reform as a script builds upon insights gained through constructionist approaches to development and social change. It is inspired by social science traditions - such as actor oriented analyses (Long and Long 1992; Arce and Long, 2000; Long, 2001) and actor-network kind of analyses (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1993) - that postulate that social action is not predetermined by structure. Structure (may) shape social actions and artefacts (like land reform) may structure the form and contents of their practices, but this do not necessarily determine action. Akrich (1992) discusses this with regard to technology and the study of innovations (see also Hebinck, 2001). The similarity of the study of technology and innovations and land reform is striking and allows us to link the design and implementation of land reform programmes to action.

‘When technologists define the characteristics of their objects, they necessarily make hypotheses about the entities that make up the world into which the object is to be inserted. (...) A large part of the work of innovators is that of ‘inscribing’ this vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object. (...) The technical realisation of the innovator’s beliefs about the relationships between an object and its surrounding actors is thus an attempt to predetermine the settings that users are asked to imagine for a particular piece of technology and the prescriptions (...) that accompany it’ (Akrich 1992:207-208).

Perceiving land reform as a development script permits us to follow land reform from design - and thus documenting the views of the policy community - to practice, recording views and experiences of land reform beneficiaries. This then will help us to understand how and why land reform unfolds in expected and unexpected ways. This implies unpacking land reform by examining the land reform beneficiaries and policy community in terms of networks, network builders, network nodes, but also their differences in opinion and emerging conflicts. By following these actors, we will able to see – referring to some of the
adagios of actor network theory - whether and how land reform becomes subject of translation. This in turn enables us to ask questions about what kind of actors are enrolled in forging networks that aim to prevent modification of the plans, as well as how beneficiaries are sanctioned or not. The data we have collected, and the available documentation in the form of published articles and reports, legitimises an investigation of how this script is actually unfolding, in what direction and in what way(s).

Land reform as script has a certain grammar (Rip and Kemp 1998) or is embedded in a certain language of development (Arce and Long, 2000) but it is also a certain ritual which can only be understood when properly historicised and contextualised. The grammar or language of the designers (i.e. the polity and policymakers) as much as the rituals of land reform are important ingredients to understand the dynamics that land reform brings about. The background of land reform is not simply undoing the injustices of the colonial and apartheid past (the 1912 Land Act, the unification of the South African State by reintegrating the homelands). Land reform is more than the redistribution and/or restitution of lands to those that have been denied ownership or have been forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. The ritual of the return of land by the State to land restitution beneficiaries is a politicised event which is known in restitution terms as the ‘settlement celebration’, a definitive moment in the resolution of land rights issues whereby claimants are handed a copy of the settlement agreement. It symbolizes the finalisation of the compensation of historical land rights by the Land Claims Commission and leads the way for resettlement of the ancestral land by the claimant group. It also marks the beginning of a new stage in land restitution when resettled claimants are faced with the question of how to develop their ancestral land (van Leynseele and Hebinck, 2008). Land reform is also about modernisation of land tenure and the social relations of production and simultaneously about the sophistication of land use according to modern, scientific insights. Land reform than becomes couched in terms of a conventional transfer of knowledge development paradigm encircled with expert-consultants, mentorship programmes and reordered (or transformed) institutional arrangements to allow the ‘emergent’ farmers to move beyond subsistence farming and access markets, technology and capital. Land reform is at the same time about Black Economic Empowerment and poverty alleviation. Reforming relations to and use of land is derived from the prospect that small-scale farming is supporting nothing more than a life of poverty.

Land reform moreover does not appear as a clear cut script, as one that is written and implemented, but politically (re)negotiated and hence rewritten by the so-called ‘policy community’ (Arce and Long, 2000). The script has been (re)designed in the context of consultations and negotiations between the various representatives of State institutions, politicians and political parties, non-governmental organisations, bilateral foreign aid donors, World Bank, private consultants, and agribusiness companies. A range of studies have argued that there is not necessarily a consensus within the policy community about the future and direction of land reform (van den Brink, 2003; Lahiff, 2003, 2007; Hall, 2004; Cousins, 2007). The State as a result of internal and political debates has refocused its policies from a more populist approach, emphasising human rights and mirroring citizenship as well as gender and racial equity principles, (during Hanekom) to a more neo-liberal and paternalistic approach (during Didiza and
prolonged by the current minister Xingwana) that favours productive use of land redistributed and Public-Private-Partnerships. This refocusing is known as the shift from Settlement Land Acquisition Grant (SLAG), which provided grants of Rand 16,000 for people to access land even if monthly income was below Rand 1,500, (Williams, 1996:15) to Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) demanding own contributions from potential land reform beneficiaries (DoA, 2001; Wegerif, 2004). LRAD has initiated *ex post* audits (replacing lengthily *ex ante* audits) and monitoring to make sure that its objectives are met (DLA, 2008: 2). More than ever, however, the State sanctions projects or elements of projects before, as well as after project establishment. Another example of *ex post* control is by means of allocating or refusing of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) grant (CASP 2003-2005). A so-called ‘situational analysis’ of the financial situation, training attended, farming activities, etc. is made by consultants or officials of the Department of Agriculture and compared with the approved business plan to see if the project is still on the ‘right track’. The LRAD policy emphasizes the possibility that land may be subdivided: ‘the permission to subdivide … will be effective immediately upon the launch of LRAD’ (DLA, 2008:8), and that ‘the ability of participants to subdivide existing large land units will be critical to the success of LRAD’ (*ibid*:12).

Cousins (2005:7) explains the shift as a result of key policy makers being influenced by the commercial farming lobby and economists advocating a somewhat stereotyped, linear understanding of agricultural development. There is, however, also evidence of differences of opinion within the State (read DLA versus economic affairs) but often also between the State and experts that are called in to assist implementation about whether or not to subdivide farms into smaller units (Hebinck and Fay 2006; Marais, 2008).

An examination of case material collected on land reform projects in South Africa, particularly in the three Cape Provinces (Western, Northern and Eastern) gives rise to the conclusion that land reform is an ambiguous and less linear process than the State would have us believe. Land reform sometimes unfolds perhaps as planned. Land after all has since 1994 been transferred through restitution and redistribution, albeit little as many commentators reason (Lahiff, 2007; Cousins, 2007; Hall, 2004; CDE, 2005, 2008), but production has not expanded. On the other hand, as Moyo and Hall (2007:150) argue it is an inherently ‘confictual process’. Land reform unfolds in many directions and creates a range of emergent properties to which we soon will turn to. Land reform is thus providing space(s) for multiple and often contrasting realities and practices to emerge. The case material collected points at a convergence of a range of strategies (or rather the interlocking of actor projects). The outcomes of these interlocking projects are examples of some of the emergent properties of land reform which have received little attention in the South African literature on land reform.

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4 LRAD now provides grants from Rand 20,000 to Rand 100,000, depending on the own contribution of beneficiaries’ in kind (machinery already possessed), cash, or in terms of labour. To access a Rand 20,000 grant, the own contribution should be at least Rand 5,000. In order for the applicant to claim that own labour will constitute the full Rand 5,000 towards the own contribution requirement, the approved business plan must show evidence that the applicant intends to devote a significant amount of own labour towards the establishment and operation of the project (DOA, 2008:4).
The argument developed here is that these emergent properties result from strategies that hinge on using the (social) space created by land reform, often leading to new and unexpected social configurations. The question that now poses itself is what then produces this social space? Does the State land reform policy, like a development script, linearly create room for manoeuvre for particular, intended social action? Or does a land reform that is being unpacked and redesigned by the range of social actors involved (including land reform and non-land reform beneficiaries, agribusiness, policymakers and experts) whose interaction generate a multiplicity of outcomes? Coming to grips with these multiple, social realities analytically involves that one situates the potential for social action in many locations in society, and not simply embedded in the expert system and/or the State. Land reform beneficiaries are not simply passive recipients of knowledge and land reform technologies, such as business plans, land use zoning and new objects of labour. The State and experts may attempt to direct and prescribe the course of events, but they certainly do not have the power to structure (or determine) the behaviour of a range of social actors in the agricultural and related sectors. Examining the agency of social actors irrespective of their level of operation (‘micro’, or ‘macro’; local or global) and the nature of the interactions between, we may be able to understand the gaps between expert and local knowledge(s) and between policies and practices. Such an analysis requires an epistemological standpoint as outlined by Long (2004:15); one that acknowledges ‘the existence of “multiple realities”, (i.e. the coexistence of different understandings and interpretations of experience)’ questioning in turn the ‘ontological realism of positivist science (i.e. of a “real world” that can be discovered)’.

Applying this to land reform implies that land reform policy documents, its technologies, institutional arrangements and so on are socially constructed which in turn implies that we need to approach the construction of such policies and their implementation as embedded in everyday life. This will allow us to (re)construct and document the planned and intended outcomes of land reform in South Africa. Similarly, situating land reform in everyday life also allows us to depict a range of practices and emerging social interactions that are triggered of by land reform and the transformations it has set out to achieve. These could be labelled unintended consequences of land reform. Methodologically this would entail an ethnographic approach to analysing how land reform lands in rural everyday life.

**Land reform as social space**

A preliminary examination of the data reviewed in the context of this chapter proposes the analytical usefulness to conceptualise land reform as a socially articulated space in which different actor projects interlock (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994). Land reform has created new and enhanced spaces, or room for manoeuvre, for a range of social actors that are directly and indirectly benefiting from the social transformations initiated by it. Towards the end of this chapter I will identify some of these beneficiaries and what they do. I will also show, however, that the actions of the social actors involved are not necessarily driven by motivations to achieve consensus about the nature and direction of social development. It is thus more useful to conceptualise land reform not simply as a
neutral social space but rather as an arena in which social actors strategise and cooperate but also struggle and negotiate over access and use of key resources and their meanings. Land reform is along these lines viewed as an articulated social space that is the result of interactions between and among a range of social actors. Land reform’s emergent properties are a kaleidoscope of various sets of interlocking projects.

The study of land reform as a script and space has benefited from and builds upon an approach that zooms in on social actors; one that values the importance of documenting everyday life and the encounters vis-à-vis a land reform project. Such an approach as Long (2001:24) summarises, pays attention to and has ‘a concern for the ways in which different social actors manage and interpret new elements in their life worlds, [...] analyses how particular groups or individuals attempt to create space for themselves in order to pursue their own ‘projects’ that may run parallel to, or perhaps challenge government programmes or the interests of other intervening partners, and [...] attempt to show how these organisational, strategic and interpretive processes influence the broader context of power and social action’.

The methodological device of starting from ‘lived experience’ (Long, 2001:14) is of central significance for such a study. Documenting and analysing the strategies employed by the actors involved, as well as their discursive means, appeared indeed as useful and insightful. It provides first hand evidence for the need to sub-divide land beneficiaries in much greater detail. Some of the beneficiaries appear as owners co-owning the farm; others come into play as shelter and social security seeking representatives of the poor. Again others (some of them belong to the old and the new rural elites) are making use of failures of land reform projects and lease parts of the resources of the project or purchase farms after they have been handed back to the State. Land reform certainly is a new element in many rural peoples’ lives and has created space and opportunities for some of them to change their lives...

Studies like these then contribute to what Long (2001:25) has set out to do with regard to State intervention generally: ‘deconstructing it so that is seen for what it is – an ongoing, socially constructed, negotiated, experiential and meaning-creating process, not simply the execution of an already existing plan of action with expected behavioural outcomes’. This implies to not just paying attention ‘from above’; but as much to actions and practices initiated ‘from below’. Outcomes of land reform are shaped by the interactions among the various participants. Perceiving land reform in this way allows one to focus on what Long (2001:26) refers to as ‘the emergent forms of interaction, procedures, practical strategies and types of discourse, cultural categories and sentiments present in specific contexts’ (see also Long, 2004).

**Co-existing emergent properties in rural South Africa**

The land reform script produces, or rather contributes to, a range of emergent properties. These are reflections of various interlocking actor projects and, signify, that agricultural and rural development in South Africa will be diverse and will continue to co-exist and interact in certain ways. These are briefly summarised below adding to the conceptual perspective that land reform is best
to be understood as a kaleidoscope of experiences and actor projects. The intention of this overview is not to quantify but to qualify the social nature of the processes triggered by land reform.

Important for the analysis of emergent properties is that land reform begun to be implemented when a broader integration in the global networks of food and agriculture began to take place. On the one hand, one may argue that land reform programme has created space for such integration to take place. The implementation of Public-Private-Partnerships between South African agribusiness and land reform beneficiaries was designed to prevent production losses in high value commodity sectors (notably fruits and nuts) at the same time securing and strengthening the embedding in global networks. On the other hand, one may also make the case that global food companies (or food empires) are continuously looking for spaces to expand their operations.

New social categories
Land reform has also led to the formation of new social categories in the urban and rural landscapes of South Africa: land reform beneficiaries and non-land reform beneficiaries. These categories are political and policy induced categories that only become real in land reform situations. Land reform beneficiaries are identified and grouped as black ‘emergent farmers’, the rural poor looking for employment, as well as communities that had been forcefully removed form their ancestral land. When one succeeds in accessing grants and/or being incorporated in a land purchasing group or when one can prove in the Land Claims Court that one was forcefully removed from ancestral land, individuals and groups are labelled as land reform beneficiaries. Non-land reform beneficiaries are those that do not qualify for land reform grants or have not been incorporated into a collective bid for a land reform farm. Given the number of conflicts among and between land reform beneficiaries in the cases that are documented by Mosike (2008), Marais (2008), Taoana (2008) and Phetlhu (2008), it is difficult to speak of consensus and harmony among the new land owners. Many land reform projects are managed by only a small proportion of the listed beneficiaries while the majority remains in the townships. Evidence is accumulating of conflicts between those on the farm and those living and working elsewhere. Conflicts over electricity bills, use of credit and who benefits from the sale of produce (if any) are rife and stifle initiatives. This raises questions about the efficiency of key mechanism of South African land reform: land reform beneficiaries pooling grants (as part of SLAG) to form Common Property Associations (CPAs) to acquire farms. These ‘rent a crowd’ associations have not produced social cohesive forms of cooperation and have contributed to what Du Toit (2004) and CDE (2008) understand and label as the ‘failures’ of land reform.

The very practice of land reform has also contributed to the next layer in social categories in rural South Africa as, after a while, a number of disenchanted land reform beneficiaries have left their projects due to the low performances of the newly acquired farm, the conflicts between fellow land owners, the hard work and exposure to risks. In almost all of the documented cases, the majority of land reform beneficiaries returned to their previous residences. Given the fact that they did not disconnect from their townships and that they have not given up
land reform totally by selling their shares, signals that land may not be as assumed to be an important livelihood source and/or that farming remains a means of last resort in case urban employment opportunities worsens (Taoana 2008). This ties-in with an aspect of land reform dynamics that has not been covered widely in research: the role of the younger generation. Little is known about why the youth is hardly present in land reform projects. The majority of land reform beneficiaries are older people combining land ownership with old age pensions. This raises questions about the future of land reform and the nature of agriculture initiated by land reform. There is a need to consider the extent to which, for many (especially young men), demand for land arises from a failure in the wider economy to generate employment rather than from a prospect of small-scale farming supporting something better than a life of poverty (see also Walker, 2005).

New social relationships
Empirical research has also shown what happens when these political social labels become real in social action and leading to a set of new and perhaps unexpected and unwanted social relations whose characterisation is important, analytically as well as politically. The cases of Gallawater A farm (Mosike 2008) and the Gugulethu project (Marais, 2008) document in detail the practice of everyday life encounters in land reform projects. They show that the objectives of land reform and non-land reform beneficiaries interlock in many ways. In Gallawater A this interlocking is sparked off by the need and wish to attract services to the ‘project’ (electricity, schools, health clinics, roads, etc.) and more people living on the farm (even the so-called non land reform beneficiaries) helps to increase the pressure on the State and service providers to deliver these services. It is, however, also triggered by the rural elite, i.e. land reform beneficiaries with large numbers of sheep often combined with other assets (such as Taxis and Government jobs), with the demand and searching for cheap labour. In return for shelter and a small piece of land to grow crops for own consumption and limited selling at nearby urban markets, non-land reform beneficiaries provide labour-in-kind to such rural elites. This raises questions as to what is the nature of these new, emerging social relations in rural areas. The evidence so far suggests that these relationships resemble those of the labour tenants during colonial times and Apartheid but with far less rights to land and a future. The political importance of this analysis is that the land reform project of the State was specifically designed to modernise agriculture including the agrarian social relationships; the outcome of which is the emergence of new forms of exploitation which from a social point of view is dramatic.

Emergent farmers fail to emerge
The political objective of land reform to create a group of black entrepreneurs has only become real to a limited extent (CDE, 2008). This is, however, difficult

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5 It is difficult to tell whether the dynamics involved with groups or individuals that seek some form of security in land reform projects is associated with the phenomena of increased numbers farm workers being evicted from the farm (see Wegerif et al.2005).

6 Contemporary Zimbabwe shows signs of similar processes (Moyo, pers. comm. June 2008).
to quantify because of lack of data and the explanations of this ‘failure of land reform’ are many fold; one being that agriculture currently does not guarantee quick and secured returns on investment of capital and labour. The focus of the new elite seems to be to move away from the rural as a productive space to more urban employment (notably government positions) and ownership or executive positions in urban based enterprises.

**Decreased agricultural production**
Another issue, closely related to the previous issue, is that agricultural production has not increased substantially; the claim is even made that output in some sub-sectors has declined (CDE, 2008). Whether this is the case, and if so how this can be linked to land reform or whether the ‘squeeze on agriculture’ that increases risks and reduces profit margins in farming is attributable, needs serious investigation.

**Bankruptcies and corporate control over land**
Land reform has also created opportunities for white ‘commercial’ farmers to sell their under-capitalized farms and property to government for land reform purposes. These ‘willing sellers’ were keen to sell their farm to the State and thus transferring the backlash in maintenance of capital, fields and buildings to the new, rather inexperienced owners. These new owners (in some cases the former farm workers; in other cases a CPA formed by a group of land reform beneficiaries pooling their grants together) quickly ran in trouble; partly because of lack of skills but also because DLA, DOA and also Land Bank were late in supplying the necessary credit to (re)financing capitalisation (referred to as ‘red tape’). This has triggered bankruptcies leading to farms being sold to the State for a next or even third round of land redistribution. This in turn has sparked off land being bought by companies, some of which are part of international food companies (*food empires*; see van der Ploeg, 2008) searching for space for production of global foods. Rainbow, a poultry firm, has managed to expand its operations in this particular way. This raises questions such as to what extent (the failures of) land reform has set off a new phase in land ownership and related land use.

**Land for consumption**
Another phenomenon, much documented in the literature, is that land reform has enabled people to acquire funds for the construction of (new) homes. Land reform fitted in with the search for social security and assisted people in becoming rural and urban people access to cheaper accommodation. For some this meant being closer to the urban areas and thus in this way land reform enabled the search for employment rather than land for productive purposes (James, 2007; see for instance the Mandlazini case documented in van Leynseele and Hebinck, 2008). Land reform facilitating settlement goes hand in hand with agriculture combined with off-farm work (notably migration). Land reform in this way has smoothed the continuation of betterment, like land use patterns, or has at least not managed to break with past patterns of development linking the
urban to the rural and visa versa. For example, a large farm just outside the city of Polekwane is now collectively owned. The farm is reworked in such a way that cultivation is individually organized on separate fields while livestock production is collectively managed. This land use pattern is a good example of the extension of ‘home land’ agriculture into former white farm areas.  

Hidden actor projects
Many land reform projects provide evidence of ‘smaller’ actor projects to be implemented. Whereas the grandeur of many policy documents is to facilitate the so-called ‘emergent’ farmer, land reform often provided space for small groups of women, and sometimes men, to engage in commercial production on a limited scale. Carving out a vegetable garden somewhere on the farm and making use of the available resources (electricity and water for irrigation and cattle manure for fertilisation) and working on it collectively allowed them to improve their livelihood. Women in particular found a way to earn cash income independently of their spouses. This dynamic is not without structural problems such as accessing markets and securing transport.

Elite capturing
Land reform projects also show evidence of privileged access to State resources. Extension officers for instance ‘renting in a crowd’ like their extended family to form a Common Property Association. The privileged access of extension officers to information of how and when best to obtain assistance and credits are prime examples of what resembles ‘elite capturing’ (ref. Platteau 2004; see also Phetlhu, 2008).

Re-peasantisation
There are examples of groups of potential land reform beneficiaries taking control over land reform themselves. Not waiting for the State to provide land and deliver services is proof of people being unwilling to wait any longer (Wegerif 2006). The potential importance of this ‘taking-control-over-land-reform’, irrespective of the limited scale in which it occurs, is that we may expect to see land use patterns that are more in tune with people’s cultural repertoires and experiences. Such land use and development scenarios are potentially challenging the current script of the agricultural expert system in the country and perhaps stands for a counter-modernity development strategy that analytically can be labelled as re-peasantisation (van der Ploeg, 2008; Hebinck, 2007; Hebinck and van Averbeke, 2007). More empirical research in this direction is being planned in South Africa as well as in the region o examines the dynamics and outlook of peasant responses to government interventions.

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7 Wolmer (2007) explores the South Eastern Lowveld in Zimbabwe from a similar point of view.
**Future Trajectories**

At a more abstract level these emergent properties can be captured as four major, different but co-existing trajectories of development and which are directly and indirectly related to land reform.

Firstly. Without doubt, large scale and capital intensive forms of agriculture will continue to exist. It may be expected that ownership structures may change in the long term (because of AGRIbee and overall black economic empowerment), but the social and technical nature of agriculture (scale, technology, farm workers and managers) and the firm embedding in global markets will not change dramatically. This form of agriculture provides employment to a quite a number of rural residents. Such continuation may only partly be explained with reference to agro-ecological conditions.

Secondly. Ownership of land may shift in the direction of food empires. Ownership of valuable land by internationally embedded and worldwide operating food companies may increase their control over land and agriculture. It is likely to expand beyond the current existing level. South Africa’s natural resources and neo-liberal political and economic environment already attracts substantial foreign capital investments. South Africa’s rural areas run the risks of the value of land and resources being externally defined rather than by local interests and local cultural repertoires. Poverty alleviation by providing rural employment in production and value adding is not necessarily a political concern of foreign capital.

Thirdly. Land ownership and agrarian social relationships may also evolve as an ‘African feudalisation’ of the rural. Pre-apartheid and apartheid trends of socially unequal development may continue to evolve irrespective of land reform. In turn giving rise to the emergence of new agrarian relations defining social categories such as new rural elites and rural residents on farms without rights (the new labour tenants) as well as low paid farm and seasonal workers. The continuation of ‘traditional’ tribal authority structures hinging on Chiefs and Kings (Ntsebeza 2005; Oomen, 2005) does in my view not necessarily challenge processes of ‘feudalisation’.

Finally, ‘Peasant’ like solutions and patterns of land use emerge and have existed for a long time and it may only be expected that that these will expand. These peasant-like practices represent powerful and dynamic alternatives to entrepreneurial forms of agriculture (Van der Ploeg 2008). Peasant forms of agriculture are land and labour intensive agriculture. Boserup (1981), Lipton and Lipton (1993) and Van der Ploeg (2008) have pointed out that it is intrinsically driven by increasing the value added on the farm or field and thereby using both increasing rural employment and an expansion of the local agrarian economy. Peasant agriculture hinges too on finding new and novel ways to reduce costs; re-orienting the way resources are mobilised (understood as ‘regrounding’). A similar argument is explored by Hebinck and Van Averbeke (2007) and Moyo (2007). This resembles the ‘African’ way, as one of the informants at the Gallawater A farm expressed it, of farming and rural life continues to evolve.

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*Strictly speaking the characterisation of feudalism does not fit the historical conditions of Africa. One way to legitimise using feudal relations to characterise social relations is to refer to an attempt of Coquery-Vidrovitch (1977) to argue for a distinct African mode of production next to the Asian and other pre-capitalist modes of production.*
The ‘African’ stands for multi-functional agriculture involving harvesting from the natural environment and not exclusively on the production of crops and livestock (also referred to as ‘broadening’ the rural economy). It also stands for culturally embedded agriculture and the re-production of cultural values and symbols (McAllister, 2001; Shackleton et al. 2001, Cocks and Wiersum, 2003; Ainslie, 2005). The ‘African’ way also stands for multiple livelihoods based on straddling economic sectors as a strategy that connects the urban to rural forms of production (e.g. ‘regrounding’) and livelihoods.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that land reform is not to be perceived as a uni-linear process or a one-dimensionally of which the impact can be simply measured by linking policy objectives directly to observed outcomes. A key ingredient of the search for an adequate analytical framework was to look for concepts and interpretations beyond structural models. The notion of script has proven to be useful provided one interprets script as unfolding in many different ways and directions. In this way we have a much better grasp of the dynamics of the emergent properties of the land reform script in South Africa. Emergent properties that reflect some of the unequal social and spatial developments in South Africa but at the same time opportunities and novelties.

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Livelihoods and the articulation of space

Leo J. de Haan

Introduction

Livelihood studies aim to understand and contribute towards an improvement of livelihoods, primarily those of the poor. However, the spatial dimension of livelihoods is often overlooked, which results in a local bias and an overemphasis on the place, to the detriment of space. Linking up with the recent ‘spatial turn’ in social science, this paper attempts to determine the relationship between contemporary livelihoods, i.e. livelihoods in the current era of globalization, and the articulation of space. It starts with a short description of globalization, followed by an overview of the origins of the modern livelihood approach and its roots in geography. These sections serve as points of departure for a discussion of the contemporary articulation of space. Instead of adopting van Naerssen’s (1979) structuralist perspective on articulated space, the paper takes an actor-oriented perspective, with the section on the ‘spatial turn’ in social science discussing present-day views on space and place and the position of livelihood studies in the light of globalization. A preliminary conceptualization of the contribution of livelihood networks to the contemporary articulation of space then follows.

Globalization

Globalization is not just a process of internationalization but a characteristic of a ‘global system’ in which each particular entity has to be understood within the framework of the world as a whole (de Ruijter, 1997). Globalization means, first of all, an increased homogenization and interdependency in the world. Clearly identifiable centres are giving way to nodes that differ in time and dimension. For some, the driving force is mostly socio-political but for others it is primarily economic and stems from production and markets. However, the trend towards global markets and politics is usually mirrored by growing diversity and an increased importance of regionalism and community, i.e. a trend towards localization. Thus, in addition to homogenization, globalization also implies greater fragmentation, for example cultural fragmentation with the reinvention of local traditions and identities, as an answer to the loss of identity through homogenization. Robertson (1995) strikingly characterized globalization as ‘glocalization’, i.e. confronting trends of both homogeneity and heterogeneity in time and space.

This view of globalization as a process not just of internalization but primarily as increased interdependency of a world system is similar to the way van Naerssen (1979) characterized the world at the end of the 1970s. He considered it an interdependent system of regions, resulting from a worldwide articulation of
modes of production. The essential driver was economic, i.e. the development of forces of production, and spatially localized in the centre. Asymmetrical economic relations, in addition to political and social relations stemming from these economic relations, have resulted in unequal development and an articulated space of interdependent centres and peripheries.

Nowadays, interdependency can still be considered a common denominator of the world system but other drivers, mainly social, cultural and political, in addition to economic are also taken into consideration. The spatial picture of the 1970s has become fragmented and fuzzy and today it is more difficult to mark out clear centres and peripheries. And although a clearly bounded Third World no longer exists, large parts of the world population still remain excluded from economic and social progress (de Haan, 2000a). This exclusion does not relate to countries and regions as a whole but instead to social groups within these areas. All this also requires a re-examination of the present articulation of space. In the following section, therefore, recent views on the articulation of space are explored in addition to the spatial outlook of an actor-oriented perspective as an alternative to a structuralist perspective. However, the geographical roots of the livelihood approach need first to be explained.

**Geography and livelihoods**

After the impasse of the structural perspective of ‘dependencia’ and neo-Marxist studies in the 1970s and 1980s (Schuurman, 1993; Booth, 1985), a more productive actor-oriented perspective emerged. It recognized inequalities in the distribution of assets and power but, above all, it stressed that people make their own history. This new standpoint was concerned with the world of ‘lived experiences’, the micro-world of family, networks and communities, and a micro-orientation with a focus on local actors, often households. At the same time, the household also came into vogue in a more practical sense, being seen as a convenient unit for the collection of empirical data. Many so-called household studies drew pessimistic conclusions, showing that poor households were being increasingly excluded from the benefits of economic growth, and were thus becoming marginalized (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005).

The 1980s was the era of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), a macroeconomic recipe to reduce debt and eliminate poverty. However, SAPs were too narrowly macroeconomic and did not pay sufficient attention to the often adverse consequences of proposed adjustment measures for the poor. At the beginning of the 1990s, a more people-sensitive approach was needed. At the same time, a new generation of more optimistic household studies was conducted – namely livelihood studies – showing how people were surviving. In its optimism, the livelihood approach was an expression of Zeitgeist but was also a direct response to the disappointing results of former attempts to devise effective policies to eradicate poverty (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005).

Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, themselves drawing on insights from previous research on food security and agro-ecological sustainability, are widely acknowledged for having put livelihoods – then usually called ‘Sustainable Livelihoods’ – centre stage. In fact, Chambers brilliantly embraced the momentum of the then-current environmental sustainability discussion,
interpreting sustainability as a matter of trade-off for poor people between (mostly environmental) vulnerability and poverty. In the early 1990s, the UNDP contributed to the renewed debate on poverty with its annual Human Development Reports. A major impetus to the further development of the approach was the 1997 election of the new Labour government in the United Kingdom. The pro-active, self-help image of the Sustainable Livelihoods approach in improving the lives of the poor fitted very well with the image ‘New Labour’ and Tony Blair’s administration wanted to project. Sustainable Livelihoods became an important theme in the UK’s development policy, with DFID initiating numerous research projects and policy debates on the subject. The World Bank finally jumped on the bandwagon with its ‘Voices of the Poor’ report (Narayan, 2000), in which Chambers also had significant input. Apparently, the Bank wanted to seize the momentum but in fact never gave any clear follow-up.

Livelihood is usually defined as comprising ‘the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living’ (Carney, 1998, based on Chambers and Conway, 1992:7). According to Long (1997), who has been influential in the Netherlands, livelihood ‘best expresses the idea of individuals and groups striving to make a living, attempting to meet their various consumption and economic necessities, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities, and choosing between different value positions’. Increasingly, a holistic conceptualization of livelihood became generally accepted. This is best reflected in Bebbington’s (1999:2022) formulation: ‘A livelihood encompasses income, both cash and in kind, as well as the social institutions (kin, family, village), gender relations, and property rights required to support and to sustain a given standard of living. A livelihood also includes access to and the benefits derived from social and public services provided by the state such as education, health services, roads, water supplies and so on.’

The livelihood approach thus proved attractive to a range of social scientists, geographers included. De Haan & Zoomers (2003: 351), following de Haan (2000b:346), identified the notion of ‘genre de vie’ (a way of life) in early twentieth-century French geography as the first conceptualization of livelihood in modern geography. For anthropologists, the concept of livelihood became familiar a few decades later when Evans-Pritchard (1940) used it when describing Nuer strategies for making a living, and pointed to its mainly economic resource base. Economists recognize their livelihood roots in more recent household studies in the 1980s, which are usually identified as ‘household economics’ and in Polanyi’s (1977) attempt to develop an economic science that was holistic and human-centred as opposed to being mainstream (formalist) economics.

Returning to geography and the conceptualization of livelihoods, it is interesting to note that when geography was recognized as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century, a great deal of attention was paid to the landscape and the strong belief in the moulding power of the physical environment on human activities. This interest in the physical features of the landscape lasted a long time, even though increasing attention was paid to human agency and man’s capacity to choose between a range of possible responses to physical conditions. De Haan and Zoomers (2003:351) explain how ‘Vidal de la
Blache was the first to introduce the concept of livelihood, or “genre de vie”, to explain that within a specific geographical setting there is a “highly localised, rooted, stable and socially bounded connection between people and the land” called the “pays” (Johnston et al., 2000:294). After World War II, livelihood as a concept almost completely vanished from geography due to the dominant structural perspectives of ‘dependencia’ and neo-Marxist approaches. Once these lost their appeal, a much more actor-oriented post-Marxist approach emerged in development geography. While it continued to put the emphasis on inequalities in the distribution of assets and power, it acknowledged that people make their own history, though not independently of structural imperatives. It also drew insights from other approaches such as feminism, for example with respect to power relations (Johnston, 1993:233-34). Post-Marxist development geography focused on local development as ‘the world of lived experience, the micro-world of family, network and community’ (Johnston, 1993:229). In geography, therefore, attention increasingly turned to issues of poverty, vulnerability and marginalization at ‘the geographical scale of experience’, as Taylor (1982) called it.

‘It is from this position that the revitalisation of the livelihood approach in geography started. Its orientation on actors and agency and its view on local development is best explained by Johnston (1993:236-245) who showed that Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory gave way to a view of the “locale”. This provides on the one hand the setting of human interaction and on the other hand is the subject of transformation by this interaction. According to Giddens, a particular ‘locale’ provides resources and knowledge on which actors can base their action and at the same time it constrains human actions because it binds them to the resources and knowledge provided. The concept of locale became known as “locality” in British geography: the everyday working and living space of actors. Johnston (1993:243) summarised it as follows: the structuration of social relations in daily life contains many similarities but leads to different outcomes in different places, recognising the uniqueness of the place without denying causation and general operative processes. Focusing on place prevents the structure-agency view of becoming either voluntaristic or deterministic: everyday life provides both the context for people’s actions and is re-created by those actions. Local differences are reflections of cultural variations, which refute economic determinism. However, local differences do not challenge the existence of general operative processes.’ (quoted in De Haan and Zoomers, 2003:351).

The spatial turn in social science

As the instigator of the spatial turn in social science, Lefebvre (1991) argued that space is not a neutral container within which social relations occur but is a constitutive element and active former of those social relations (Cornelissen 2007:119). Moreover, Lefebvre made it clear that space must be regarded as an on-going production of social relations rather than an inert, neutral or pre-existing phenomenon. Consistent with his neo-Marxist background, Lefebvre maintained that the reproduction of social relations of production within this space will lead through necessity to the dissolution of old relations and the
generation of new relations. However, unlike the neo-Marxist theories discussed by van Naerssen (1979) that postulated the hegemony of the capitalist mode of production, Lefebvre emphasized the possible emergence of ‘new spaces’. In his view, the spaces of modernity or ‘abstract space’ are created by trends of homogenization, hierarchization and social fragmentation in capitalism, which at the same time curb variations in local culture, history and natural landscape. Spaces of modernity are the spaces of private property, markets and labour. However, new spaces may appear – the so-called differential spaces – that will resist forces of homogenization and emphasize differences. In fact, Lefebvre (1991) had a dialectical perspective of the conflict between abstract and differential space.

In political science, the spatial turn invited different conceptualizations of the state as a manifestation of collective spatial imaginings, which are not necessarily territorially bound. It also led to changed understandings of political concepts like deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Cornelissen, 2007) to come to grips with seemingly diverging processes under globalization. As Lefebvre (1991) already made clear, this did not mean that studies of locality became irrelevant, quite the opposite in fact. Appadurai (1996), another architect of the spatial turn, called for more studies on the ‘production of locality’ and pointed at the relevance of area studies, assigning them the task of studying the historically uneven course of globalization, but not necessarily resulting in homogenization. In his view, different societies appropriate modernity in diverse ways so studies of areas, with their different geographies, histories and cultures, are extremely relevant. Appadurai ‘stresses that locality itself is a historical product and subject to the dynamics of the global. Areas put in this way represent sites for the analysis of how localities emerge in a globalizing world, how colonial processes underlie contemporary politics, and how history and genealogy inflect each other’ (Al-Zubaidi, 1998:1).

However, what is often neglected by Zeitgeist and its awareness of agency is the asymmetry of global relations. The uneven course of globalization, heterogeneity etc are connected with the exclusion from economic and social progress of hundreds of millions of people in large parts of the world.

Against this broader theoretical background, the modern livelihood perspective must clarify its understanding of contemporary globalization. Despite the importance of locality, the one-sided local orientation, which is still prominent in many of today’s livelihood studies especially those with an interest in natural-resource exploitation, is outdated. A new conceptualization of the articulation of space along the lines indicated by Lefebvre and Appadurai stands out, through a focus on the asymmetry of the global-local nexus or glocalization, as mentioned above.

This means that the general geographical interpretation of development characterized by Kleinpenning (1997:13) ‘as an in time and space varying, but always complex ensemble of generically heterogeneous factors on various spatial levels of scale: natural and social, internal and external, historical and actual’ remains unchallenged. But it also means that one should carefully compose the analysis, i.e. no local without the global, no natural without the social and, something that is apparently the easiest to neglect as Kleinpenning (1997:15) explains, no contemporary without the historical. Attention to the global-local
nexus must assure that the geography of livelihoods does not become diverted into the study of local customs and (folk)lore.

The emergence of livelihood networks

Livelihoods in the era of globalization are increasingly organized in networks. This trend has been encouraged by the interrelated and accelerated processes of individualization, multi-tasking and mobility.

In modern livelihood studies the poor are no longer regarded as victims but play an active role in shaping their own livelihoods. This focus on the active involvement of people in responding to change and also enforcing change corresponds with an increased awareness of the trend towards individualization. For a long time, ‘family’ or ‘household’ used to be the unit of analysis in actor-oriented development studies, with households seen as decision-making units maximizing their welfare with respect to a range of income-earning opportunities and resource constraints (Ellis, 1998:12). They were usually defined as co-resident groups of persons, who shared most aspects of consumption, drawing on and allocating a common pool of resources, including labour, to ensure their material reproduction. From this awareness of intra-household relations comes the realization that globalization has impacted on the characteristics and functions of households. Instead of pursuing an optimal balance in a harmonious domestic unit, individuals now pursue their own methods to improve their situation, for example by diversifying their livelihood or moving to a new location to exploit new opportunities. In many cases, traditional solidarity-based principles of pooling incomes, consumption and labour within households have become weaker or at least changed. Thus, although individuals remain members of domestic units (families or households), they are increasingly acting independently. Extended families are breaking down into nuclear families; nuclear families are disintegrating further; and single-person households are no longer limited to industrialized societies. In many parts of the world, the number of female-headed households has risen and the elderly have increasingly become a separate and often isolated group, no longer cared for in extended families (de Haan and Zoomers, 2003:354). The second trend is multi-tasking or diversification. Livelihood diversification is ‘a process by which .... households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living’ (Ellis, 2000:15). ‘Today, few among the poor derive all their income from just one source or hold all their wealth in the form of just one single asset. In many cases, the bulk of income of the rural poor no longer originates from agriculture, and it is no longer realistic to classify the population as small farmers or the landless poor. At the same time, among the urban poor, part of the population is now involved in urban agriculture, which provides additional food supply’ (de Haan and Zoomers, 2003:356).

People have various motives for diversifying their assets and activities. Multi-tasking is seen as a way of compensating for insufficient income or temporary crisis situations. It is a strategy to escape poverty, cope with insecurity or reduce risk. It is also becoming increasingly clear that diversification is persistent and enduring in the sense that the phenomenon occurs everywhere and does not
appear to be temporary. Diversification does not mean having an occasional income in addition to a main activity; it means multiple income sources and it is a distinguishing feature of the poor (Ellis, 2000:4). It is poverty that induces households to intensify their income-generating strategies, using any available labour or resources as fully as possible. They adjust, cope, create and recreate their livelihoods under the impact of macroeconomic circumstances, climatic variability and institutional change (Ellis, 2000:14-15).

Individualization and multi-tasking are joined by a third process, namely a rapid expansion in people’s mobility as a result of improvements in communications and transport technology. Increasing numbers of people are now living on the edge of urban and rural life, commuting from the countryside to the urban centres. Poor people too supplement their incomes by travelling large distances to earn additional money as temporary migrants. Finally, there is the considerable group of transnational migrants. However, one should not fall into the trap of ‘immigration paranoia’, which is so prevalent in western politics at the moment. Most migration, in fact, takes place within regions of the developing world and not from developing to industrialized countries. But on the other hand, the impact of remittances and flows of information generated by migration should also not be underestimated. The relevant issue here is that the focus should not be on migration as it is the combination of individualization, diversification and mobility that matters.

As a consequence, individuals are no longer organized as co-resident groups concentrated in space but resemble individual nodes that are connected to each other by livelihood networks along which remittances, information, ideas, goods and people flow. These multi-local networks of livelihoods have spread quickly around the globe. And the question is what this means for livelihood studies in the future. Livelihood networks deserve closer scrutiny by a new generation of livelihood studies because the ‘network transformation’ has not yet been properly researched as the focus is too limited to migration per se.

One interesting question would be if livelihood networks mirrored the network society, as conceptualized by Castells (1996). He has pointed at the emergence of a new type of firm – the new network enterprise – which is based on the space of flows, so characteristic for contemporary information networks. However, the components of these network enterprises are located in places. Castells (1989: 69-70) showed that the more organizations depend upon flows and networks, the less they are influenced by the social context associated with the places of their location. But people on the other hand do live in a physical world, the space of places. However, because of this tension, people risk losing their sense of Self and, as a consequence, are trying to remodel their identity (Castells 1996).

Clearly, the remodelling of identity by migrants is partly captured by the contemporary conceptualization of transnational communities, but the challenge of conceptualizing the livelihood component as a flexible network firm or enterprise is not taken up. In either case, the asymmetry in relations through the working of ‘power relations’ calls for further attention.
To conclude

The modern livelihood perspective offers interesting prospects regarding the conceptualization of contemporary articulation of space. From an actor-oriented viewpoint, livelihood studies tend to favour locality or place but analysis of the global-local nexus has shown that this nearsightedness can be overcome.

The impact of the emergence of livelihood networks – trigged by the combined processes of individualization, diversification and mobility – on the articulation of space has yet to be explored. It has been argued that the outlines of this conceptualization should be linked to the debate on the network society.

Finally, attention to the asymmetry of relations, i.e. analyses of power relations, should be a key element points of view. This cannot be overemphasized. Only then will it become clear how large parts of the world’s population remain excluded from economic and social progress.

References


Revisiting peripheral capitalism in Zambia

Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht and Rudolf Scheffer

1 The harvest of a coincidence: fieldwork in 1975, graduation in 1976, and a book, a conference, and a Zone publication in 1977

Introduction

Studying geography in Nijmegen in the early 1970s was a fascinating experience. Two of us had combined the 'research training' stream of geography (under Piet Kouwe), with a Dependencia course at CEDLA in Amsterdam (under Geert Banck; see Dietz and Van Haastrecht, 1974), and we wanted to apply our new insights in a fieldwork setting somewhere in the 'Third World', preferably in a (somewhat) radical setting. One of us followed the 'planning' stream, and wanted to prepare for a job in development co-operation. Ton van Naerssen was the obvious person to go to, and he happened to know a young Dutch geographer who worked as a geography lecturer at the University of Zambia, Leo van den Berg.

Zambia? Africa? We hardly knew anything about it. Yes, Kaunda was one of the new African leaders who, at the time, happened to be in a process of designing a ‘third way’, in between capitalism and Russian-style communism, calling it ‘humanism’, or ‘African socialism’. We were also aware of Zambia’s role as frontier state against the Rhodesian and South African atrocities. It might be an interesting place to test the dependencia theory, and the workings of ‘peripheral capitalism’, and to find out what the impact had been of big (capitalist, ‘growth pole’) investments in a (formerly) rural environment. However, finding literature about Zambia and about its economic geography was cumbersome, and when we presented our research design to a possible funding agency (WSO) they told us that our design was too meagre. Of course, we saw this as evidence of exclusion tactics by Utrecht development geographers, who indeed were quite influential in using this Fund for their own students. Together with the Free University in Amsterdam, under Ad de Bruijne and Jan Hardeman, the Utrecht geographers under Jan Hinderink and Jan Sterkenburg spearheaded the establishment of separate sub-departments of ‘human geography of developing countries’ (SGO), and they might have seen a move by Nijmegen in the same direction as undesirable competition. Grudgingly we went back to the library of the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam to find more convincing background literature, and it seems we did, because our second submission to WSO was successful.

We spent five months in Zambia, between March and August 1975, and wrote our combined English-language Master’s thesis during the rest of that year. We
graduated in February 1976, and while two of us got a job at the geography department of the University of Amsterdam, Rudolf got a chance to summarise our findings for a publication in the *Nijmeegse Geografische Cahiers* (Scheffer, Dietz and Van Haastrecht, 1977). In May 1977 we were involved in the organisation of a ‘working congress’ of the new Dutch radical geographers’ and planners’ journal *Zone*, together with the people around the Danish radical geographers’ journal *Fagligt Forum*. The congress was entitled ‘Imperialism and the spatial analysis of peripheral capitalism’ (in English), and had keynote lectures by David Harvey, Mogens Buch-Hansen, and David Slater (*Zone*, 1977). Annemieke also presented a paper on our Zambian results, which, later that year, was published in *Zone* (van Haastrecht, 1977). And that was the end of our Zambian adventure.

It took until 2008 before Rudolf went back (to Lusaka), while Annemieke and Ton looked at Zambia from the other side of the border at Victoria Falls. Revisiting that country in virtual space was easier, though, and that is what we did for this tribute to our supervisor, Ton van Naerssen. But first we will give a summary of our findings, particularly based on the ‘Zone’ article.

### Box: Ton van Naerssen visits Zambia: Livingstone please!!!
At the end of our fieldwork period Ton van Naerssen visited us and, together with our daily supervisor Leo van den Berg, we discussed our fieldwork findings. For Ton it was his first African trip, and some of his experiences there probably supported his decision to further specialise in Southeast Asian affairs. After the ‘formal’ part of his visit (in Lusaka) we invited him to accompany us to Zambian tourist spot number one: Livingstone and the Victoria Falls which we would reach by train. We arrived early at the train station and Ton proposed that he would buy our train tickets. He therefore stood first in line at a yet to be opened ticket counter. Gradually he was joined by a large group of Zambians. When the counter opened they all pushed forward and Ton, not the tallest of persons, was overwhelmed and soon found himself the last one in what was no longer a line. Nobody noticed him calling ‘Livingstone Please!!’ When the train was about to depart he still had a long queue before him. When we discovered his plight, we decided to get him out of the queue and board the train without tickets. We would wait and see what would happen. Indeed after a while the train conductor appeared to check our tickets. When we explained what had happened to us at the station he gave a big smile in reply: ‘Ohhh, you now have a major problem! There will be a very big fine. But because you have been sooo unlucky, I will make a deal: you will get the tickets from half way the trip [still far away], and I add the fine; together that will be the amount you should have paid. But please, I will not give you the receipt for the fine. And, please, next time [looking at Ton van Naerssen], you push a little harder!’

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**Peripheral capitalism, the basics**
Among the various theories debated about ‘third-world’ countries until the mid-1970s, the theory of peripheral capitalism was a prominent one, with Samir Amin and Raúl Prebisch as its most iconic scholars at the time (*Amin, 1973; Amin, 1976; Prebisch, 1976; also see Slater, 1977, and Senghaas-Knobrauch,
In short, peripheral capitalism was thought to have two basic characteristics (van Haastrecht, 1977: 37-40).

First, capitalist structures (firms, the organisation of the market for goods, finance and property) were seen as being dominated by foreign parties (often multi-national companies). This left little room for either national capitalists or state agencies at the national or local levels. Compared to ‘central capitalist’ economies a relatively high percentage of the generated ‘surplus’ was thought to leave the peripheral country towards the ‘centre’, and of what was left, a considerable part would be used for the luxury consumption of the company’s managerial class (often foreigners, and their ‘state lackeys’ and ‘comprador bourgeoisie’). Most of the production of the capitalist sector in peripheral economies was meant for export to world markets. For the capitalist sector working in these peripheral conditions there would be no need to develop a market for consumer products, and hence no need to create a large working class with enough income to become a large-enough consumer class for a thriving local production sector of ‘mass consumption goods’.

Second, capitalist structures functioned in a social formation (as it was called) that was heterogeneous, with a strong presence of non-capitalist relations of production in peasant and ‘feudal’ agriculture and ‘petty’ handicraft production, which were seen as subsidising the capitalist sector (Baumgärtner and Poppenga, 1975; Rey, 1976; Senghaas, 1972). The subsidy was thought to take various forms. The most important form was the fact that family members of workers in capitalist enterprises (and workers in their free time) produced a major part of the goods and services these workers and their families used for their reproduction. This was thought to enable capitalist firms to pay wages below family subsistence levels, and sometimes even below individual subsistence levels of the wage labourers. In addition it was thought that costs made to feed, clothe, house and educate labourers before they became wage labourers had been provided by the non-capitalist sector. Again when wage labourers left their jobs or were fired their upkeep would be provided by the non-capitalist sector. Colonial and post-colonial states provided services to capitalist firms (like educating their future labourers and keeping them healthy, but also building roads and other infrastructure), for which they did not get enough funds from these capitalist firms in the form of taxes and levies, but by taxing the non-capitalist sector (called ‘tribute’ in some diehard Marxist literature). This would enable capitalist firms to maintain very low wage levels and pay very low taxes, and hence this created possibilities for cutthroat competition at international levels, or for extra (‘surplus’) profits. The low economic multipliers related to capitalist production in these circumstances were seen as a major contributing factor to underdevelopment (Kay, 1975).

Characteristics of peripheral capitalism in Zambia until the mid 1970s
In Zambia, we encountered a situation in which British colonialism (until 1964, when the country changed its name from Northern Rhodesia to Zambia) had left a strong, foreign-owned, copper mining sector, with a railway line connecting the Copperbelt through Zambia’s capital city Lusaka with the harbour city Beira, in Portuguese-dominated Mozambique. Along that railway line a few thousand white farmers produced maize, which formed the staple food (nchima) of the
The copper industry produced more than half of the available ‘surplus’ in the capitalist sector of Zambia (Seidmann, 1974), but employed relatively few workers, most of them coming from the north-eastern Bemba community. Also the sector of large-scale capitalist agriculture employed only a minority of the available rural workers in Zambia, mostly from the Tonga and Chewa communities in the central and eastern parts of the country. According to Lombard and Tweedie (1974), the percentage of rural households in Zambia that could be described as ‘peasant households’ (without access to a wage income in the capitalist sector) was more than 85 until well into the early 1970s. However, especially when compared with other African countries, Zambia had a relatively large urban population (close to 50%; mainly located in the Copperbelt region and in Lusaka). Within this urban population many households did not have access to wage jobs, and in the 1960s and early 1970s so-called squatter areas in the urban environment experienced an explosive growth. Peasants were subsidising the meagre earnings in the urban ‘petty commodity production and distribution sector’ (later referred to as the ‘informal sector’; see Bienefeld, 1975).

However, Zambia in 1975 was also in a process of so-called Zambianisation, and experienced an attempt to create a state-owned economy. Under its first President Kaunda the Zambian state had succeeded in claiming a higher percentage share of the copper profits, a great source of income revenue in the first decade following Zambia’s Independence, which would dwindle rapidly afterwards. In 1968 the Zambian state also acquired a 51% share in the ownership of 26 formerly private companies in the building, trade and transport sector. In 1969 the Zambian state took over all copper and other mining companies. This was followed, in 1970, with the acquisition of insurance and real estate companies.

Thus, when we visited the country in 1975, all major companies in the capitalist economy had been taken over by the state, with the exception of the banks and large agricultural farms (the latter often owned by white ‘colonists’). Zambia had also succeeded to attract considerable amounts of ‘development aid’, carefully playing out the East-West controversies, and it was one of the first countries in Africa to get major (and economically crucial) support from China, which built an alternative railroad for Zambia’s copper, the so-called Tanzam railway to Dar es Salaam in ujamaa-socialist Tanzania.

The expansion of Zambia’s state ownership over a major part of the economy was also possible because between 1966 and 1970, and again in 1973, copper fetched very high world-market prices, the income of which was invested in Zambian state ownership of many companies, in new productive initiatives of the State’s Industrial Development Corporation INDECO (which included some foreign participation), and in the rapid expansion of Zambia’s education and health sector and its government apparatus. In 1972 INDECO’s 22,000 labourers made up 45% of all labourers in productive industries in Zambia. INDECO’s gross profit of 27 million Kwacha from a total turnover of 286 million Kwacha in 1972 was distributed in a way which gives a good picture of ‘surplus distribution’: 12 million was provided to the Zambian state, 8 million to its foreign partners, while 7 million was reserved as capital for future investments (van Haastrecht, 1977:42-43, based on INDECO 1973; KIT, 1973; SBW, 1976).
The Zambian state also tried to curb the power of non-Zambian capitalists working in the country. Many of these foreigners were of Indian origin. Hence in 1972 foreigners were no longer granted permission to set up shops, wholesale businesses nor transport companies. In consequence a part of the Indian population decided (and succeeded) to get the Zambian nationality. A few hundred others were forced to close and sell-off their shops in the country (Tordoff and Molteno, 1974). Furthermore, foreigners could no longer borrow money for productive purposes, in contrast with aspiring Zambian entrepreneurs, who could, quite easily, get such loans from the new Financial Development Corporation, a state-owned development bank. The state also tried to pressure nationalised enterprises into recruiting more Zambian managers, while also rapidly expanding the number of Zambians in decision-making positions within the government bureaucracy.

On the other hand, Zambia’s ambitious economic and political goals also demanded the influx of considerable numbers of advisors and consultants from abroad, many sponsored with development aid. Thus the University of Zambia was a rather cosmopolitan community of scholars, and a thriving place for radical leftwing and ‘third way’ debates (until staff and students began to clash with the government). The general atmosphere in Zambia among intellectuals was one of optimism. The state budget had increased seven-fold between 1964 and 1970; although later on growth rate did slow down. The number of people working for the government (excluding the development corporations) had grown from 22,000 in 1963 to 54,000 in 1971. Real wages and salaries in the state sector (including the development corporations) had almost doubled in the few years before 1975. Luxury imports of food had increased from a total value of 14 million Kwacha to 50 million Kwacha since Independence. Indeed, President Kaunda complained that it might even be necessary to replace the agricultural implements in the national emblem with the Mercedes Benz symbol (Africa, 1975-77).

In summary: the Zambian state was in a process of challenging the characteristics of peripheral capitalism, created by colonialism. It tried to nationalise ownership and management of the major capitalist enterprises; it created a state-driven process of industrialisation; it increased the real wages of labourers in the large-scale sector; and it increased its tax base, based on enterprise profits (adding foreign aid gifts and loans to fund its rapidly growing public investments). It tried to integrate the isolated countryside and the marginal urban population in ‘development’ by massive investments in education and health care. Yet, however ambitious this project, it failed to economically integrate the majority of Zambians, although the structural heterogeneity of Zambian society no longer seemed to function as a necessary way of subsidising the (state-) capitalist sector. Furthermore, Zambia’s economic expansion plans entirely depended on its copper production and the world market for copper. During the first ten years of Zambia’s Independence copper exports had never fallen below 90% of total export value.

Fieldwork in Zambia: Kafue and Mazabuka

Part of Zambia’s ambition was to industrialise the countryside. Two areas along the Kafue River, south of Lusaka, were major targets. In Kafue the government
created a New Town, around basically two growth pole industries: Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ), producing fertiliser and explosives to be used in the mines and Kafue Textiles of Zambia (KTZ), producing cloth, based on cotton. In Mazabuka the Zambian government also built a sugar factory around the new irrigated Nakambala Sugar Estate. NCZ was started in 1969 as an INDECO company (with only 1% of all shares in the hands of another owner, a Japanese firm) and when we did our fieldwork in 1975 it had grown to a company of 700 labourers. Unfortunately we could not get permission to do any research there.

KTZ also started off in 1969. INDECO had 55% of all its shares; other owners were a company in Liechtenstein (20%), the Commonwealth Development Corporation from the UK (15%) and Barclays Bank (10%). By 1975 KTZ had 1470 labourers and we interviewed almost 200 of them. INDECO also owned the majority of shares of the Nakambala Sugar Estate (51%), with UK-based multinational Tate and Lyle being the major other shareholder and having its management contract. The sugar estate had started off in 1966. By 1975 7,000 hectares had been planted with sugar cane, and the company employed 4,400 labourers, the majority of them cane cutters recruited from the western Lozi community, usually for eight months per year. We interviewed almost 200 of these labourers. In addition we gathered information at the level of the company management and spoke to various informants in Kafue Town and Mazabuka.

*Box: Turmoil in Nakambala after the fieldwork: the ethics of engagement*

We had a nice time in Nakambala. We could make use of the staff club and its dining and sports facilities (where staff would aggressively ring table bells to order food and drinks) and we were frequent guests of a Dutch-Rhodesian couple who lived in a very luxurious house, and whose swimming pool was a delight. They were amused about our romantic left-wing ideas, and we were tormented by, what we regarded as racist and upper-class attitudes. With the labourers we had long discussions about labour rights, and wage levels, and as long as we were there we experienced heated debates among them, but no ‘action’. Later, back in the Netherlands, we heard that soon after we had left there had been a spontaneous strike, demanding higher wages and better treatment. When the police came to arrest the agitators some people were shot dead, and the strike was over. We have always felt guilty for creating turmoil, and not being there to face the consequences.

Kafue Textiles of Zambia spent 22% of its expenditure locally in 1974-5. Most of that was spent on wages and salaries (3.6 million Kwacha of 18.2 million total expenditure). We estimated that 2.5 million Kwacha (14%) was paid to INDECO and the Zambian state, as profits and taxes. Most of the other expenses went abroad: to buy cotton from Tanzania, cloth from Egypt, salt from Kenya, other products, interest and profits to the UK, Japan and the USA. Only a meagre part of all expenses went to other Zambian producers (10%, and even that was for products whose inputs also came from abroad). The company had 18 foreign employees in 1975 (average salary: 11,000 Kwacha) and 67 Zambian salaried staff (average salary: 7,000 Kwacha). The more than 1300 labourers earned an average of 753 Kwacha during that year (van Haastrecht, 1977:45 and 49) and spent most of this income on goods and services, produced in the large-scale...
sector. The subsidy thesis, so central to the theory of peripheral capitalism, was impossible to prove for the KTZ labourers, as wages earned were high enough to pay for own basic consumption, their household members, and sometimes also other dependents. Forty of the interviewed labourers combined their KTZ income in 1974-5 with other sources of income, adding an average 250 Kwacha to their annual cash income. Some related these activities to KTZ, selling cloth they had acquired cheaply elsewhere to their fellow labourers, or lending money to fellow labourers, asking high interest rates for these loans. Others engaged in petty-capitalist activities: selling fish, charcoal, or agricultural produce (van Haastrecht, 1977:52-53).

Nakambala Sugar Estate spent 35% of its expenditure locally. This included wages and salaries, which were 21% of Nakambala’s annual turnover of 10 million Kwacha in 1974-75. In addition, 9% was spent on local building and transport contracts, and on buying sugar cane from outgrowers, and 5% on food to be sold to labourers in company shops. Thirteen percent of the company’s expenditure went to the Zambian state as taxes and payments to INDECO. Of the other 52% the majority were purchases of inputs from abroad, sometimes via a refinement process (e.g. oil from Ndola). In 1975 Nakambala employed 78 foreigners, who earned an average of 7,000 Kwacha each. The Zambian salaried staff (135 of them) earned an average of almost 1,800 Kwacha each. And the more than 4,000 cane cutters and other labourers received an average of 440 Kwacha per year (van Haastrecht, 1977:45 and 49). Each year, about 1000 seasonal labourers (most of the cane cutters) were collected in the far-away Western Province, and for them the wages were only 160 Kwacha per year. Of the interviewed seasonal labourers only 35% said that they would succeed to bring anything home; the other 65% said they just survived for the period they were in Nakambala, and could not save anything for people back home. For these labourers it is clear that they are being subsidised by their rural people, when at home during the four months in which they could not work at the sugar estate (a seasonal enterprise). Asked about their job history, 131 out of 186 Nakambala workers said that they had been jobless for at least half a year since they were sixteen years old, and in those periods they had to rely on support from their rural families, and 30% said that they occasionally worked in subsistence agriculture. Fifteen percent of the interviewed Nakambala labourers did have other sources of cash income, besides their wages from the sugar estate: cash gifts, sale of fish, sale of tobacco and other agricultural produce, and small trade (van Haastrecht, 1977:52-54). Indeed, providing subsidies to labourers by the non-capitalist sector was a plausible proposition for the poorer labourers. But for the majority of the labourers this was not a very realistic assessment; with their salaries they could rather easily pay basic necessities, not only for themselves, but also for household members and sometimes even for others.

When we surveyed the shops and markets where labourers bought their daily necessities, we found that most products came from the large-scale industrial and agricultural sector. Again this was evidence, which did not support the argument of necessary structural heterogeneity. The number of wage labourers for whom the argument was more plausible, had already begun to dwindle, especially in relative terms, in the years prior to our fieldwork. Seasonal labour became less important. For the company the recruitment of seasonal labourers constituted a major burden each year as their reliability was low: there was a high turnover,
and this segment of the labour force often contained ‘revolutionary’ elements, leading to occasional problems for the management. Efficient (state-) capitalist production demands a stable and reliable labour force above all, even if this is achieved at the expense of higher average wages.

Box: the scientific reception of our work
With the current tools of valuation of scientific work, it would have been rather easy to find out what other scientific authors had done with our work, and we would also have tried to increase the ‘impact’ by publishing the major results in influential journals. In 1975-77 that was not at all at stake yet, and we had the idea that an English-language working paper, an English-language conference paper, and a Dutch-language article in a journal like Zone would already be a major accomplishment. None of us thought we should do a PhD as a follow-up of the Zambian material, although all three of us got a job at a University, Rudolf at the Free University of Amsterdam and Annemieke and Ton at the University of Amsterdam. It was ironic that the UvA job can be seen as the result of writing the Dependencia article, of which the Zambia study proved to be rather sceptical. So we wanted to move in other directions. Nevertheless, the publication in the Nijmeegse Geografische Cahiers, was widely distributed in Zambia, got a price in Nijmegen, and was cited at least two times in an established geography journal (both by Ettema, in 1979 and 1983), as an example of critical development geography, and fruitful use of the centre-periphery perspective. However, the Zambia experience had made us wary of theoretical approaches with meagre empirical foundations, and indeed had pushed us away from the type of work, which Ton van Naerssen continued to do for some time. And this is the first time we find the occasion again to write about our experiences in Zambia.


Population growth and aids
When we were in Zambia, in 1975, it was already clear that the rapid improvement of health services, and the better availability of food and water, was in a process of creating a population explosion: with more than 3% annual increase Zambia’s population was thought to double before the Millennium. This was a process that had already started during the 1950s, still under Colonial government, but that dramatically increased after Independence. Not only did it mean that the number of mothers using modern health facilities during pregnancy and breast feeding periods had increased rapidly, and that the number of young children of school-going age had reached very high numbers in 1975, it would also mean that the number of young adults entering the labour market during the 1980s was expected to explode. The expanded public services in education and health already had difficulty to cope with the increases in demands. But the structure of peripheral capitalism was thought to be completely inadequate to make sure that all these additions to the labour market would get paid jobs in an expanding economy.
Of course nobody knew yet about HIV/AIDS, the scourge that would shake the demographic foundations of many African countries, and Zambia would be one of the worst affected. Many of the youth of the 1970s would not make it into the 1990s, and the demographic drama created an urge for those surviving to get as many children as possible, creating a very volatile demographic situation, and undermining the social-cultural and economic foundations of the country. In 2003, an estimated 1.2 million Zambians out of 11.3 million were HIV positive, with between 19 and 22% of all adults aged between 15 and 49 years infected with the virus. However, Zambia’s population was not yet shrinking, although its annual population growth had gone down to only 1.5%. Infant mortality was extremely high for world standards (102/1000) and under-5 mortality among the worst in the world (182/1000). Life expectancy at birth had gone down to 36 years only (IFAD, 2008).

The collapse of the world market for copper, the collapse of the Kwacha: Zambian peripheral capitalism in crisis, 1975-2003

In an analysis of Zambia’s economic prospects, UNCTAD (2006: 2) noted: ‘Until three decades ago, Zambia was one of the most prosperous countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Today it ranks as one of Africa’s least developed’. Zambia’s bold (and naïve) attempt to build a state-driven industrial society (‘state-monopoly capitalism’) during the late 1960s and early 1970s was based on windfall profits of its main link with the world market: copper mining. This resulted in ownership of 80% of all companies in Zambia by the state by the late 1980s (UNCTAD 2006: 4). In a study about Chile, another major copper producing nation, Hernández (2005) reconstructed the long-term trends in world market prices for copper. After the Korea war in the 1950s copper prices had been in the range of 1.50 to 2 US$/lb (using 2004-price levels), but they went up to levels beyond 3 (and even up to 4) in the years between 1963 and 1970, when the Zambian state planned its state-driven expansion of the economy. However, the oil shocks of the early 1970s created major fluctuations, and after 1975 the price plunged down to 1.80 to 2 US$/lb around 1980, down to 1 between 1980 and 1987, up a bit at the end of the 1990s, to reach its lowest level in the year 2000 (0.70 US$/lb).

When we did our fieldwork in 1975, the Kwacha was a strong currency. For one US dollar we could only get 0.65 Kwacha at the time and for a Dutch guilder only 0.24 Kwacha. Soon afterwards the Kwacha became weaker, following the collapse of the world market price for copper. In 1987 there were already 11 Kwachas to the dollar, in 1995 956, in 2000 2780 and in 2004 (at its worst for the Kwacha) 4645 (and one could get 6337 Kwachas for a Euro). (Oanda, 2008; Schuler, 2008).

As a result, the Zambian economy and society experienced a rapid deterioration, made worse by droughts during the 1980s, and 1990s, and a massive drought in 2001-2002. Also the civil wars in Angola, and Congo-Zaire had major negative impacts on the economy. Food riots in 1986, and political clashes afterwards did result in so-called multi-party elections, in 1991, ending the official ‘state of emergency’. It made an end to the 27-year presidency of Kenneth Kaunda. However, the economy did not recover. The second president, Chiluba (1991-2001), adopted drastic austerity measures, a major liberalisation
of the economy and the dismantling of the state’s hold on the industrial sector: the final breakdown of Zambia’s state-monopoly capitalism. UNCTAD wrote in 2006: ‘Governments since 1991 have enacted comprehensive market liberalization policies’ (UNCTAD, 2006: xi). To no avail, or worse: it brought the economy to a further stand still, and government corruption became a major element in withholding development aid from time to time, also under the third president, Mwanawase. Under close guidance from the IMF and World Bank, the Government introduced tough reforms resting on three main policy planes: removal of subsidies; economic liberalization and stabilization; and privatization of public sector enterprises. Price controls were removed, the exchange rate was unified and became market-determined, capital controls were abolished, and regular auctions of treasury bills were initiated. Agriculture input and output markets were also opened up to private sector entry, and import controls were abolished with very few exceptions. The privatization process moved faster and by 2002, almost all the parastatal companies were privatized. However, it is noteworthy that the largest companies in vital economic sectors such as utilities, oil and finance are still state-owned. By April 2002, 257 state enterprises had been privatized from a total of 284. Of the privatized companies, 65 percent were sold to Zambian individuals, 29 percent to foreigners while 6 percent were wound up. The country had become a ‘normal’ peripheral-capitalist country, although one with a very weak capitalist sector, and a mass of people toiling at very low levels of productivity in the rural and urban non-capitalist sector.

Thus from a country in the middle range of middle-income countries in the early 1970s, according to World Bank classifications, Zambia had sunk into the ever-deeper ends of the list of low-income countries in the early 2000s (with 380 US$ as its GNI/Capita in 2003; IFAD, 2008). In 2005, UNDP positioned Zambia at the 166th rank out of 177 countries ranked for the Human Development Index (UNCTAD, 2006: xi).

In 2003, 86% of all Zambians were classified as poor, and during the drought of 2001-2002 2.7 million Zambians required food aid (Nations Encyclopaedia, 2008). In 1975 Zambia had one of the most urbanised populations of Africa; in 2003 more than 60% of all Zambians lived in rural areas, and it is quite likely that the urban poor relied for part of their food on direct linkages with the countryside. In 2005, only 400,000 Zambians were employed in what was known as the formal sector (Klerk, 2008), a wage labour participation rate of less than 8% of its adult population. Of all Zambians 64% had to survive on less than one dollar a day in 1998, and 87% on less than two dollars a day. Poverty levels are so high that height for age indicators for children under five in the country as a whole indicated 47% malnutrition (weight for age 25%) and 49% of the total population was regarded as undernourished (IFAD, 2008). On the other hand, investments in education from the 1960s onwards – a priority for President Kaunda, and supported by development aid ever since – had resulted in an educated population: 80% of all adults in 2002 were regarded as literate, and 89% of all school-age children indeed went to school (Ibid).

The collapse of the Zambian economy was the more painful because one of the reasons for Zambia’s predicament in the 1970s, being a frontier state in the struggle against Rhodesia and Apartheid-South Africa (with its border with Rhodesia closed from 1973 until 1978; and experiencing an air raid by South
Africa’s armed forces in 1986), was resolved as far as Rhodesia was concerned in 1980 (when it became Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe), and as far as South Africa was concerned in 1990-1994, when De Klerk handed over to Mandela. But the ‘pacification’ of relationships with Zimbabwe and South Africa did not bring much happiness. In fact Zambia’s economic liberalisation programmes, as a forced response to pressure from IMF and World Bank, following its dramatic economic downfall in the 1980s, created the conditions for a flooding of Zambia’s shops with South African produce in the 1990s, killing whatever (protected) local industrial and agricultural development had taken place in the years before.

In 2003 Zambia was a poverty-stricken country, with a dramatic HIV/AIDS problem, and a government that heavily depended on development aid. In 2002, Zambia adopted its first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which became the key document for support by World Bank and other donors (World Bank, 2005). In 2003 Zambia’s economy had a value of 4,335 million US$, of which 940 million US$ was earned as merchandise exports: copper (and cobalt) still leading, but also cotton lint, sugar, and tobacco. Government expenses were in the range of 750 million US$, but the Zambian state received 560 million US$ as development aid. In the first part of the 2000s, Zambia could best be described as an aid-dependent protectorate of IMF, World Bank and UN institutions, and of major aid agencies.

Oriental rescue after 2004?
Since copper became the dominating sector, in the 1920s, Northern Rhodesia’s and later Zambia’s fate has always been closely linked to what happened at the world market for copper. We have seen that Zambia’s bold expansion plans could be financed initially when world market prices for copper had reached all-time highs, in the late 1960s. We saw that Zambia’s peripheral position in the world market meant that when the world market for copper collapsed, Zambia’s economy collapsed even more, although it lasted another decade before the Zambian state dismantled (or: was forced to dismantle) its ownership of major parts of the economy. The very low copper prices until about 2003 meant a deep economic crisis, and widespread poverty. Then, in 2003, things suddenly changed, and the copper price on the world market started to improve. In 2004 copper was sold for 1.50 US$/lb, twice the level of 2003. In 2005 the price doubled again, to 3, and towards 2008 the price started to stabilise at a level of close to 4 US$/lb (Purchasing, 2008; LME, 2008).

In 2004 the Zambian Kwacha also reached a turning point. Its value gradually (albeit with ups and downs) began to appreciate again when compared with the US$, but also the Euro. Hence by 2008 one US dollar could get you 3136 Kwacha (and no longer 4645 as in 2004), and one Euro would fetch 4878 Kwacha (was 6337 in 2004). Suddenly there are many signs of revitalisation of its impoverished economy, and it is not difficult to find the reasons: China, and the world energy situation.

In 2004 the Zambian economy suddenly started booming again. In 2004 and 2005 annual economic growth rates were above 5%. Its GDP had gone up from 3.2 billion US$ in 2000 to 5.4 billion (and its GDP/capita from 317 to 471 US$), and exports had risen from 746 million to 1,067 million US$. Average

After years of economic contraction, the copper industry suddenly grew again. As a result of this, copper production was projected to increase to over 500,000 tons in 2006 from 398,000 in 2004 and a low of 228,000 in 1998 (UNCTAD, 2006:5). In addition, foreign investment increased in the banking, telecommunications, and tourism sector, while also investments in agriculture (sugar, fruit, flowers, horticulture) and manufacturing increased. Investors came from all over the world (with the UK in the lead, if we look at the background of the companies profiting from Zambia’s privatization programme), but with increasing interest from investors from South Africa, Zimbabwe and China. Current data are not yet available, but UNCTAD (2006: 8-9) shows that in 2000-2002 40% of foreign direct investments came from Southern Africa, and 21% from China. Probably China now is the most important investor: in 2007, a Zambia-China Economic and Trade Corporation zone was established, offering tax exemptions to Chinese companies in return for $800 million of investment in manufacturing over three years (Klerk, 2008). In 2006, UNCTAD (2006:61) was optimistic: ‘Prospects are good as world demand for copper and prices increased considerably in 2004 and are expected to stay at a higher level for some time due to increasing demand for copper from growing economies such as China’. In the most recent period, Zambia’s potential as a major producer of sugar cane for ethanol production is highlighted by various sources, as a result of the world wide urge to increase the production of agro-fuels. We may conclude that, after years of economic contraction, the capitalist sector in Zambia is expanding again, answering to the increased demands for raw materials and (bio)energy, spearheaded by China’s economic growth. However, it will be very questionable if the poor and HIV/AIDS infected population in Zambia’s huge non-capitalist sector will profit a lot. The growing export possibilities of copper and other products (like sugar- and cotton-derived products) will result in some extra employment, and in benefits for the state, probably diminishing some of the poverty in the country. However, the sheer size of the non-capitalist economy, and its very low productivity, demands a much more massive change of the Zambian economy (and probably other policies) than is likely in the near future. But there is more optimism now than during the last three decades, and that optimism may translate in more bold government policies in tackling the immense poverty and health problems in the country.


*Kafue: a mirror of Zambia’s downfall*

The proud Kafue New Town, with proof throughout its realm of state-driven import-substitution industrialisation established in the 1970s, has dwindled to a poverty-stricken area of broken promises in recent years. By 2000 the town held 46,000 inhabitants, many of them unemployed, living in squalor. In addition, the Town’s industries were polluting the Kafue River downstream in ways that were thought to be detrimental to people’s health. Around 2001, an environmental
NGO, ARE, was trying to force Nitrogen Company of Zambia, Bata Tannery and Lee Yeast of Zambia (old acquaintances of us in 1975) to improve its environmental standards (Blacksmith Institute, 2008). By 2002, the two leading companies, Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia and Kafue Textiles of Zambia were on the verge of collapse, as the new President, Mwanawase admitted: ‘On the NCZ and KTZ, the President explained that when he took over office [in 2001], he found the two companies on the verge of collapse, but that the New Deal administration had managed to keep them afloat’ (All Africa, 2008). It was the time that the government had succeeded to get the Universal Mining Group to invest in a major iron and steel plant in Kafue, which was thought to provide jobs to 6,000 labourers, including former labourers of KTZ and NCZ, although the President indicated that he was not happy with the fact that Kafue had become an opposition stronghold (Ibid.).

In 2003 Kafue Textiles of Zambia had been offered for sale by the Zambia Privatisation Agency, and when no buyers were forthcoming, it had to close in 2004, and more than 700 workers lost their jobs (AAIW, 2003 and 2004). Years of cheap imports of second-hand clothes from Europe, and years of ‘bad management’ had undermined the survival of what was meant to be one of the leading import substitution companies in Zambia, despite the fact that ever more of its raw material, cotton, was being produced in Zambia itself, and no longer in Tanzania. However, according to UNCTAD (2006:8) KTZ was actually sold in 2005, but we don’t know what happened afterwards.

In 2002, in a study about private sector development in Zambia, NORAD wrote that NCZ, the fertiliser company, had collapsed (NORAD, 2002:21), although not completely so it seems. However, in 2008, NCZ still was in deep trouble. The Lusaka Times reported about angry labourers blocking the streets.

‘Police in Kafue this morning blocked a peaceful marching procession by Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ) workers who wanted to walk to Lusaka as they continue to demonstrate over their non payment of four months salary arrears. Over 200 workers only marched up to the Kafue steel plant on their way to Lusaka to petition government at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives over the non payment of salaries and government’s neglect of the plant by not funding it and paying for fertilizer it produced in November last year. The workers were intercepted by a team of paramilitary and police officers who ordered them to retreat and disburse’ (Lusaka Times, 2008a). In June, the problems had not yet been solved: ‘Traffic on the Kafue-Lusaka road in Kafue today came to a standstill after scores of Nitrogen Chemicals of Zambia (NCZ) workers and their families blocked the main road as they demonstrated demanding that government should immediately address their plight’ (Lusaka Times, 2008b).

Nakambala: steady growth, under new owners, and now with great hopes
In July 1994 it was Nakambala Sugar Estate’s turn to be privatised. Tate and Lyle (later part of Booker Tate) and CDC, already partial owners, increased their shares in the Zambia Sugar Company to 70%, with an investment of 37 million US$. Recently South Africa-based Illovo Sugar, a company with 51% UK ownership (Associated British Food), took over most of the shares; which are now part of the Lusaka Stock Exchange. In January 2007 Zambia Sugar
announced that it planned to raise sugar output by almost 70%, from 260,000 tonnes to 440,000 tonnes in 2011, and that it plans to start producing ethanol at its Nakambala Estate plantation, using a by-product of sugar production, molasses (currently used as stock feed and exported to South Africa). The plantation would increase from 11,000 to 17,000 hectares, and cane production from 1.8 million tonnes to 3.3 million tonnes (Reuter, 2008). The expansion plans created some tension with the company responsible for Zambia’s electricity supply, as it was feared that the irrigation water used by Nakambala would jeopardise the volume of water that could be used by the hydro-electricity works downstream (Chirwa and Bupe, 2007). This source also added that the Zambia Sugar Company’s plans would mean an investment of 840 billion Kwachas (more than 200 million US$). It would make Zambia the second largest producer of sugar in Africa, after Sudan (Ibid.). In September 2007 Zambia’s President, Mwanawasa officially launched this plan of expansion, and also said that Nakambala would become fully self-supporting in energy, and that the country would not only be known for exporting copper, but also sugar (Chishimba, 2007).

In 1995 FAO included Nakambala Sugar Estate in a study about the impact of HIV/AIDS, and included some information about its state of affairs (FAO, 1995: Ch. 5 p. 1). It writes: ‘The Estate has experienced several periods of expansion and now has a nominal capacity of 140,000 tonnes of sugar per year with some 10,000 hectares under cane cultivation. In addition, 1785 hectares of sugar cane is provided by the Kaleya Smallholders Scheme, where 140 smallholders manage 560 ha, and the remainder is run as an estate. Two neighbouring farmers own 450 ha of sugar cane which they deliver to Nakambala for processing’. This means that between 1975 and 1995 the area of cane cultivation had almost doubled. The number of permanent employees had remained almost the same as it was in 1975, but the number of seasonal and temporary employees had strongly increased, to almost 5,000 people, still mainly coming from Western Province. Compared to 1975 the number of female employees had increased, especially in lowly paid jobs (although still low at 12% of the total labour force). It was estimated that in total 32,000 people derived their livelihoods from the estate. The number of foreigners among the salaried staff had gone down to only fourteen. The company had reached a very high profit level in 1992/3: according to FAO (1995, Ch. 5.8) total expenditure was 24.9 m. US$, of which 30% on labour costs. But total sales were almost 50 m. US$, which meant a gross profit of 23.7 m. S. So, it seemed that Nakambala had escaped most of the economic horrors that had been so damaging for the rest of Zambia, and prospects are good.

UNCTAD (2006: 43) wrote: ‘There is considerable scope for increasing sugar production and expanding the range and improving the quality of sugar products such as bagasse for generating electricity … Presently, Illovo of South Africa with some minority foreign partners is the main sugar producer, selling 65 percent of the refined sugar domestically and exporting the balance to the region’. In 2007, Nakambala Sugar Estate was reported to have 5,102 workers, about 3,346 of them as seasonal workers during the cane-cutting period. This would mean that more cane was produced, on more land, but with fewer laborers compared to 1995. The percentage of white sugar produced for the Zambian market had further decreased (to 50%). Ten percent of its white sugar was
exported to the European Union under a preferential sugar export treaty, while the rest was exported to other southern and east African countries (Reuter, 2008).

In 2005, a critical article was published in the Times of Zambia about the company’s labor situation, attributed to ‘arrogant behavior’ of the new owner (but not far from what we had experienced in 1975):

‘In the first few years of Illovo on the scene, massive infrastructure and state of the art plant machinery worth millions of dollars has actually been invested in the firm. This was equalled to the ever-improving quality and quantity of the product being produced… However, a darker and more depressing scenario amid this success story has been unfolding…Most contentious of all is the quality of life on the estate which according to some workers who preferred anonymity for fear of reprisals from management has deteriorated… A household is only allowed to keep one dog while all other forms of domesticated animals such as chickens are banned. The growing of backyard vegetables or maize is also outlawed. The residents of the estate have also been given an unconstitutional curfew time where anyone found driving or walking after the prescribed time unless so permitted is charged… incidences of racial slurs against the indigenous Zambians are also on the increase… They alleged that most of the jobs that were Zambianised even over a decade ago were slowly being reclaimed by expatriates’. Also there were ‘numerous complaints from the town’s business association and individual suppliers about how indigenous Zambian suppliers have been systematically phased out from supplying big contract goods and services with the firm opting for South African firms’ (Mataka, 2005).

Revisiting peripheral capitalism

When we did the analysis for our thesis project in 1975, we were confused about the relevance of the theories of peripheral capitalism for what we found in our empirical work. Of course, Zambia’s economy was in a peripheral position with regard to world capitalism (and in fact to all - isms), and its dependence on the world market for only one product, copper, was overwhelmingly clear, particularly when the party was over. However, the applicability of core elements of the theory of peripheral capitalism, such as the importance of foreign ownership and management and subsidies from the non-capitalist to the capitalist sector to keep wages low, on Zambia’s situation around 1975 was questionable. In the ZONE publication, (van Haastrecht 1977) an attempt was made to at least leave some of its relevance intact, for instance by arguing that for many of the poorest laborers, the seasonal cane cutters of Nakambala, wages indeed had to be supplemented by their families back home; and indeed, behind the veil of ‘Zambianised management’ the real power was often in the hands of foreign personnel and advisors. But on the other hand, what we witnessed was a bold (now we would say naïve) attempt by the Zambian state to build a state-owned economy, against all odds. Between 1964 and 1968, the public sector’s share of the economy rose from 14% to 80% (NORAD, 2002:20). It took the ‘Washington consensus’ more than a decade to break it down, and yet another decade to turn Zambia into a country that was much closer to elements of the theory of peripheral capitalism than in 1975. What had remained of the (state) capitalist sector in 2003 had largely turned into dependencies of foreign companies, with an increasing proportion of management again being foreign, and with wages often so low, and working conditions so bad, that workers partly rely, we assume, on their families beyond the capitalist sector for their survival.
And otherwise the country was an HIV/AIDS stricken poverty camp, with appalling living conditions for the majority of its population.

We no longer apply the language of Marxism and theories of peripheral capitalism, however increasingly we might need to consider trying it again and this includes Zambia from 2003 onwards. Yet there are very few scholars who are making such attempts at present. It is clear that a country like Zambia still faces the downside of global capitalism (or better: of its lack of full-scale participation in globalization; and massive reliance on non-capitalist forms of production and circulation). The recent economic miracles in some parts of the world, spurred by China’s appetite for everything raw (including copper), and the world’s panic over its energy supply, are increasing opportunities for Zambia and creating much optimism, over its situation, though this is probably, and once again, naïve. Zambia may well turn from a western periphery into an eastern periphery, but peripheral to the global economy (capitalist, or otherwise) it will probably remain for a long time to come.

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6

Knowledge development, SNV’s impact on world history

Sef Slootweg

Introduction

In 2002, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation launched an internal discussion about its organizational strategy. The road to a new strategy was paved with documents like What do we want to be good at? (April 2003); What do we want to be better at (July 2003) and SNV knowledge – the rough guide (September 2003). SNV had positioned itself as a knowledge organisation for capacity development. The main question it tried to answer was how its advisory services promoted capacity development and thereby could have ‘impact’ on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This contribution should be read within this context.

What follows are messages1 I posted on the ‘D-group’2 for SNV network leaders and the D-group of SNV West-Africa local governance advisors between 18 September and 7 October 2004. I made some changes to make them easier to understand for outsiders. I thank Rinus van Klinken (SNV Tanzania) for starting this discussion and Jörg Schaeffer (SNV Burkina Faso) for pushing me further.

Prologue: Do we recognize that we are failing?

In September 2004, Patrick Chabal (King's College London) and Gerard Prinsen (ex-SNV Mozambique) facilitated a Learning Platform workshop for SNV advisors from East and Southern Africa. At the workshop, Chabal put forward the key message of his book Africa Works (Chabal and Deloz, 1999): that Africa works in its own ways; ways that are not really compatible with development as we, westerners – and especially those in the development sector – conceive it. His general argument goes as follows:

‘Although there are obviously vast differences between countries in this respect, we would argue that what all African states share is a generalized system of patrimonialism and an acute degree of apparent disorder, as evidenced by a high level of governmental and administrative inefficiency, a lack of institutionalization, a general disregard for the rules of the formal political and economic sectors, and a universal resort to personal(izes) and vertical solutions to societal problems’ (Chabal and Deloz, 1999: xix).

1 As these are my edited comments, I have left out the reactions of my colleagues. I wish to thank Anne Slootweg, Patrick Chabal and Lara Yocarini for their valuable remarks. I take all responsibility for the text however.
2 ‘D-group’ Development through Dialogue is a forum for discussion groups for development organisations on the internet: http://www.dgroups.org/
In other words: ‘… in most African countries, the state is no more than a décor…’ (ibid:16). Decentralization is often seen as a solution for a weak state. Chabal states elsewhere: ‘… the success of decentralisation ultimately rests on the quality of State governance’ (Chabal, 2005). Can civil society provide a solution for a weak state? No, according to Chabal: ‘Our argument is that the emergence of a properly institutionalized civil society, led by politically independent citizens, separate from governmental structures, is only possible where there is a strong and strongly differentiated state’ (Chabal and Deloz, 1999:21). The workshop participants were in shock since the core business of SNV is to provide capacity strengthening services to local authorities and civil society organisations in states that could be classified as weak. Rinus van Klinken, trying to catch the emotion of many present, wrote to his fellow network leaders:

‘How do we account for forty years of development co-operation in Africa? Do we recognise that we are failing? (…) how are we envisioning how to create that impact? By doing more of the same? By doing what everybody else is already doing? Doing what we have been doing, but trying to do it better? Or should we look for something different? (…) Can SNV really play a part in capturing that Africa, that works, and make it productive for the modernisation and the development of the continent?’

This message inspired me to reflect on the role of planning and planners and their belief in the possibility of ‘creating a better world’. It also led me to think about possible explanations for why development in many parts of Africa continues to lag behind. I would like to present two possible explanations for this. The first is that not enough people take up the challenge to develop themselves3. The second is that development aid has given rise to perverse incentives; it pays to show poverty and misery instead of performance and opportunities. Since ‘people respond to incentives’ as William Easterly (2001:xii) writes, this may help explain why development projects and programmes do not work.

This brings us back to the challenge of how to measure impact. I draw a parallel with German history in the first half of the 20th century. Could SNV have prevented two world wars, supposing we had been there with our capacity development services? My conclusion is that we, in SNV as elsewhere in the development business, need to be humble in our goals, we can not change the world. But, we all play a little role in world history.


This workshop reminds me of the old days, the discussions we had at university, back in the seventies. I studied urban and regional planning. We arrived in the middle of an academic debate. The new paradigm in planning theory was ‘process planning’. It was a reaction to the ‘blue print’ planning experience of the fifties and sixties and Lindblom’s ‘muddling through’ notion of planning

3 I don’t mean to say Africans generally don’t work. My experience is most Africans work more and harder then Europeans with less rewards.
(Lindblom 1959). The staff in our department, led by Prof. G. Wissink, applying process planning, had in 1972 finished the report *Ruimtelijke Ontwikkeling van het Stadsgewest Nijmegen tot 1985* (Planologisch Instituut Nijmegen, 1972). By 1976 the department felt frustrated because the result had stranded in red tape.

What was going on? Like in Klinkens’ question: ‘do we recognise that we are failing?’, academics and practitioners alike, we discovered that society could not be engineered. We would make nice plans but according to our teachers 90% of new constructions in the built environment had been realised without a proper development plan. New constructions were approved based on small ‘stamp size’ plans, or excpeted as an ‘exemption’ to the valid general plan. As students we made a trip to Poland. Poland at the time was a ‘state planned economy’, where we thought not a single brick could be placed or moved without proper planning. At least that was the theory. It was 1976, and we had long discussions with our Polish colleagues. It appeared that even there, constructions in the existing city were mostly realised based on ‘coincidental’ decisions of the authorities. We were astonished, that even in a planned economy, planning was not really planning, but mainly an effort to prevent undesired outcomes, often without result. Well, not a very stimulating experience for planning students. Did this chase us from the planning faculty? No, we had listened to Bertold Brecht and recognized that we cannot change the world with a plan:

‘Ja mach nur einen Plan
Sei nur ein großes Licht!
Und mach dann noch 'nen zweiten Plan
Gehn tun sie beide nicht’ (Brecht, 1975:111)

The world turns, the society changes and the plan follows, and is by definition always too late. We as students had Angst im Kapitalismus (Duhm, 1972). Due to Vietnam we understood Lacoste, explaining La Géographie, ça sert, d’abord, à faire la guerre (1976). We posed The Urban Question (Castells, 1977), our choice was to fight for Social Justice and the City (Harvey, 1973). We embraced ‘Advocacy Planning’ like Cockburn (1977) did, which meant, taking position for those who are victim in the struggle for space and public services. We ended up After the Planners (Goodman, 1972), asking ourselves Participation or Manipulation with the Dutch ‘Werkgroep 2000’ propagandist of community planning Eisse Kalk (1971). Old fashioned? Outdated? Read: The Action Guide to Advocacy and Citizen Participation (VeneKlasen, 2007).

Back to our problem. I think that the development industry never left the stage of social engineering. We want ‘to make a difference’. It is even worse; we think that SNV can have a direct and visible impact on the reduction of poverty and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. If not worldwide than at least in a country, or may be only in a province, or may be just in a village or a neighbourhood\(^4\). And if that goal proves itself too big and complicated, we shift our change effort to a social sector like the health system, or education, or we try to support the development of a specific market chain like cashew nuts or cotton. Time and again we try to show the impact of our efforts to support those who ‘pursue their own sustainable development’\(^5\) But we fail to perform. Have we, the blue print planners of the sixties, the process planners or advocacy planners

\(^4\) SNV’s 2007-2015 strategy is called: Local Impact, Global Presence (SNV, 2007)

\(^5\) From SNV’s mission statement.
of the seventies in fact just ended up ‘muddling through’ the eighties and nineties? Society has changed and not as we, planners of a better world, had thought or wished. We have good hopes for Latin America and Asia, but for Africa we are really pessimistic. But can we attribute the success of the Asian Tigers, of China, India and Brazil to the efforts of the development industry? Why is it that those countries in Asia that developed best, were the ones that received relatively little development assistance? And why do we not see much progress in Africa, where much of the development efforts were concentrated?

In my second year at university we already discovered the answer: ‘Aid does not work’ (Onderwijskern, 1972). Our conclusion as students then was not ‘abolish aid’, but ‘make it work’. In order to make it work we have to understand what works and what not and why. As Hounkonnou explains, we have to Listen to the Cradle (Hounkonnou, 2001) to understand what works. He defends SNV’s ‘process approach’ as practiced in the nineties. He urges us to listen to people in villages and neighbourhoods to understand how they survive and create their own future. We need to carefully support these efforts without destroying them with an overdose of log frames and development money. And this means SNV can only play a modest role in the development of the continent. We have to abandon the presumption that SNV (or the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or the World Bank) can develop a continent. This continent will develop itself. With all the ‘mistakes’ that go with it: war, famine, diseases, religious hatred, ethnic cleansing, racial tensions and nationalism. But is this not something that we recognize so well from Europe’s, America’s and Japan’s past? When we manage to overcome our past, there is hope for Africa too. It will take more than the lifecycle of an SNV mission statement, I’m afraid.

Sent: Saturday, September 25th 2004, 10:34 AM – It Is The Mentality

‘Do you think it is possible to write a good article that shows the good things of our new SNV approach and why we think changing mentalities is the most important factor to make it work? I think more and more this is the keyword. We are not directly and may be even not indirectly contributing to the reduction of poverty or to achieving other Millennium Development Goals. We work in order to change mentality. We raise awareness for the idea that it is in the first place the people in communities, villages and cities who are responsible for their own development. Not the mayor, the government or the ‘international community’. All support is in vain when development does not come from the internal forces of a society.

A small example from a colleague: Boukoumbé, a rural municipality in the north of Benin is twinned with a municipality in the Netherlands. The Boukombé Development Plan had revealed that the health centres are underused. The reason being that trained and qualified staff do not want to live in Boukombé. Therefore finding and accommodating qualified staff is one of the development priorities of the municipality. In May 2003 the Dutch sister municipality promised to finance the education for three Boukoumbé girls to be trained as a nurse in Parakou, a town in a different region of the country. Motivated girls who wanted to become nurses were found and their parents agreed to send them there. All that was left to do was to arrange some formalities. The registration deadline was September,
but neither the municipality nor the parents took the necessary steps to register the girls in time. Their application was therefore submitted too late, and their admission denied. The municipality promised the Dutch partner and the girls that they would not miss the next opportunity. But this year again, they are late. One of the girls could travel to Parakou for the application form but the municipality did not manage to send the completed forms back to Parakou in time. They asked SNV to help. And of course this is what SNV did. But will it really help?

What can we do? How can we let Boukombé discover that its future is in its own hands? Should SNV deny this service and not organise the admission procedure for them, in their place? Should we stress it is their own responsibility to seize opportunities: ‘Stop the complaining and the requests for help. When you choose not to use the chances you get offered, live happily forever with your Tchoucoutou and stay in your poverty’. Nobody, and certainly not our SNV staff, will talk like this. I am one of the few who bring this up. But it appears that some of my friends from Benin share my opinion. I work with one or two mayors that take up the challenge. They have great difficulty in convincing their population and voters. Voters choose a candidate because they expect him to solve their problems, not to hear that they themselves are responsible for finding solutions.

A second example. Yesterday I accompanied the wives of the European ambassadors to ‘les Aguèguès’, a beautiful municipality in the south of Benin.

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\* Tchoucoutou is a thick, sweet local beer brewed in the North of Benin.
As this is a municipality situated in Lake Nokoué we visited the three arrondissements of les Aguegues by boat. We received a warm welcome from the local authorities and various women groups with music and dance. And of course the women grasped the opportunity to explain their situation. Everywhere we heard the same story: ‘we are poor, we need help’. In one arrondissement the ambassadors’ wives also met a women group that had started a chicken farm, grew vegetables and was planning a fish breeding business. They were successful in selling their products to major supermarkets. But even they focused on telling their stories of poverty and the help they needed. Jonas Aklé, the mayor, was asked why the women were not proud of their achievements and did not show confidence in their chances for success. He answered: ‘It is the mentality’. He explained that these women were ‘conditioned by the successive support programmes to believe that it paid to show poverty. When you show strength and confidence you do not qualify for support’. He gave the example of a recently started World Bank Programme for ‘community-driven development’. The first selection criterion for a community to qualify for participation in the program was the level of poverty. ‘How then can you expect people to build on their strength?’ The mayor felt practically alone in his fight to encourage pride and self respect.

How on earth can we get this changed? That is the fundamental question I’d like our network to talk about. And that is why I want to involve our local governance D-group in the search for what works and what not and why.

Sent: Wednesday, October 6th 2004, 4:37 PM – People Respond To Incentives

‘Yesterday I saw a wonderful film Das Wunder von Bern (Wortmann, 2003), dealing with the way a German family (and Germany as such) tried to get back on its feet again, back in the fifties of the last century. The story used the 1954 football world championship as a metaphor. The film explained how a destroyed person, family, country, can regain its self-respect and the respect of the world. And again this tells me about development as well. Africa is in this respect not different from Europe. But it has a long way to go. I want to get away from the moral side and more into the realistic side, which means to me always, start from practice, learn from practice, turn it into theory and apply that into practice again (Mao Tsetung, 1971 and Mao tse-Toeng, 1971).

I read also a formidable book, from William Easterly: The Elusive Quest for Growth or Economists’ Adventures and Misadventures in the Tropics (Easterly, 2001). He is a former World Bank employee and his thesis is: ‘people respond to incentives’ (ibid:xii). Easterly explains that many development projects and programmes just do not provide the right incentives, and therefore they don’t achieve results and even make matters worse. ‘Free’ gifts, and rewarding non performance (by ‘listening to the heart’ and by ‘helping the poorest of the poor’) are no good incentives. I want to go on with my practical observations like in Boukoumbé and les Aguegues and try to formulate why ‘aid’ does not work. I believe that ‘good’ incentives do exist and that we in SNV can help to develop them. This means with Easterly we have to challenge the prevailing paradigm of development theory. So African and European practitioners unite! You
remember the expression ‘philosophers have only interpreted the world, (...) the point, however, is to change it’ (Marx, 1970:30).

Sent: Thursday, October 7th 2004, 8:35 AM – Measuring Impact

“Indeed, one of our concerns is how to measure impact. Currently we promote decentralisation. Because we presume that this will bring politics and the responsibility for development closer to the citizens. That is why we, in our role as practitioners, want to know: does decentralisation (and what kind of decentralisation and how introduced) have an impact on poverty reduction? The back of our business card says: ‘SNV is dedicated to a society where all people enjoy the freedom to pursue their own sustainable development. Our advisors contribute to this by strengthening the capacity of local organisations’. Do our SNV advisory services have an impact on poverty alleviation and ‘good governance’? Do we free people to pursue their own development?

Suppose a small organisation like SNV would have worked between 1900 and 1950 in Europe in Germany with the mission to strengthen the capacity of local organisations to promote democracy and ‘good governance’. Could this small organisation have claimed impact? Few will answer positively. We would not have been able to prevent wars, the killing fields, or the destruction camps. Would our efforts have been in vain? This in fact is the dilemma we face in many African countries. Yet many inside and outside Germany have tried hard to change the course of history at that time. And I believe that this struggle was the cradle of success for Germany in the second half of the 20th century. And when finally the Wall tumbled in Berlin, the optimism about the course of history was so immense that Fukuyama predicted the End of History and the Last Man (1992). However, history proved Fukuyama wrong, the introduction of the market economy and the introduction of liberal democracy is not enough to change the world in a paradise for mankind. He wrote Trust (Fukuyama, 1995) building on Putnam’s Making Democracy Work (1993) about the importance of civic traditions for development, to stress some years later the importance of the central state for development in: State-Building (Fukuyama, 2004).

I do agree that we do not live in 20th century Germany but in 21st century West Africa. I want to make visible why it makes sense what we do. That it is a support for people who want to develop themselves. And so we must be specific about the effect and impact we like to achieve with our support. What is it that our clients know better? (1) What is it that they do differently with this knowledge? (2) And what is the outcome of these actions in services to people? (3) And do these services lead to a longer and richer life? In other words what is the impact on realising the Millennium Development Goals? (4) We might go as far as measuring the first and maybe the second point. The third and fourth appear only measurable in the very long run, if we are lucky. That is, if our impact is not annihilated by the impact of other events like the political, social, economic, ecologic conflicts at country, regional or world level.
Epilogue, Nijmegen, January 8th, 2008 – Hope for Planners

It was the final day of the exhibition: De Seventies in Nijmegen, Tien Kreatieve Aksiejaren in the Valkhof Museum in Nijmegen. A debate was held to mark the end of the exhibit. The main subject of the debate was the impact of the ‘Socialistiese Studentenbonden’ on society. Ton van Naerssen took the floor and explained: ‘These “Creative Action Years” left no trace whatsoever on the university. Today’s university would not operate differently without the actions of the student groups of that period. But this does not mean that these years made no sense’. He referred to the effect these years had on the individuals who participated in it and studied, worked and agitated for a better world. Again the

7 The socialist student leagues had been established in 1970 and 1971 in many Nijmegen University Faculties, and were united in the ‘6 October Group’ from October 6th, 1971.

8 Ton himself is a product of the action years of the sixties and seventies. He was known for his leading role in actions against the invitation for Suharto minister Seda to address the 1968 Nijmegen Lustrum Congress (Koster, 1979:103). When he applied for a post, the Geography Department was not keen getting this rebel on board. The student representatives in the Faculty Council together with the staff of the Planning Department voted for his appointment at the Nijmegen ‘Interfaculteit Aardrijkskunde en Prehistorie’, end of 1972. I am proud to have been a member of the council that year.
same question. Does it make sense what we do and strive for? What has changed between the early seventies and today? And in how far has it been a result of our actions? Has Africa changed between 1972 and today?

In 1972 the ‘Onderwijskern Geografiek’ published its short course development geography for high school called: Wie zwijgt stemt toe... (who remains silent agrees). The chapter ‘Is there a solution for the problem of underdevelopment?’ starts like this: ‘We have seen that despite development aid, the poor countries have not improved. Aid does not help’ (Onderwijskern, 1972: 43). ‘Aid’ is not meant to help the poor, it helps the rich, was the message. The message about what might work was the principle ‘Not Aid But Trade’ (Onderwijskern 1972:xiii). Surprisingly modern, has nothing changed? Is there a solution? And what is the answer? Easterley, in his quest to blame the planners formulated this as: ‘the only Big Answer is there is No Answer’ (2006:30,382) and ‘the best plan is to have no plan’ (2006:5). Is there no hope for planners?

In 1973, a group of students prepared a theme about The effect of the political-ideological developments on the situation of underdevelopment in China and Indonesia. One of them was me. Our idea at the time was that China with its ‘great cultural revolution’ was on the good road. One quote: ‘China (…) is not tempted to become at all cost a welfare state in order to surpass the capitalist countries in an attempt to proof the superiority of socialism with the production of an abundance of consumer goods’ (Slootweg, 1974:22). Authors with name and fame had convinced us: ‘By the year 2001 she (China, ssl) will be a powerful industrial socialist State’ (Suyin, 1967:231). I believe history proved us wrong. We are 35 years sadder and wiser. China (now 20% of the world population, then near 25%) has developed into a world power, indeed, as we thought 35 years ago. But the success was not caused by ‘the cultural revolution’. China is defeating the West exactly by producing an abundance of consumer goods. And I cannot withdraw from the idea that having a long term vision; formulating strategies; learning from mistakes; setting goals and defining actions to achieve them, has had to do something with China’s success. There still is hope for the planners.

Post script: And SNV’s Impact?

The e-mail discussion of which these messages were part continued in the SNV Learning Platform in 2005, 2006 and 2007, again with Patrick Chabal and Gerard Prinsen. Altogether some 58 SNV advisors used their free time to read, discuss, research and reflect on their practice. The result can be found in 36 research papers of which 16 are presented in the 2005 and 2007 AEGIS and the 2006 ASAUK international Africa academic conferences (van Klinken et al. 2007, Slootweg 2007)9. Have a look, you’ll be surprised.

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Migration Trajectories
Return migration and development: a complicated marriage

Tine Davids and Ruerd Ruben

Introduction

In recent years, there has been increasing attention for the potential contribution of migration to “development” in migrant-sending countries (Özden and Schiff, 2007). Return migration takes a somewhat special and ambivalent place in the - often assumed - unilateral relationship between migration and development. On one hand, return migrants have traditionally been attributed a crucial role in stimulating the possible local process. They are often expected to generate *braingain* or, more generally, contribute to social and cultural linkages that enhance the availability of capital and knowledge resources that might provide a significant development impulse to the society of origin (de Haas, 2005). If the rhythm of development in their country of origin takes a positive turn, migrants are likely to be amongst the first to join in and recognise such new opportunities, thus reinforcing these positive trends through investing and/or returning to their origin countries (de Haas, 2007). Consequently, sending countries are believed to benefit from the return of their migrants, who’s financial and human resources are believed to contribute to development.

On the other hand, especially within Europe where immigration policies have become stricter (partly in response to growing xenophobic attitudes), remigration becomes more and more related to the shift and changing perspectives in immigration policies, which have led to a growing emphasis on (forced and voluntary) return rather than integration (Black and Gent 2004:4-5; Blitz and Marzano, 2005:182-183). In the Netherlands, for instance, in this context of growing interrelatedness between remigration and restricted immigration, policy memoranda were formulated by the Dutch ministry for Alien Affairs and Integration, suggesting that development cooperation should be used as a strategy to contain the influx of migrants (Verdonk, 2003). While the minister of Development Cooperation stated at the same that - although containment of migration and international cooperation are not the same - they are indeed linked together, implying that an effective return could be favoured through international cooperation (Ardenne, 2003). In addition, sustainable return could contribute to local development processes. Return and remigration - forced or not - thus became part and parcel of a political discourse of which NGOs working with migrants, refugees and development were very reluctant to take part, rendering remigration and return a highly problematic phenomenon from a development perspective (PON, 2004).

In this article we provide a reflection on the phenomenon of return migration based on extensive field research on the sustainability of remigration processes under forced returnees, carried out by staff of the Radboud University Nijmegen.
Centre for International Development Issues (CIDIN). 1 We argue for the importance to consider return migration as a process of mixed embeddedness and depart from an understanding of remigration within the framework of the politics of belonging. We demonstrate that such an approach leads to new insights regarding the complex interfaces between social, economic and psychosocial factors influencing local embeddedness processes, and we identify major intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence this process of mixed embeddedness. Most importantly, the study reveals that prospects for better local embeddedness of return migrants in their countries of origin strongly depend on the loving circumstances provided to them in the host country.

In so doing we share an approach in line with, and certainly inspired by Ton van Naerssen’s own approach concerning the relation between migration and development and his keen interest for international entrepreneurship, where the concept of mixed embeddedness originates from. In particular since he always advocates that it is a common mistake to equate development with economic growth and loose sight of the human dimension in development: “However the issue of development is much more complex and includes social, cultural and political aspects” (van Naerssen in Nijenhuis et al., 2007:15).

**Returning, development and belonging**

From a research and policy perspective, the link between return migration and home country development is not new. The Western European experience with “guest workers” from Morocco and Turkey provides early examples. In the 1960s and 1970s, both sending and host-country governments considered their stay as temporary. They were generally expected to return after a few years and to deploy their financial resources and newly acquired knowledge for the economic development of their home countries. In particular after the 1973 Oil Crisis, receiving countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands experimented with policy incentives to stimulate return migration. The general image is that such policies failed and that the majority of migrants became settled in Western Europe, triggering a process of chain migration through family reunification and family formation. Low return migration coincided with the increasingly pessimistic views on the development potential of migration (Entzinger, 1985, Penninx, 1982, de Bree et al., forthcoming).

More recently, within the renewed attention for remigration, return is increasingly considered as the natural thing to do for migrants, while at the same time, many positive influences for the country of return are attributed to it (see: Black and Gent 2006). Return is thus seen as an indicator for the maturing of a state and a way of contributing towards peace processes in post-conflict

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1 The research is based on a pilot study from 2006 among a total of 131 voluntary and involuntary returning migrants from Western Europe and relocated migrants from mainly Angola, Guinea, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Somalia and a standardised monitoring study from 2007/2008 on assistance to 178 involuntary returning irregular migrants refused asylum seekers and ex refugees in six different countries in three different continents: Sierra Leone, Togo, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Vietnam. In this study, quantitative methods (such as standardised surveys, factor and regression analysis) were used in combination with qualitative methods (such as in-depth interviews and life history analysis).
countries or (in the case of former Yugoslavia) to reverse ethnic cleansing (Black and Gent, 2004, Black, 2001, Eastmond, 2006). The most recent buzz word emphasising the bright side of return migration is that it could trigger the development of the home country. European policy makers have been quick to embrace this viewpoint and readily incorporate it in the new migration policies.

In this discourse where migration policies are articulated with development policy, return is all too often and to easily considered as simply ‘going home’. As if it would be possible to just take up life where one has left. Although the post-return experiences of migrants are relatively understudied, empirical evidence shows that return is almost never simply going home (Ghanem 2003, Hammond, 1999, Pedersen, 2003). Let alone that going “home” would simply contribute to local development (Van Houte and De Koning, 2008). Consequently, many of the real experiences of (re)migrants do not fit into the dichotomous categories produced in the discourses that oppose “returned” vs. “settled” migrants (see also: Snel et al., 2004).

Within this dichotomy, return implies smooth (re-)integration into the country of origin, which is - especially in the case of forced returnees - almost never the case. Not only is the dichotomy of returned versus settled not adequate to understand the remigration process, the term integration also falls short in capturing under which conditions migrants arrive to some form of settlement and acquire a sense of belonging. Integration within the public and political discourse on migration usually goes accompanied by connotations of adaptation to dominant norms in society. This suggests that the receiving country is one of social cohesion where existing cultural, ethnic, class or other difference are fully neglected (Anthias, 2006). Research has shown that in reality this process is far more complex. Returnees have to negotiate all these differences from a different predisposition after their migration experience, which contradicts the idea of simply fitting in because they arrive a gain in their country of origin (de Bree et al. forthcoming). Approaching (re)migration from such an integration perspective constructs newcomers in receiving countries foremost as the ‘others’, thus ignoring the predispositions from returnees or just considering that they can easily blend.

Furthermore, in particular in the case of forced migrants, remigration often implies returning to a changed country, where social relations, political structures and economic conditions are not what they used to be when the place was left. Confronted by such difficulties and given the sometimes difficult conditions of (re)settlement, the relation with development becomes very fragile. Expecting returnees that did not have the intention to return in the first place, to invest in a society where they do not want to be, turns out to be a strongly overestimated perspective.² It remains largely neglected how efforts for trying to gain some sort of belonging on behalf of returnees might counteract (at least in the short run) with their eventual attribution to the development of their countries of origin. Articulating remigration programs with development policies - as described above – tends to disguise the critical relation between individual sense of belonging and the politics of belonging as part of that same development process. Politics of belonging refers to specific political projects that try to define the boundaries of those who belong to a certain group or nation and those who

² In contrast to what NGOs and policy makers refer to as ‘voluntary return’, in this article, those migrants who did not manage to obtain a permanent permit to stay, or returned outside their own personal desire, are referred to as involuntary or forced migrants.
cannot exercise this belonging. Restricted national migration policies, citizenship arrangements or return projects are all critical aspects that can contribute (or not) to the re-construction or reconstitution of such boundaries and differences (Yuval-Davis et al., 2006).

Returnees have to actively negotiate these boundaries and differences upon their return, trying to construct a new sense of belonging and to formulate an identity. In studying the return process and its possible relation with development, this process of belonging has to be taken in consideration and needs to receive more emphasis and exploration than it has received so far within development studies. In order to do so and to avoid the negative connotations of the concept of integration as described above, we opted for using the alternative concept of mixed embeddedness for exploring whether return can be sustainable or not.

Embeddedness

Why mixed embeddedness?
Embeddedness is a concept originally developed and used within the context of institutional economics, launched in 1985 by Granovetter to identify trust as part of social networks that are crucial for the successful transactions of companies. Mixed embeddedness has also been used by Aldrich (1995), Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) and Kloosterman (2006) in exploring immigrant entrepreneurship. The basic idea of this concept refers to the process in which a person, organisation or company is able to participate in a given society depending heavily on the identity dimension (see also: Davids and van Houte, forthcoming). Although it may argued that embeddedness is just another word for integration, it is important to bear in mind that in trying to conceptualise this process differently (from the way it is used in public integration and migration discourses) by using new or different concepts and metaphors can help to open new avenues for understanding the complex nature of society-group interactions.

Translated to remigration research, (re-)embeddedness entails a multidimensional concept that refers to an individual finding his/her own position in society and feeling a sense of belonging to and participating in that society. It consists of economic, social networks and psychosocial dimensions that are interrelated and could reinforce each other. As such, it takes remigration to be an ongoing process distinguishing different grades of participation and belonging to a society, which can be applied equally to migrants and non-migrants. Embedding is not simply measured by adaptation to dominant norms. Nor can re-migration be considered isolated from other stages in the migration cycle; it involves the experiences of dis-embedding in the country of origin when leaving, as well as the experiences of embedding in receiving countries.3

In contrast to departing from the predisposition that constructs migrants as ‘others’ in receiving countries and re-migrants as ‘alike’ in sending countries, the concept of mixed embeddedness proposes to explore in what way and in how far re-migrants are considered to be ‘others’ or construct themselves as ‘others’ or as

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3 See also Boyd and Griego (2003) who distinguish different stages of the migration cycle.
‘alike’. The dispositions with which a re-migrant arrives in the country of origin cannot be taken as given but need to be explored based on the everyday epistemologies of the returnees themselves. Following this approach, the operationalization of mixed embeddedness implied a mixture of quantitative methods (such as standardised surveys and regression analysis) that can be used in combination with qualitative methods (such as in depth interviews and life history analysis).

Mixed Embeddedness and Sustainable Return
Black et al. (2004:25) distinguishes between three elements of sustainable return: the subjective perspective of the returnee, the objective conditions of the returnee, and the aggregate conditions of the home country. Building on the concept of embeddedness, this means that not only measurable socio-economic indicators are taken into account, but also the importance that returnee attribute to these different elements plays a role. This approach furthermore assumes that individual sustainability is needed to guarantee a contribution to the stability of the home society.

The economic dimension of embeddedness refers to questions whether a returnee can rebuild a sustainable livelihood. Chambers and Conway (1991:6) define a sustainable livelihood as follows: A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (i.e. stocks of resources, claims and access) and activities required for making a living. In practice, a livelihood comprises the extent to which an individual owns, or otherwise has access to resources and assets, such as income, housing, land, livestock, transportation, education and health care. Moreover, it encompasses the livelihood capabilities which individuals can maintain and expand with these assets. Livelihoods are sustainable when they can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance their capabilities and assets, provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for next generations, and guarantee net benefits to other livelihoods both at local and global levels and in the short and long term (Chambers and Conway 1991; De Haan et al., 2004; De Haan and Zoomers, 2003).

Social networks represent another dimension of embeddedness. Boekestijn (1988, 89) stressed that social relations provide migrants with the feeling of being accepted, and that social acceptance is a crucial factor for migration success. Social networks are important for acquiring information as well as sharing personal and intimate relations. In a more dynamical sense, social networks can add to social capital. Social capital refers to the features of social organisation, reciprocity, networks, information flows and social safety nets that emerge from social contacts between individuals in the society. This could lead to a more efficient and stable position of the individual in society. Whether returnee can benefit from social capital depends on the type of social networks they maintain. Not only the quantity and frequency of individual social contacts are important. Social contacts become valuable when there is some sort of ‘closeness’, the feeling that one can really rely on the other. According to Cassarino (2004:275), social networks are crucial for understanding the ways in which returnees can mobilize their resources while at the same time being involved in creating and maintaining cross-border social and socio-economic networks. For sustainable embeddedness, these networks need to be responsive to specific pre- and post-return conditions.
In addition to material wellbeing, psychosocial wellbeing is equally essential for finding one’s place in society, and to acquire a sense of belonging to that society. An important aspect of this psychosocial well-being refers to the ability to construct and express one’s identity. It provides an individual with a place in society, and at the same time establishes the connection between the self and that society (Ter Maat, 2002:15). Being free to construct one’s identity and having this identity accepted in a wider society, leads to a feeling of belonging and attachment to certain localities, although these attachments and the way in which returnees position themselves may at the same time be highly trans-local (see also Anthias 2006, de Bree at al. forthcoming).

Identity is always dynamic, multidimensional and contextual (Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1991). Identity is not a fixed and given character of a person. Rather, it is a dynamic process: a changing view of the self and the other. It is constantly influenced by different – sometimes opposing - processes (Ghorashi, 2001:22). The process of migration and remigration represent such processes (Nagel and Staeheli, 2004). Changes in geographical and cultural settings can lead to dramatic identity changes. In additional, returnees may also construct a transnational identity, which comprises a set of new hybrid cultural forms combined out of different cultures (Appadurai, in Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002:4; Brah, 1996; Dwyer, 2000). Upon return, a complex situation is likely to emerge. The returnees’ new hybrid identities do not necessarily fit into the home society that has likely also undergone significant changes. In the ideal situation, the migrants will combine the best of both worlds and could benefit from this (Ghorashi, 2003:5). However, this situation can also create a feeling of ‘in-betweenness’ for the returnee; the feeling that they do not belong anywhere anymore (Ghorashi 2001:119). The reaction of each individual returnee could be found somewhere between these two extremes.

It will be clear that all these dimensions of embeddedness are highly contextual and may differ consequently amongst countries. Notwithstanding these differences, in the research project carried out by CIDIN, we tried to analyse the influence of assistance provision (by governmental or non governmental organisations) on the prospects for re-embeddedment of migrants in their countries of origin. We especially considered the influence of the migration policies in the host country on the process of sustainable return migration.

**Findings**

The most important findings in exploring remigration as a process of mixed embeddedness indicate that (a) there is considerable diversity amongst the experienced levels of embeddedness amongst return migrants, and (b) individual return migrants experience wide varying degrees of economic, social and psychosocial embeddedment. In the majority of the cases concerning involuntary return, the returnees have barely been able to construct a sustainable livelihood (see also Van Houte and Davids, 2008 forthcoming).4

4 See also Van Houte and de Koning (2008) Towards a better embeddedness? Monitoring assistance to involuntary returning migrants from Western countries. Research Report. Nijmegen: CIDIN, Cordaid and AMIDSt, and Van Houte and Davids (2008m forthcoming) ‘Development and Return-
Economic embeddedness
On the economic dimension of embeddedness, many returnees who participated in the survey managed to meet their basic daily needs, such as accommodation and a certain amount of income, but their situation is often unstable. House ownership was very low and consequently most returnees had to live with relatives, sometimes causing tensions due to overcrowded houses. Also in terms of income, most returnees remain in an unstable and dependent position. In the sample of the 2007 return migration study, 50 percent fully depended on sources of income other than their own income generating capacities, such as allowance from relatives, remittances, loans, public relief, or humanitarian assistance.

Not having control over their own income, or depending on unstable sources of income puts these returnees in a very vulnerable position. The migrants that manage to generate a somewhat more independent income through salary or revenue from trade (50 per cent) are not necessarily in a sustainable income position either. Only 30 per cent of those with stable employment report that their income is sufficient to support themselves and their dependents. In sum, returnees are often worse off in terms of access to independent housing and income compared to their pre-migration situation.

Although for voluntary returnees the economic situation is different and not as fragile as for involuntary returnees, their return is not always economically successful either. Often, these migrants depend on ‘Old Age Pension’ (AOW) or ‘Occupational Disability Insurance’ (WAO). In addition, 45+ returnees can sometimes make use of an occupational disability insurance provided under the ‘Remigration Act’ (REM) (de Bree et al. forthcoming). This arrangement encourages return by covering returnees’ travel expenses and monthly living costs. Returnees that are most successful in economic terms are those who voluntarily returned, were well-prepared and without any assistance. In the case of Suriname, for instance it was registered that people who returned independently and without any assistance were better prepared than those returning within the government-sponsored program for return, as this financial incentive for return often leads to too quick decisions (Bredewold, 2006; Huis in ‘t Veld, 2006).

Social Embeddedness
For fulfilling material needs, it is critical to find meaningful social contacts. Only 42 per cent of the return migrants stated that they could rely on their social contacts for material support (mainly accommodation). Living with family members not only implies having access to shelter, but also sharing in the household’s other assets and income. Furthermore, having access to meaningful networks could also bring them into contact with their relations, who could provide returnees with employment or in another way help them rebuild their livelihoods. However, only returnees from privileged socio-economic backgrounds seemed to have access to these kinds of social relations. In less
wealthy families, as returnees stretch the already limited budget of the household, they tend to cause a major burden. This explains part of the frustration that relatives sometimes express towards their returnee relatives. It may be no surprise that relatives in already unstable wealth cannot be a source of material assistance to returnees, since - as many returnees state - “they do not have anything themselves”.

Most returnees have, for a number of reasons, only a small network of people on whom they can really rely. Mostly, these are members of their nuclear family. This puts returnees again in a rather vulnerable position. Returnees who lost these relations or for any other reason, do not have enough contacts on whom they can rely for their material (and emotional) needs, run the risk to become isolated. Social capital is thus of vital importance both for involuntary as for voluntary returnees upon and after return, to become part of local networks for information provision, access to resources and exchange networks (see also Casarino 2007).

**Psycho-social embeddedness**

A majority of involuntary returnees could rely on their social contacts for emotional support. This includes being able to confide in their social contacts, feeling trust towards and comfort with their contacts, sharing experiences and spending time together. Married respondents highly depend on their spouse to find emotional support and for sharing their problems. Three quarters of the sample state, however, that they changed during their time abroad and that they sometimes face difficulties in the country of return because of their modified identity. As returnees have often stayed abroad for many years, they have adopted some of the norms and values of the host country, and this influences how returnees perceive and behave towards the home country.

The way returnees are perceived by the society in the country of return strongly depends on the extent to which a returnee had a ‘successful’ migration experience. When a returnee was forced to leave the host country and, or did not manage to bring back money or assets, return is frequently seen as a failure. Consequently, these returnees are often stigmatized, excluded and discriminated. Differences in attitudes or behaviour from the dominant patterns are usually not accepted as being positive. This makes it difficult for them to construct a feeling of belonging. As a result, almost 40 per cent of the respondents claimed that they had trouble in expressing their identity as a returnee, and some of them preferred to conceal their ‘returnee’ status in trying to adjust to the dominant culture again. Behaviour that deviates from the norm is generally not well received and frowned upon.

In contrast, those returnees with a positive and successful migration experience were happy to be back and gained status from their newly acquired skills. As the experienced socio-economic changes also led to something meaningful for them and their family members, their behaviour was also generally better tolerated. This illustrates that different dimensions of embeddedness are interrelated and reinforce each other.

This also holds true for voluntary returnees: the more successful the migration experience the better re-embedded in the country of origin. However, it does not mean that all returnees easily adapt to their country of origin again. In the case of
Morocco, for instance, it became clear that in constructing a sense of belonging returnees apply transnational practices. They are not exclusively embedded in the local context of their communities of origin, but generally feel strong needs to maintain a number of economic, political and socio-cultural transnational practices (de Bree 2007; de Bree at al. forthcoming 2008). These return migrants uphold in varying degrees their Moroccan-Dutch or a Dutch-Moroccan identity. The transnational practices they exercise in constructing such an identity are highly dependent on motivations for return, gender and generation. Especially for former male labour migrants the incorporation of transnational practices in their lives is critical for establishing feelings of post-return belonging, whereas such practices were less relevant for their wives. Instead, they prefer to return to the Netherlands to improve the lives of their children, who feel uprooted in Morocco despite the transnational practices they hold.

Other aspects of the psychosocial dimension of embeddedness refer to psychological condition and the feelings of (un)safety. In often post-conflict societies where migrants migrated from, this is a key issue in itself. Furthermore, the migration experience can cause a feeling of cultural bereavement, which may include the loss of social structures, cultural values and self-identity. This may cause serious psychological disorders such as depression, phobia and schizophrenia (Bhugra and Becker, 2005). Psychosocial embeddedness in (post-)conflict countries depends very much on the feeling of safety. Physical un-safety is often still experienced in post-conflict countries due to lasting disputes and social and/or political tensions. This affects the mobility and limits the choice of place of residence for the returnees, who are restricted in returning to or visiting their pre-war homes or communities. Furthermore, in almost all countries, a lack of general safety feelings was reported due to unstable economic conditions and fragile livelihoods.

The majority of all returnees proved to be in vulnerable psychosocial positions. Psychological problems and a rejection by the home society of certain elements of their identity and the related pressure to adjust to dominant norms and values, affect their psychosocial embeddedness. However, these hardships do not prevent 64 per cent of the respondents to feel at home in the community of return. Presence of family and friends, home ownership and personal identification with the country were indicated as most important reasons for this.

**Influencing factors**

As mentioned above, the process of embedding and re-embedding is highly contextual and depends on diversified socio-economic opportunities. In a post-conflict country such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, favouritism among different ethnic groups played a significant role in the process of embedding. Notwithstanding these differences, we would like to discuss briefly the influence of two particular factors on the re-embedding process: (a) the position of the returnee in the migration cycle and (b) the impact of different types of assistance provision on the prospects for enhancing embeddedness.
Migration Cycle

The experiences gained in the migration cycle of the returnee migrants plays a crucial role in their possibilities upon return. Especially, the circumstances under which one came to and left from the host country, and which living circumstances were experienced abroad, proved to have an essential impact on psychosocial embeddedness, thereby strongly influencing social networks and economic embeddedness upon return.

All respondents from post-conflict countries stated that insecurity and unsafety were important reasons to flee. In addition to these macro factors, there are always other - often personal - reasons at the micro level that provide the direct trigger for leaving the country. The caseload proved that motivations to flee or move are never one-dimensional but always involve a complex combination of different factors and motivations. As van Naerssen argues: “the fact that people migrate is often taken for granted, however when interviewing migrants it becomes clear that the decision to migrate is in most cases not taken deliberately” (van Naerssen in Nijenhuis et al., 2007:15). A migrant from Angola (interviewed in the Netherlands) stated that he wanted to migrate already for a long time for economic reasons. After the outbreak of the conflict that was internationally recognized he was supplied with legitimate grounds for migration and a refugee status. Another female migrant from Somalia who fled to another part of the country and eventually left because she did not belong to any clan which affected her identity and safety in the new pro-clan policy, declared that at the same time she escaped from her husband who she did not want to see anymore. Here, a combination of ethnicity, safety and gender-related reasons represented the basis to out-migration. There are many examples of situations where the conflict was an important reason to leave the country, but seldom was it the only driving force.

Cross-section analyses of surveys and life histories can unravel the ways in which macro and micro factors in a complex connectivity work together in stimulating a person to become a migrant or refugee. Motivations and stimuli that appear in large scale surveys easily as mainly economic or political, in reality are far more complex and interwoven. The reasons and events that caused people to migrate are also related to the expectations they have regarding their stay in the host country. It appears that if migrants go with the intention to eventually return and are better informed of what they can expect during their stay in the host country (i.e. temporary protection until return once the conflict had ended), this contributes to returnees being psychologically better prepared to accepting their return and to rebuild their lives once returned. Furthermore, migrants who expect they would have to return eventually invest substantially more in maintaining their transnational social networks. The extent to which these initial motives and practices play a role before return takes place, has a decisive effect on the way returnees can accept being back.

Additionally, the living circumstances provided in the host country also play a crucial role. Migrants often spend a significant period of their lives in the host country. Actually, the majority of the forced migrants become (more) depressed because of the insecurity and the problems they face during their stay in the host country. This applies especially to migrants that did not have any chance to make themselves useful with work or study in the host country. A forced migrant interviewed in the host country says: ‘I don’t like thinking too much, because I
almost get sick. (…) Too much pressure what will happen tomorrow. I am exhausted’ (Knoben, 2006).

Returnees, who managed to maintain independent living circumstances abroad through work, having access to independent housing and by maintaining broad social contacts are on all dimensions significantly better embedded than those who did not have these opportunities. Although migrants without a permanent permit to stay are often engage in low-skilled jobs below their qualifications, and the skills or knowledge necessary for these jobs were often not very relevant for finding employment upon return, they greatly benefited from the possibility to work in a number of ways. First of all, it gives them the opportunity to save some money which they save to take back after return or send back to their country of origin, thus strengthening their social networks. Both savings and remittances contributed to the returnees’ economic and social embeddedness. Moreover, being incorporated in a working environment abroad and generating one’s own income gives migrants the possibility to remain their self esteem and develop their survival skills.

Social contacts, independent living circumstances and the possibility to work allowed migrants to take control over their own situation and lead an active life without depending fully on asylum centres and social benefits. In contrast, migrants are held in asylum centres and depend on social welfare, often do not manage to take control over their lives upon return and thus face a disadvantage regarding their prospects for becoming embedded. Even while the more independent conditions abroad did not cause a large improvement in living status compared to the life one prior to migration, it prevents the degradation of self esteem and enables the maintenance of survival skills that are critical for creating embeddedment upon return.

A final influencing factor within the migration cycle refers to the conditions under which return takes place. The legal status of migrants at the point of return influences the agency they have in the decision to return. Migrants who returned due to pressure or force from authorities expressed their frustration for ‘not being ready yet’, both mentally and practically. Furthermore, it has an impact on the way returnees were perceived by the people in their home society. For example, in Sierra Leone, it became quickly known when a forcibly deported returnee arrived handcuffed and under the supervision of policemen, and these people were often severely stigmatised, thus affecting their psychosocial embeddedness. The specific individual characteristics of returnees combined with their position in the migration cycle represent a returnee’s complex background that should be taken into account when considering the type of assistance provision suitable for the returnees.

Return Assistance
The biggest challenges for migrants upon return are (a) building an independent and sustainable livelihood, (b) gaining trust and respect from social networks, and (c) developing a feeling of belonging. Considering the obstacles that many returnees face, it is of interest to see to what extent assistance can help to overcome these obstacles. We distinguish between different types of pre- and post-return assistance and also consider the relative effectiveness of public and voluntary (NGO) agencies and private networks.
Pre-return preparation assistance, with the aim of facilitating a free and well-informed choice to return, has a positive contribution to all dimensions of embeddedness, especially when provided by friends or family. When migrants could make use of accurate information on the situation in their country of origin from people they trust, it gives migrants the feeling of having a real say in the return decision. This effect was, however, not found when the information was offered by (public) institutions that migrants conceived as the actors that were merely pushing them out of the host country. Moreover, while returnees initially did have confidence in the sincere intentions of NGOs, many of them stated to be rather disappointed in them after return, as the high expectations that were raised about the possibilities in the home country, did not come true. This is not necessarily the result of purposefully given false information, but rather of unclear and under-defined communication about assistance possibilities. For example, this is can be the case when NGOs communicate with their clients through third parties, who may not share the same vision on return. In the return migration monitoring study of 2007, the communication between the NGO and the returnee took place through a governmental organisation that had more interest in the return of migrants and therefore may have given a brighter image of the available assistance to encourage their agreement to return.

Incorrect or sometimes misleading information that is meant to ‘convince’ migrants to return causes returnees to feel tricked into agreeing to do so. The frustration, disappointment and the feeling that their return is a result of an unfair procedure, prevents returnees to accept being back. Therefore, pre-return preparation and information assistance can only have a positive impact when it contributes to return (a) being based on a well-informed choice and (b) being followed up by effective post-return assistance. Most NGOs have not been able to make use of this potential dual role in trying to provide assistance to returnees.

Post-return assistance is the most direct way to try to respond to returnees’ needs. Two thirds of the interviewed returnees in the 2007 return migration monitoring study had at least to some extent, access to institutional assistance services after return. While a large variety of assistance facilities are available after return, the focus is usually on financial assistance which can be unconditional sums of money, monetary assistance for starting a business, providing money for (temporary) housing or for medication for a certain period of time. Less tangible forms of assistance, such as information and psychosocial counselling, are scarcely provided. From the perspective of support agencies, giving financial assistance is often the easiest, quickest and best measurable method; especially in situations where many people return simultaneously to their country of origin and need coordinated assistance. Also from the perspective of the returnee, the primary needs after return are material. Monetary assistance that is given to the returnees is rarely monitored and therefore often spent on other purposes than it was aimed for. This unmonitored and incidental financial assistance provided in cash or in kind, proved to have limited effects for enhancing sustainable livelihoods.

In contrast, more focussed assistance for setting up own-account business or service activities significantly and positively contributes to embeddedness. An explanation for this lies in the fact that it is a more conscious process aiming at generating an independent income. This support is often provided in stages, starting with planning and some non-material guidance to help the returnees
decide in what area they would like to engage in a business and asking them to take active steps towards this goal. While financial assistance is certainly important, it is the combination with human guidance aimed towards an independent sustainable livelihood embedded into social networks, which makes business assistance successful.

As an alternative to business assistance, recent initiatives are providing assistance in finding wage employment through subsidised work programmes where returnees are hired for six months by a local firm. These programmes recently started but it remains questionable if, in a country of high unemployment, participants will keep their job after the subsidy has expired. However, the strength of the initiative is that it recognises the fact that not every individual returnee has entrepreneurial skills and can be expected to run a business. It is important to follow the developments of these projects, to see whether the concept can work.

Additional to material assistance, practical information is also essential after return. At the moment, returnees often get lost in bureaucratic requirements that they do not know. In none of the studied countries, however, an information package for returnees was available that guided them through the practical resettlement and legal procedures. Local partner organisations could prepare such an information package for returnees. In addition, in certain contexts of (post) conflict, access to psychosocial assistance is crucial. The virtual absence of this types of assistance has a strong negative influence on embeddedness.

Most important actors in (after return) return assistance are host-government programmes (mainly implemented by the International Organisation for Migration/IOM) and activities by local voluntary organisations funded by Western NGOs. There exist clear differences in the scale and approach between these two different actors. Government-funded institutions like IOM have an advantage in scale and budget. For returnees from host countries that have a programme with IOM and who qualify for their assistance, a substantial amount of money available. However, local organisations that are funded by NGOs have a better potential to contribute to embeddedness through their small-scaled, more personal-tailored and flexible approach. This gives them more room to respond to specific needs of individual returnees in the assistance provision. Nevertheless, this potential is not fully realised, largely due to budget and staff limitations, but also related to the limited abilities of the partner organisations that are often not specialised in issues of return migration. Therefore, NGOs that work in this area do not optimally use the added value that local organisations could provide. In addition, the flexible and informal character of return assistance also become a weakness when there are no clearly defined boundaries about what returnees can expect and what an NGO has to offer.

Compared to the contextual factors and the migration cycle, assistance plays a much smaller role in the process of embeddedness of return migrants. This confirms other findings in the Maghreb region where less than one out of ten return migrants declared having benefited form the support of the public authorities after return (Cassarino, 2007). Moreover, the potentially positive influence that assistance can have is not always fully operationalised. While the challenges of building a sustainable livelihood mostly only partially addressed, other equally important dimensions of embeddedness such as building social networks and gaining a feeling of belonging are often left aside. An integrated approach is required, where both material and human assistance needs are
addressed, and which can be rely on the social networks structure of the returnees. This implies that assistance activities need far more careful implementation within a framework of reinforcing diverse, multi-activity and multi-location livelihood strategies.

**Outlook and Policy Implications**

Even for voluntary returnees, return migration does not signify simply going home. Processes of embedding are a key prerequisite for assessing whether return migration can be sustainable and eventually lead to a contribution to development. While achieving sustainable return for the individual returnee is thus already an enormous challenge, it cannot be expected from these returnees that they contribute to development. Rather, the opposite is true: returnees often represent a burden to the household budget and put high pressure on already limited employment, health care and education facilities in the country of return. In contrast to the common thinking and discourse on migration and development, our sample analysis of involuntary returnees experiences points to high risks of deprivation and exclusion for the individual, the household and eventually the community of return.

We also registered a direct and transnational interconnectedness between restrictive living circumstances provided in the host society and their often negatively affect on the possibilities towards re-embeddedment after return to their country of origin. This implies that there are major inconsistencies in current Western European migration policies. While the intention is expressed and budgets assigned to enable return migrants to contribute to development in their country of origin, this intention is severely undermined by extremely restrictive migration policies that constrain the rights of migrants during their stay in the host country. Especially irregular migrants and refugees are constructed as citizens in between states, left with no substantial ways to participate in society or earn a position in that society, (in a sense as ‘superfluous’). After spending years in these circumstances, too much damage is done to a returnee to be able to fix this with assistance programmes, which are furthermore too limited in size and duration to be able to make a difference. Encouraging migrants to contribute to development can not merely be accomplished by means of these post-return assistance programmes, but should start with constructive pre-return engagement. This illustrates the strange paradox of expecting return migrants that at a certain stage of their migration process are conceived as superfluous, to transform themselves into actors who can rebuild their societies at a subsequent stage of their remigration process.

Finally, (inter)national citizenship arrangements that are intrinsic part of the current multidimensional development process easily get lost when captured in the static dichotomous opposition of returnees versus settled migrants in the migration discourse on development. Instead of considering these different stages as interconnected phenomena forming part of the same chain, the current migration discourse on development tries to construct them as separate and apart. This renders the already complicated and problematic marriage between return migration and development a very fragile one. Expectations are that this may
further deteriorate with the latest restrictive policy measures agreed upon in the European Union.

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People, borders, and trajectories

Martin van der Velde

Preamble

Last fall Ton and I ‘finally’ completed an edited volume on East-West migration in Europe. This volume provides the results of on of the workshops of the seminar ‘Mind the GaP’, organized in the summer of 2004 at the occasion of further profiling the research program ‘Governance and Places’ of the Nijmegen School of Management, in which both of us are participating. This workshop focused on differing approaches towards east-west migration research employed in policy and social sciences, particularly in human geography.

My contribution to this Festschrift consists of the epilogue of this volume. This seems to me very appropriate in several respects. First of all a liber amicorum is meant as a kind of showcase of the contribution of the honoured to science in general and scientific development of the authors in particular. This co-authored epilogue serves both. First of all it develops the concept of ‘thresholds’ in several phases of a (potential) migration process. To my knowledge this is still a quite new approach. Secondly this piece for me also is the culmination of my fruitful (but too short) cooperation with Ton. Due to him we were able to enhance the ‘threshold of indifference’-model, which was already developed within the realm of border studies in the Nijmegen Centre of Border Research (van Houtum and van der Velde 2004), to include more ‘geography’ in the form of the spatial routing of mobility processes.

Furthermore the first part of the title of this epilogue, Borders, People and Trajectories, is also very appropriate to serve as the title of my contribution. Scientific cooperation and its success for a large part are based on people, disciplinary borders and development trajectories. To paraphrase Shakespeare’s quote on the city ¹: “What is science but for the people”, science and scientific progress need good scholars. Cooperation is all about being able and willing to cross disciplinary borders. And thirdly the way and direction this cooperation evolves can be expressed in development trajectories.

By including the epilogue ² in this volume, this specific part of the work of Ton will gain attention of scholars other disciplines as well and thereby hopefully also be serving as a source for further debate on the important issues surrounding trans- and international migration.

¹ “What is the city but for the people”, Shakespeare, 1623, Coriolanus.
A model to approach migration in the enlarged European Union

The enlargement process of the European Union has raised a considerable number of academic, political and public debates on a wide variety of related issues ranging from European governance and citizenship to environment and public safety. Perhaps the most controversial debate in this respect concerns the issue of east-west migration after enlargement, equally feared and desired in and by the old (EU 15) member states. On the one hand it is argued that, due to the greying of the population and certain niches in the labour market, migrant labour is needed. On the other hand, most of the old EU countries are putting restrictions on the flow of migrant workers from the new member states. In the UK, which was an important exception and which allowed free entry of workers from ‘the East’ after the enlargement of May 2004, policy makers changed their mind and were considerably less liberal towards the (expected) flow of new EU members of January 2007.

There are different approaches towards east-west migration research employed in policy and social sciences, particularly in human geography. Some researchers limit themselves to the analysis of current processes, which can be done in a quantitative way using available statistics and qualitatively by in-depth interviewing. Other methods, which are primarily quantitatively oriented, elaborate on ‘positivist’ forecasting and impact studies, estimating future flows of migration and their influence on labour markets and/or social welfare systems. Wallace (2007) exposes the weaknesses of the available statistics. Her forecast of ‘non-massive migration flows’ within the enlarged European Union is based on arguments regarding state regimes and migration motives. While these imply a free movement of labour within the enlarged EU, Delsen (2007) argues that the (future) volume of immigration from East Europe to West Europe is usually underestimated. Moreover, he questions the economic advantages of migration for both the sending country and the host country. In this respect, it is interesting that Iglicka in her contribution argues that Poland is in the process of transition from a labour-exporting country to a labour-importing country. In such a fluid situation it would be all the more interesting to see how the balance between positive and negative impacts is evaluated.

Researchers who position themselves within a more qualitative tradition tend to make use of a ‘social constructivist’ approach to scrutinise the de- and re-bordering of the European Union with regard to migration and mobility. This is the approach by Geisen et al. (2007) focusing on constructing ‘the other’ and Pijpers (2007), with the latter questioning migration forecasts. She reaches the conclusion that the social construction of borders in the European Union is ongoing and so will most likely be the efforts to border labour immigrants. Narratives on ‘the other’ might be more powerful on having an impact on policies than quantitative models. We will join the ‘social constructivist’ approach, while using the umbrella of the duality of structure and agency as coined by Giddens. In the enlargement process of the European Union, institutional (re)borderings are involved, which have an impact on the mobility strategies of (potential) migrants. To capture the individual spatial migratory behaviour we will propose a model constituted of the three basic components: people as agents who decide to migrate; borders that are constructed as barriers
or de-constructed to facilitate mobility; and trajectories as the routes people use to cross borders.

**How people decide to move**

Often when studying actual and potential migration, migrants are reduced to anonymous atomised entries, ‘moving bodies’, functioning in a ‘force field’ of, for instance, population growth, supply and demand on the labour market and regional economic disparities. Such approaches to mobility depart from assumptions that were already formulated in the 1880s by Ravenstein (1885), who considered regional wage differences as the basic principle underlying labour migration and distance as a determining variable. In later years, new and more complex explanatory models came into use, the most popular ones located into the ‘push and pull’ framework. *Push* concerns the factors that force or motivate people to leave home. They are mostly economic such as poverty, open and hidden unemployment, and small farm sizes but could be social as well, for example, lack of educational or health facilities, political climate and so on. *Pull* factors mirror the pull factors and they refer to higher wage levels, employment opportunities, the availability of good health and educational facilities, and democratic space. Although admitting ‘intermediate factors’ such as state interventions, the framework is basically within the neo-classical economic tradition, based on the decision-making individual that acts as the ideal *homo economicus*. Moreover, people’s decision-making is considered as structurally determined.

To cope with the shortcomings of the neo-classical approaches, Simon (1982) introduced the notion of *bounded rationality*, stating that people in their decision to migrate or not cannot be economically rational since they simply do not have all the information they ideally need to take a fully rational decision; even if they do, part of the information will be distorted. Other dimensions and concepts were included, for example the influential idea of *human capital* (Becker 1962) that links the labour decision to migrate to investments in education or learning experiences that could be profitable in the long run. Again another notion is *transaction costs*, which states that all kinds of transactions and, as a consequence, decisions involve indirect costs, relating partly to another culture, as well to different legal procedures, and so on. The *new economies of labour migration* pioneered by Stark (1982) and originally conceived for rural-urban migration in developing countries, conceptualise the origins of migration as an effort by *households* to overcome market failures that constrain local production and shifts the focus of migration modelling from individual independence to mutual interdependence among members of households, families or even communities. The idea is that the collective unit collaborates with the individual to take the migration decision, with the aim of migration as a means to spread economic risks of the family, community, and so forth.

However, even when these aspects are included, the explanation still departs from an economically based push-pull framework. To start with, the push-pull framework often overestimates the level of labour mobility. For example, we need to realise that within the EU – both the old and the new – immobility is still the rule. Logically, we then reach the conclusion that we should focus less on
factors that make people move and more on factors that make them stay. This is the reason why Straubhaar and others (1988) developed the so-called insiders advantage approach (Straubhaar 1988; Tassinopolous and Werner 1999; Fischer 1999), which tries to attach an economic value to being immobile, by introducing ‘keep’ factors. Examples are the work experience or competences built up by workers in practice. If an employer on the other side of the border is not interested in such skills, a worker has to weigh the profit he/she can make when he/she moves against the loss of his or her competences. When a worker is strongly socially embedded in a region and, moreover, feels happy to live there, these could be reasons to stay in the home area as well. This ‘feeling of wellness’ can be linked to the concept of ‘psychic income’ introduced by Greenhut (1956).

In addition to such ‘keep’ factors, we can also include ‘repel’ factors. These factors are linked to the potential destination region, for example, when that region is characterised by traditional resentment towards foreigners, or when the region has an unfavourable regional image, for example because of high crime rates. Such repel factors might prevent people from going there. However, again, an approach, which includes keep and repel factors, still fits into the tradition of rational choice approaches. It presupposes actors who are constantly in a process of deliberation, who are engaged in weighing the pros and cons of different places or regions. In other words, it supposes that these actors are willing and are able to evaluate between the ‘here’ and ‘there’, in our case the area on this side of the border and the area on the other side.

However, migrants are not soulless, overly rationalistic objects, that can easily be put in mathematical models explaining and forecasting the flows between countries and different parts of the world. Such is the approach of Faist when he argues that social networks explain why people stay or move to become transnationals (2000). His book focuses on Turkish-German linkages but it can be easily applied within the European Union, as Dikkers (2007) demonstrates in the case of Eastern European Roma, who – both for economic and social (read discrimination) motives – have reason to migrate to Western Europe but they do not. Also, how can we explain the dominance of Poles in migration flows to and from (mainly) Germany, the Netherlands and the UK? Migrants should certainly be seen as real human beings with a world view, perceptions, stories and so on, that have to be included in the analysis in order to understand what is happening and to be better prepared for what might happen in the (near) future.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that of the Polish migrants in the Netherlands less than half mention finding a job as the major motive for leaving Poland. Family reasons (family creating, reuniting or co-migrating) are also important for about 30 per cent of them (Ecorys 2006). Of course, a part of this flow would not come into existence if the job-related migrations had not materialised but nevertheless it puts the potentiality of migrant flows into a different perspective. We will return to the question of motives and decision-making after having clarified the character of the two other components of our conceptualising East-West Europe migration.
Borders

The importance of reflecting on the nature of borders and its impact on policies becomes particular clear in Geisen et al (2007). What are borders? An easy definition states that they are lines demarcating units that differ or are supposed to differ, and in that way, they reveal their ‘J anus-faced character’ (Van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005): existing and/or imagined. This section touches upon the various manifestations of such a duality.

At the structural level, a first distinction is between interpretations of borders as stemming either from 'nature' or 'nurture'; as innate or learned phenomena (Storey 2001). In Western countries, the former interpretation has a fairly long tradition stemming from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia demarcating sovereign states with a territorial line. It reached its summit in the romantic nationalist movements of the early 19th century, which imagined states as nation-states, and gradually seemed to lose credibility in the final decades of the 20th Century. The idea of borders as created and socialised by human actions is a more accepted one in Central and Eastern Europe but the events after 1989 with new territorial units and borders showed the strength and force of the nation-state idea. The same ambivalence certainly exists in de post-colonial states of the non-Western world, where as a rule demarcations were imposed by colonial powers and continued after independence. Imagined communities (Anderson 1991) are needed to make borders acceptable but there are still many examples of cross-border movements based on pre-colonial loyalties and traditions, such as in Sub-Saharan Africa where crossing national borders is ingrained in the lifestyle of traders and nomads (see for example Bilder and Kraler 2005). To make matters even more complicated, in the wake of the 9/11 events there is a trend to posit again a kind of natural world ‘order’ that is accompanied by ‘natural’ demarcations.

Another interesting interpretation sees the border as fuzzy or amorphous rather than fixed with a binary character. In fact, in the final decades of the 20th century the two just-mentioned seemingly contradictory functional interpretations of the border were fused by the conceptualisation of the border as a selective filter. Where borders used to be filters for all (or most) of the cross-border interactions, they now increasingly control and fence off certain forms of interactions and processes. A clear example is the US-Mexico border, which in the wake of the NAFTA agreement lost a considerable part of its control function for goods, but reinforced its control function for people who intend to cross the border, especially when entering the US. While globalisation and liberalisation have led to a free flow of capital and an increasingly free flow of goods, where people are concerned, the trends are contradictory. For example, an increase in temporary cross-border movements for tourist reasons is encouraged, while border control has been sharpened with regard to workers and asylum seekers. In general, there is a greater contradiction between the existence of (inter)national sovereignties and territories in a world that is increasingly cosmopolitan and transnational. Concerning possible futures for the EU, Zielonka (2001) foresees two development paths: the EU either as a Westphalian superstate, with clear-cut outer and eradicated inner borders, or as a neo-medieval empire in which loyalty and sovereignties can shift easily, not only in time, but also depending on the issue.
At the level of the individual human agent, one can distinguish the idea of the naturalness of borders and the assessment of the border as a ‘natural’ demarcation of personal action spaces on the one hand, and the border functioning as a barrier to activities on the other hand (Van der Velde 1999; Van Houtum 1998). A negative correlation characterises the two interpretations. When a border is regarded as something that demarcates in a natural way and the natural limits of action spaces coincide with the location of territorial borders, there is less need to cross the border, and the border is not considered or experienced as a barrier. Borders may be conceived as guardians against threats from ‘the other side’. This functional interpretation of the border connects to the individual assessment of the border as something that is natural and logical. Conversely, borders can be regarded as creating differences between the adjacent territories, differences which, in turn may create opportunities such as cross-border price differences. This functional view of the border concurs with the individual assessment of the border as a barrier when intended actions to utilising these opportunities are obstructed by the same border. It is clear that with increasing globalisation this view is gaining in importance. The duality of borders logically follows. They are either the instrument to reach certain goals, or the final outcome itself, or, both simultaneously (Williams and Van der Velde 2005). From an EU perspective for example, the outer border serves as an instrument in the migration policy, especially as some kind of filter. It can also be considered some kind of an outcome of the whole discussion on the essence of European (Union) identity. It is the territorial demarcation of this identity.

Finally, we want to distinguish a more static interpretation versus one that stresses dynamic aspects. In the first interpretation the border indicates the more or less stable outcome of demarcation practices. The border itself is the centre of interest, compared to the more dynamic practices and processes of bordering. Thus a distinction can be made between boundary studies, in which the ‘where’ is stressed, and border studies in which the ‘how’ is much more important (Van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer 2005). The distinction that Paasi (1996) makes between borders as morphologies (borders on the ground) versus borders as representation or interpretation (borders in the mind) is similar to these two interpretations. It is in this perspective that we have to evaluate the border issue in and around the EU: within the EU the borders are conceived as imagined, nurtured and open for erosion, while the outer EU borders are considered as ‘natural’ or, in the case of the admission of Turkey to the EU, as a demarcation of ‘West’ from the ‘East’. But as the debates make clear, this view of the Turkish-EU border can change and as such shows processes of (de- and re-) bordering.

Trajectories

People move or stay, they cross borders or not. If they move they follow routes, which are often already explored by predecessors and/or are organised and exploited by smugglers who are specialised in human trafficking and need to be hired. Pang (2007) explains how Chinese undocumented migrants pay substantial amounts of money to ‘snakeheads’ who transport them to Central Asian states, from there to Russia and then to Eastern Europe and further, usually
to the UK. The journey is disjunctive and it can take months before it is accomplished. On the way to the West there are certain central points or ‘hubs’ that serve as transfer points: Istanbul is a well-known hub, serving people from the Middle East and Iran; several places in Morocco and in the northern states of Africa are other ones, serving African migrants (Brachet 2005; Moppes 2006).

In the migration literature, it has been acknowledged that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish countries of destination, origin or transfer. In the case of the study of Chinese immigrants in Belgium (Pang 2007), is Belgium a country of destination or transfer? Many undocumented migrants say that they were hindered from making their way to the UK. In the same way, anecdotal evidence reveals that people from Central Asia, the Middle East, the Far East and even Sub-Sahara Africa are immigrants in the new member states of the EU although it remains to be seen whether they consider themselves as permanent or temporary migrants. In the latter case, they will sooner or later move to one of the old EU countries or the United States. At the conceptual level this implies that the inner EU borders although of considerable significance bear an insignificant meaning for these migrants.

Trajectories are meant to bridge the distance between places (localities, regions, countries) of origin and places of destination. This distance is not measured in space only; it is also a mental construct since it equally involves motives to stay or go such as the perception of the labour markets that can act as a strong or weak pull factor, and the institutional setting of borders, including border controls.

Thinking international migration differently

In the foregoing we explained three components of a geographical conceptualisation of cross-border mobility. In the first place, international migrants take strategic decisions to move or stay. Their decision is not overly rational, if only because they are not fully informed about all alternatives and depend on social networks. In the second place, at the individual level borders are ‘natural’ or created. The perception follows the actors’ discursive interpretation of structures (Pijpers and Van der Velde 2007). Third, trajectories as spatial routes connecting place of origin and places of desired destination constrain or facilitate the movement of the actor in space. We will now proceed with a model of factors influencing spatial behaviour in international migration.

Instead of focusing on mobility, we start with the concept of threshold of indifference to explain labour immobility, as developed by Van Houtum and Van der Velde (2004). This concept is based on the idea and rationality of belonging and the importance for people to belong to somewhere or to feel at home in a specific locality or region. This concept is related to that of psychic income as used by Greenhut but – again – it expands the latter idea beyond the realm of economic rational choice approaches. The consequence of using the notion of a space of belonging is that a mental distance is created between places on both sides of the border. At someone’s own side of the border a space of belonging is created, with ease and comfort, where mental nearness to the other inhabitants exists: ‘we’ in the ‘here’. The other side is not a space of ease or comfort, it is another ‘world’: ‘they’ in the ‘there’.
The consequence of this process is that a space of indifference is created; a space that impacts on the decision to cross borders. It creates (consciously or unconsciously) a threshold that has to be overcome before the ‘there’ is included in the search for a job (Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004). One of the fascinating aspects of this concept is that it explains why social networks are that important in rejection or disregarded in a cross-border movement: it is the existence of transnational communities or of ‘here’ in ‘there’ that allows, facilitates and initiates cross-border migration (Madsen and van Naerssen 2003). For example, the availability of Polish newspapers, food and drinks, and a Polish community will provide migrants with the feeling of being at home. In an earlier phase of the decision-making process, it might also lower the threshold of indifference.

In the original model by Van Houtum and Van der Velde, after crossing the indifference threshold, the actor enters the active attitude part. Here a (bounded) rational process of decision-making is supposed, where all kinds of locational factors are taken into account. These factors can be connected to the place or region of origin, but also to the possible destination. Depending on this deliberation, the actor might decide to become mobile or stay put. We would like to introduce a second threshold here, the locational threshold. This threshold is not surpassed when the actor decides not to move although he/she might be engaged in an active search process.

As was already mentioned in the introduction, we regard three constituents as fundamental to international migration, people, borders and trajectories. This is the third aspect that we also would like to introduce in our model. When someone has decided to move, he or she still has to determine the route to take. This is especially relevant in the case of undocumented migration. Where in the process of deciding on the trajectory, the outcome can be that the wish for mobility will not materialise, or as is more likely to be the case, the final destination will never be reached, because the migrant gets stuck somewhere en route. We would like to call these factors that either totally prevent mobility, or influence the destination, a trajectory threshold.

Figure 9.1 tries to elucidate the ‘dynamics’ in trans- or international migration. The model suggests a sequence of decisions of thresholds, while allowing for several interactions and feedback mechanisms to take place. At the structural level, the differences and similarities on both sides of the border are extremely important for crossing the ‘threshold of indifference’. When these factors (such as income difference, unemployment rates) are considerable, one could expect people to be less ‘indifferent’, implying that the ‘there’ is considered an alternative option. Going beyond the economic factors at play, the social component of ‘here’ in ‘there’ is of major importance in decision-making. Space, distance, borders and place as comprehensively incorporated in our notion of ‘trajectory’ are the geographical factors that play a role, and as such explicitly labelled as determining factors in the model.

The original model has been developed in the context of an already highly integrated region like the EU 15, where contrary to the expectations, dismantling the border did not result in a major increase in labour market mobility. In such a situation explaining immobility instead of mobility is relevant, as, for example, is shown by Dikkers (2007) for the Roma. The model can also be used in
situations and at other levels where integration has not developed to the same extent, for example, the US-Mexico border or the outer border of the (enlarged) EU. However, and as a final note, as Hooper (2007) shows in the case of sex trafficking, all cross-border movements, migrant motives, borders and trajectories should be put in the context of power relations between states and regions which constitute the hidden dimension in the model.

**Conclusion: assessing the (un)desirability of borders for channelling mobility**

National borders do play quite different roles in different parts of the world. Sometimes they are not much more than symbolic markers between groups of people that feel somehow connected. In other places they function as an active protection against presumed threats of all kinds. Focusing on the EU, this is in essence the same. The Eurocrats would like to interpret the inner borders (especially the ones between the EU-15) as relics from the past, which we have to get rid of. At the same time they use the outer borders to literally establish
fences against the forces that in their view threaten the wealth and prosperity of the Union.

Where the mobility-inducing differences are small, people will be indifferent to borders: they will not cross the threshold of indifference. This seems the case in the EU 15. Differences are small and much to the disappointment of the EU, mobility is low. Borders are not needed in their role as a control mechanism for human mobility. In this vein, potential mobility between the countries of the EU 25 might be higher, as demonstrated in the case of the Poles. But even here it seems more a matter of a temporary shock to establish a new equilibrium. Within the context of the EU, performing a balancing act between national protection and EU integration has proven the difficulty of using the national borders as a control mechanism. Those that want to be mobile go to any length to reach their goal. To cite a recent example: in the Netherlands in the spring of 2006 there was a lively debate about whether or not the transitional measures with regard to labour mobility should be continued. Within the government the State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment pleaded for the complete abolition of barriers. His main argument however was not so much that this will be beneficial to the Dutch economy, but that he was unable to enforce the existing measures. He was throwing in the towel so to speak.3

When looking at the outer borders obviously the differences are bigger and therefore also the motivation ‘to get in’. Also in this case however, it is our conviction that we do not need to overestimate the mobility of people. In fact, mankind is not very mobile. Notwithstanding the fact that our hypothetical ‘migration country’ would be the 5th largest country in the world, it would only account for three per cent of the world population. Of course, one could conclude that this shows that borders are functioning quite well. Comparable data for the EU (supposed to be a showcase for an integrated region without borders) shows that only 1.7 per cent of the EU nationals are living in another EU-15 country. Could this be an indication for the redundancy of borders when it comes to controlling human mobility?

Along borders several outcomes are possible, resulting in mobility as well as in immobility. When a large group of people exhibit an indifferent attitude towards job opportunities on the other side of the border, immobility will be the rule. That situation is found along the Dutch-German border, perhaps as well other inner EU borders. The other extreme holds for borders such as those between the EU and Africa, where life itself is at stake for the workers from Africa, and people are ‘desperately’ seeking alternatives for their current situation. The greater the (spatial and mental) distance, the border control, and time to overcome between places of origin and destination, the greater the importance of trajectories acting as constraints or facilitators. Workers from the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 apparently occupy the middle ground. From one of the European opinion polls it appears that they show no big desire to move (Bruinsma and Hakfoort 2005); for them keep and repel factors are already more important than the authorities in the old member states realise.

The provocative question we would like to leave the reader with is, what would happen if we grant everybody unlimited freedom of movement (as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights)? When accepting the thesis that mankind is

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3 In May 2007 the transitional measures were officially abolished.
not particularly nomadic, are the current border control measures not like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut? We counsel a more reactive instead of proactive stance, but at the same time close monitoring to try to understand what makes people mobile. We would not be surprised if in the end the answer to the question of the desirability of undesirability of borders would be that we can discard borders as channelling instruments for human mobility and that we have to concentrate on the regions of origin and destination instead.

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Remittances versus migrants: disjointed flows in a globalising world

Introduction

The main quantifiable outcome of intensified levels of globalisation in the last decennia is a massive increase in the exchange of goods, capital, ideas and ...people. However, there is a remarkable difference in the processes of regulation concerning these different flows. Where flows of goods, information and capital are explicitly deregulated by state and supra-state authorities, the flow of people is given much importance by these same actors. This has resulted in a fast increasing range of policies and instruments that primarily seek to constrain migration. In particular, migrant receiving countries are highly interested in measures which control, or at least reduce, the inflow of ‘undesirable’ people. The quest of these countries to curb this inflow does not apply to all groups however, as highly skilled migrants are perceived as ‘desirable’. Yet in many cases these skilled migrants may originate from the same countries as those who are regarded as less desirable. This selective migration interest has recently been formulated in the new policy term ‘migration management’ reflecting the desire to keep the ‘unwanted’ from migrating while stimulating the ‘wanted’ to migrate. Subsequently, human mobility has become one of the most polarising factors of today’s globalising world (Bauman, 1998); we have global nomads and locally bounded people living in one and the same world.

From a liberal economist perspective, it is often argued that restrictions on all kinds of flows between regions, including people as a form of ‘labour exchange’, are counterproductive. The basic argument is that market forces are best equipped to deal with inequalities between countries. Part of this equation is labour, which should then be allowed to efficiently move from one place to another where it is required, i.e. where demand for it is strongest. In addition, it is expected that the free movement of people will have a strong redistributive character, if unhampered by institutional barriers, for instance, through remittances which migrants send back to their countries of origin. Following this argument, it is paradoxical that in times of globalisation and economic liberalisation, which have enabled and intensified the mobility of all kinds of flows, the flow of people is increasingly restricted (Pécoud and de Guchteneire, 2005).

In this contribution we focus on this globalisation paradox within the analytical framework of the debate on migration and development. Our argument is that the globalisation paradox has a strong influence on this debate; migrants’ money, i.e. remittances, is viewed as a valuable instrument for poverty reduction, whereas the people behind the money, i.e. the migrants, are often perceived as
economic threats. Our analysis focuses on sub-Saharan Africa and the challenges provided by current legislation on the relationship between migration and development.

**Africa’s position in the space of flows: key player or bystander?**

In economic terms it is often stated that Africa has largely been excluded from globalisation. Thus, its major cities, however large their populations, do not feature as prominent nodes in global circuits of trade and industry (with the exception, to some extent, of Johannesburg). Although global economic linkages certainly exist, the continued weak performance of the African economy vis-à-vis other regions seems to prove that globalisation has only resulted in a marginalisation and polarisation of wealth for the African continent. Indeed, Africa is the only economic region in the world where investment and savings per capita has declined since the 1970s (Lundahl and Pienaar, 2004). Hence Lundahl and Pienaar (2004) also come to the conclusion that Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, has remained a bystander rather than become a key player in the global economy.

There are certain developments pointing towards possible change in the perspective of the continent. Recent World Bank reports suggest that Africa’s economy is beginning to change track, shifting to a faster, more sustained mode of economic growth (World Bank, 2007). The question is how this change has been brought about. There is a general consensus that the rise of the Chinese economy forms one of the main catalysts of this change. China’s insatiable demand for natural resources has changed prospects for many African countries with Chinese investment in mining industries of countries such as Zambia (copper) leading to certain reinvigoration of national economies which had noted declining GDPs for decades on end.¹ And the global competition for natural resources such as oil (e.g. Nigeria) and cobalt (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo) is unlikely to diminish. Yet, as in the case of the export of raw products to western countries, the question does need to be asked whether the interest of the Chinese for these resources is inciting sustainable development, or whether Africa is rapidly ‘selling off’ its main asset, its natural resources, at bargain prices.

**Cultural globalisation**

Flows of ideas and cultural exchanges are as important factors of globalisation as economic flows. In this framework, Africa has often been cited as being on the wrong side of the digital divide, namely as an example of relative backwardness in communication infrastructure. Obviously the divide is there; the density of telephone lines and internet connections across Africa is much lower than elsewhere in the world. Yet, at the same time, Africa does have the fastest growing number of mobile phone users and internet is now available in all African countries, notably in their urban areas (Cheneau-Loquay, 2007). Furthermore, Africa’s intrinsic cultural values of sociality and conviviality make

¹ In Chapter 5 of this book Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht and Rudlog Scheffer discuss in greater detail the impact of the Chinese interest in Zambia’s copper on Zambia’s economy.
it possible for many Africans to gain access to the internet through others, i.e. without necessarily being connected themselves (Nyamnjoh, 2004). Therefore, cultural globalisation, if taken to imply an increased spread and exchange of ideas and values throughout the world, has also reached Africa in an intensive way. This is particularly noticeable in the evening when millions around Africa tune their televisions to football matches of the European Champions League or to one of many American soap series. Others, particularly the younger generations, spend many hours in internet cafes, exploring vast virtual worlds, seeking to establish exchanges with people around the world through e-mail exchanges, dating programmes, internet forums, etc.

While critics worry that such focus may result in a monolithic mass culture, producing a perpetual loss of cultural diversity, the role of cultural globalisation is an important element that also helps to explain the migration of thousands from Africa to other continents. Thus, Gebrewold (2007) argues that young Africans often feel encouraged to migrate because images of modernity and western luxury are omnipresent in their societies. Yet the influence of cultural globalisation is too often neglected, the focus of national and international policymakers concerned with migration being on the economical and political motivations of migrants.

Transnational flows
‘Never before has the continent experienced such massive forms of mobility culminating in transnational and intercontinental movements of migration’ (van Binsbergen and van Dijk, 2004). This comment can be read in two ways. First, the volume of migration, within and beyond the boundaries of the continent, is at an unprecedented level. Second, this physical flow of people also produces a variety of other transnational flows: money, goods and ideas. Some are channelled through relationships that were already in place prior to migration, others are new. These flows, notably financial remittances, constitute a significant and increasing proportion of all international exchanges between the global north and south. Indeed, awareness of the volume of these transactions has led to a surge in interest from governments of countries of origin and countries of receipt of migrants, as well as related institutes, such as the International Organisation for Migration, who share a common goal in seeking to harness these remittances for development aid or, more generally, economic development (Adepoju, van Naerssen and Zoomers, 2008).

Transnationalism has come to take on various definitions since its adoption within various disciplines from the late 1970s onwards. In essence, transnational theories sought to provide more satisfactory explanations for migration processes than existing theories, by perceiving migration as a continuous flow, rather than a discrete, stepwise, process. This refers notably to the ability of migrants to concomitantly engage in activities in geographic locations around the world through their transnational ties with local actors (Levitt and Sorensen, 2004; Madsen and Van Naerssen, 2003; Mazzucato et al., 2004).

Recent contributions from transnational studies, notably multi-sited studies, reveal how migration is often entwined in existing economic, cultural and social practices and institutions, seldom constituting complete breakaways from prior practices (Smith, 2007; Kabki, 2007). Most migrants intend to go abroad for a
limited period of time only, seeking to accumulate savings with which to realise investments in their country of origin. During their period abroad, most migrants maintain social and economic ties with family, friends and business partners ‘at home’. These exchanges often provide significant support to the livelihoods of their families and close friends, and ensure that they remain part of their home society, by being involved in all kinds of cultural and social activities through transnational exchanges. Other transnational exchanges relate more directly to personal interests in establishing economic activities that will allow them to sustain their livelihoods upon return to their country of origin. Once these activities are successfully established, often with instrumental support from local counterparts, migrants are in the position to choose when to return to their country of origin.

Migration and development: promises and pitfalls

In academic research, and in several policy fields, it is acknowledged that international migration cannot be seen in isolation from development. Traditionally, emigration was merely regarded as an expression of poverty or hopelessness. Only recently, the perception of migration has changed and today it is often seen as an important instrument for development (Adepoju, van Naerssen and Zoomers, 2008). That migration has only recently come to be perceived as a poverty alleviating instrument overlooks the fact that migration was always a strategy for people to improve their lives. Indeed, according to the economist J. K. Galbraith, migration is ‘the oldest action against poverty’.

Over-enthusiasm for remittances as Africa’s cure to poverty

Africa has a long history in migrant remittances. Already under colonial regime, male members of households migrated to national or regional urban centres as wage labourers, sending money back to their families to augment their livelihoods, sustain agricultural activities and help realise certain investments. With an increased volume of migration by Africans, to destinations within and outside the continent, one might expect an increase in the volume of remittances, in relative and absolute terms. While in absolute terms increases in remittance volume have been recorded, African migrants send home fewer remittances than their compatriots from countries around Asia and Latin America. Thus, according to the World Bank’s Migration and Remittances Fact Book, during the last 10 years sub-Saharan Africa has received a constant 5% share of all remittances received by developing countries (with the volume of outward remittances varying between 2 and 3 billion US dollars). Yet its percentage of all emigrants of the developing world is almost 11% (Maimbo and Ratha, 2005).

Notwithstanding these findings, the absolute volume of remittances has still resulted in the general view amongst governments of African countries that

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3 According to the World Bank’s Migration and Remittances Fact Book, France receives more remittances than the whole of sub-Saharan Africa ($12.5 billion against $10 billion dollars). Indeed six European countries have made it into the top 10 of remittance-receiving countries, the other 4 countries being India, China, Mexico and The Philippines.
remittances are their ‘greatest hope for development’ (Oucho, 2008:63). Indeed, over the last two decades ‘migrant money’ has come to surpass Official Development Assistance (ODA) in many countries. Moreover, the data of the World Bank only accounts for registered, formal transactions when it is generally acknowledged that a substantial part of African remittances—of either monetary or in kind nature—are sent through informal channels.

However, the question needs to be asked whether remittances are to be regarded as the way to achieve development in Africa. Many scholars argue this not to be the case. Some of these scholars argue that this relates to the nature of remittances: they are predominantly used for consumptive rather than productive purposes, which limits their impact as monetary investments. We counter this argument by noting that a large part of this so-called consumptive spending goes into health care, education and nutrition; all crucial elements enabling developments at a micro level.

Our critique on remittances as a resource for development concerns the continued misunderstanding that remittances are unconditional and non-contextual flows of monetary funds that can be simply tapped into by governments of countries for their development agenda. This ignores the core reason for the very existence of these remittances: they resulted from the decisions of individuals, alone or with their families (or other sponsors), that migration would be the best way to secure funds with which to achieve a certain set of specific goals. Hence, while migrants certainly have a commitment towards their home countries, their migration, as an economic project, is primarily intended to benefit themselves and their immediate network. Their focus on personal advancement is hardly surprising given the investments they needed to make in order to go abroad. What this means however, is that no allusion should be made that remittances sent by migrants to their countries of origin, can be ‘harnessed’ and channelled into poverty reduction programmes or other development related projects. These remittances are private funds. Obviously, when migrants feel a moral obligation to support their country or community of origin, and provide financial or other means for particular development projects, this should be welcomed and supported. However, such initiatives should only be stimulated and not enforced as a moral obligation by governments of both countries of origin of migrants and where they reside at present.

Instead we can, and should, try to provide an enabling environment to migrants to heighten the efficiency and sustainability of transnational investments they intend to make. This can take the form of training in entrepreneurship, providing loans, providing information on potential investment opportunities, etc.

The perception that remittances are an open source for development also neglects the investments of those in the country of origin with whom migrants engage in transnational activities. Remittances continue to be perceived as a one-way flow from North to South, which ignores the inputs of those with whom migrants engage in their country of origins. These include, for instance, investments of labour in migrant activities in their country of origin, such as businesses and houses (Smith, 2007). Such reciprocal flows, of labour or other kinds of investments, seldom show up in formal statistics on remittances, as these tend to only focus on financial flows.
Remittances are therefore not unidirectional and we should, in the very least, broaden our perspectives towards remittances that flow out of developing countries. More properly stated; when the development impact of remittances is analysed we should not forget to also take into account outgoing monetary transfers from countries of origin of migrants. Thus, migrants, notably during their actual migration, are more often receivers of substantial amounts of remittances (to meet livelihood expenditures, travel expenses) than senders (van Moppes and Schapendonk, 2007). Furthermore narrow definitions of remittances exclude informal flows of money and other kinds of transnational flows often entwined with financial flows.

Hence, the development impact of migration through remittances should be contextualised in two ways. First, they should be analysed in a broader perspective of in- and out-coming monetary flows, which nuances rather than neglects the positive impact of remittances on a society. Second, the analysis of financial remittances should be contextualised in a broader framework of migration related reverse flows to a country including non-monetary flows. This also positions migration within the larger framework of globalisation.

The flow of people: African migrants in a bordering world

The bulk of African migration takes place within the African continent; rural to urban migration and migration within sub-regions. These are, in quantitative terms, more important than intercontinental migration. Nonetheless, African migration to the North, particularly to Europe, is increasing. As European visa regimes and asylum policies are rather restrictive, many Africans lack the opportunity of going directly to their desired destinations. Consequently, migration processes have turned into long-lasting, often risky, undertakings with a strong stepwise character. As a cumulative policy effect, so-called transit countries are increasingly involved in European initiatives to control migration. This has shifted European borders southwards and has transformed North Africa from transit to ‘holding’ zone (Bensaad, 2007). As a result, many African migrants are living under vulnerable conditions near the European border, awaiting the moment to enter Europe (usually irregularly). Many others are discouraged to move further northwards by intensified border controls by countries such as Algeria and Morocco, and some are even detained in transit camps in the Sahara desert. This indicates that, in the African context, migratory flows to the North are more often fragmented and sometimes also stagnated efforts rather than fluent and smooth flows (Collyer, 2007; Schapendonk, forthcoming).

The latest initiative to ‘manage’ migration does not aim to prevent Africans from entering the European Union, but goes one step further: It attempts to keep people from exiting their own country. In line with the migration and development agenda, several EU member states have offered development aid to African countries in exchange for cooperation on migration control (Adepoju et al., 2007). Moreover, development projects are explicitly designed as ‘the

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4 Remittances are defined as money transfers from migrants to their home countries. A reverse flow (family money to the migrant) can formally not be defined as remittances.
alternative’ to emigration. These initiatives overlook the fact that migration has always been a supplemental strategy for people to improve and diversify their livelihood, achieving higher levels of social security through diverse sources. With the rather paternalistic and simplistic argument of the EU that people are best off living their lives ‘at home’, remittances, as an important income source, are annihilated.

The recent step-up in efforts of the North to control migration has resulted in a conflict of agendas within governments on migration. Whereas policymakers of developing cooperation departments may approach migration in terms of opportunities for the South, their perspective is overshadowed by the more dominant domestic agenda, which perceives migration pre-dominantly in terms of threats for national security. The dominance of the national security agenda and its implications for migration policies shows how globalisation is not a unidirectional and homogenous process towards social openness, unrestricted flows and inter-connections. It simultaneously contains elements of social closure, the blocking of access and the prevention of mobility (Shamir, 2005).

Another element that needs to be part of this discussion is the impact of migrants’ formal status on their ability to send remittances and make an impact on development in their country of origin. It is widely believed that irregular migrants are less likely to send substantial sums of money to their home countries as they often lack access to the necessary infrastructure. This argument also extends to non-monetary remittances. Since irregular migrants generally encounter many more problems in their quest of climbing the ‘social-economic ladder’ of society, they are also expected to have less impact on their home communities, for instance in terms of knowledge transfer. In addition, modern modes of communication may also be relatively expensive for this group.

Altogether, the immobilisation of (potential) migrants, the lengthening of migration processes and the enforcement of stricter (ir)regularisation policies have led to a weakening of the impact of migrants and their remittances. The extreme difficulties faced by African migrants not only during their migration, but also upon arrival in a host country, may sustain their fragile position as remittance receivers, rather than senders.

In sum, the quest of northern states for limited and well-controlled migration management, concomitantly satisfying a need for higher levels of national security, have marginalised opportunities for migrants to play a role in supporting developments in their countries of origin through remittances.

**Discussion and conclusion**

In the introduction we asked ourselves why migration is perceived as a threat to development, notably by receiving countries (e.g. ‘waves of migrants’), but also by sending countries (e.g. ‘the brain drain’), when the monetary flows resulting out of migration are hailed as one of the greatest promises for development in the global south. How can these two trains of thought run along the same track without crashing into each other, because they are so obviously and strongly related? The answer is that states can only maintain these two lines

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5 A Senegalese example is a program called *Retour Vers l’Agriculture*
of thought if an artificial separation is created between, on the one hand, the flow
of people, and on the other, the flow of goods, artefacts and money. Thereby it
could be argued that the first flow is framed as a negative effect of globalisation
which calls for strong and restrictive management to manage labour markets to
ensure cultural integration, global security, balanced economic growth, etc. The
second flow, on the other hand, is largely perceived as a positive effect of
globalisation: namely the ability, due to technological advances and the
liberalisation of markets, to send goods, money, etc, across geographical divides
for the benefit of all –potentially leading to development. In our view, this
artificial divide cannot be maintained and below we provide our main arguments
why these two ‘types’ of flows cannot be viewed separately from one another:

First, concerning migratory flows, we argue that migration is not looked at in
its full context, instead, it receives political attention primarily with regard to the
concern that an inflow of people, bringing along their culture (‘African’, ‘Islam’,
‘Polish’, etc) will have adverse effects on local communities. We do not deny
that an influx of people in a local community can have a (temporary)
destabilising effect, yet this does not imply that migration can then be equated to
a whole range of societal problems. Furthermore, there is a second angle to
consider: the need to also take into consideration that migration is very often a
reflection of global differentials brought about by a liberal economic agenda
which has increasingly led labour to become a dynamic and active flow that
closely follows economic developments around the world. It can no longer be
seen as having the form of reserve pools that are physically bound to particular
geographical locations.

This, however, calls for a major step that is not likely to take place: If the
liberal open economy agenda is to prevail at a global level then a systematic and
complete tearing down of all kinds of man-made barriers –physical and
institutional- is required to create an open market. Then labour, notably unskilled
labour, can become part of the global flow. Such a liberalisation of the labour
market, enabling migrants to easily migrate from one location to next, wherever
their input is required, can help to give global accreditation to the value of their
labour, reducing discrepancies between the values of a same type of occupation
between one local economy and another. Such an open valuation of labour will
also make the management of skilled migration much less ethically problematic;
mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that transfer of labour from one
location to another is compensated for. Then brain gain becomes a temporary
problem –diminishing as the global market becomes saturated. And programmes
around brain circulation, which at present are deemed to be window-dressing
attempts of the global north rather than anything else, become redundant.

Such a development will result in an open competition between labour forces
across the globe. The insecurity of such an open, global economy, notably for
those presently privileged by all kinds of market protection measures in
developed countries, makes this unlikely to take place. Hence, multinationals
will continue to move whole manufacturing and industrial plants rather than
adjusting their source of labour from one continent to the next. The ‘guest
worker’ programmes in Western Europe of the 1970s addressed just this issue,
inviting cheap labour to temporarily work in Europe. Yet these initiatives were
controlled by national governments, not by a dynamic, open market.
Second, with regard to flows of remittances, we have argued for the need to nuance the role of remittances as development panacea. Remittances have, in both the global north and south, been wrongly labelled as the cure to underdevelopment and poverty. Migrants should not be seen as development agents as this misinterprets the basic reasoning for migrants to go abroad and their entitlement to use their own resources as they see fit given that these are private funds that have been generated with the investment of private capital. Migrants are seldom the poorest in their own countries and will also seldom maintain links with the poorest in these countries. Therefore, there is a strong need to offset any engagement of governments and NGOs –in the north and south- with migrants in local development projects in their regions of origin, by also initiating development projects elsewhere in the same country. In these poorest parts, resources to enable people to migrate –notably to distant, foreign destinations might have been lacking altogether. This comment should not be taken to mean that we feel that migrants do not contribute to the development of their countries. To the contrary, private investments of migrants in their countries of origin (especially houses and businesses in urban areas) provide employment, have various multiplier effects for local economies, and provide opportunity for others in their country of origin to improve their lives by being engaged in these transnational activities. We also argued how support to the livelihoods of their families and close friends also needs to be seen as a form of development; sustaining and increasing human capital. With regard to these incentives and investments improvements can be realised, notably when this concerns returns to investment in businesses, as many migrants are entrepreneurs ‘by default’ rather than entrepreneurs ‘at heart’. It is in this field that development cooperation could play a supporting, capacity building role. Indeed, first initiatives have been initiated around Europe to this effect.

African migrants biding their time all along the North African coast, apprehending their opportunities to reach Europe, is an image which can be used favourably by both pro- and anti-migration camps. It feeds into the arguments of the anti-migration camp to persuade the powers-that-be that more control measures need to be put in place to stop the influx of illegal migrants, and more campaigns need to be launched to dissuade potential migrants from leaving their countries. On the other hand, the pro-migration camp can use the same image to argue the case that there is a clear disjuncture between the demand of the European economy for (cheap, unskilled) labour and an apparent societal-political demand to restrict this inflow. Given, as we indicated in our introduction, our choice to take a liberal perspective to understand the relation between migration and other flows within the global economy, we feel that the pro-migration camp has the stronger case. Albeit, in whose benefit? Obviously their stance will benefit migrants, but it also favours industries and other large employers. This is where the anti-migration camp can argue the case for a need to protect national/regional labour forces and their established rights to social benefits, minimum wage, etc against an outside, more flexible labour pool.

Yet it is exactly the persistence of protectionist anti-migration laws that an informal labour economy has arisen all around Europe which seems to be undermining the position of the formal economy. This informal economy is

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6 In Chapter 8 of this book Tine Davids and Ruerd Ruben discuss the complexities surrounding migrant identity and the investments they seek to make in their countries of origin.
largely the result of a discrepancy between labour market demands and opportunities for migrants to legally work in Europe. The flexibility of this market may not be altogether disadvantageous to employers as their costs are lower while their labour force is dispensable, which is suitable if there are strong variations in labour demand. This development is to the disadvantage of local labour, which finds itself unemployed, being unable to compete with this pool of informal labour. By allowing legal labour migration, a consensual set of standard of employment conditions can also come into place and be monitored by all actors involved. Given the intentions of migrants to only stay in the global north long enough to accumulate sufficient funds with which to establish income generating activities in their country of origin, one can question the use of intensification of monitoring activities along Europe’s borders. Rather than dissuading people from migrating it seems to simply lengthen the period and resources required to reach Europe. This has ramifications for it implies that migrants, once they have managed to get inside Europe, will lengthen the period they need to recuperate from the significantly higher expenses they incurred before they can start saving money. Notably, if they remain in the informal economy their status may be precarious; given their lower and more insecure earnings they will take longer to reach their financial targets. This will also hamper their abilities to put their migration efforts into productive use; sending remittances to support their families and friends and engaging in investments which will allow them to return home. Given the arduous nature of the work they conduct, especially if they take on multiple jobs, their health runs at risk, which not only constitutes a personal liability but can also result in them becoming a financial burden to their host society. These are issues rendering invalid many of the arguments of the anti-migration camp.

In conclusion, the debate on the impact of migration on countries of origin through remittances and the debate on the desirability of migration have run along seemingly separate tracks due to the political agenda within which they have been contextualised, and their seemingly different geographical impact. Yet, logically, the flow of people and the flow of remittances are strongly entwined, both the expression of development within an incomplete globalisation agenda. The seeming inability or unwillingness of policy makers, notably in the global north, to draw the intricate connection between these two kinds of flows has led to largely ineffective policymaking, both with regard to migration and with regard to remittances.

For the two flows to be united into a concerted and objective policy approach that depoliticises migration and recognises it as an integral part of globalisation processes, a concerted effort in policymaking will be required from representatives of national states of the global north and south, the World Bank, the International Labour Organisation, the World Trade Organisation and the International Organisation for Migration. It remains to be seen whether these actors can be convinced to give up their own interests and convictions and take on this attempt.
References


Door-to-door cargo agents: cultivating and expanding Filipino transnational space

Marisha Maas

Introduction

Within the context of Philippine migration, enduring belonging to the country of origin and continuing care for the ones left behind, are turned into transnational merchandize. This article puts forward the door-to-door industry as a typical Filipino immigrant business industry, sprouted from, and commercially exploiting, Philippine-specific state policies to retain the loyalty of the overseas nationals while also being embedded in culturally defined normative expectations of migrants with regard to lasting responsibilities towards their kin. The primary aim of this chapter is to show how basically simple and small business ventures, initiated at grassroots level, can actively stimulate transnationalization beyond the narrow kinship systems that migration usually engender, as they expand these pre-existing social relations into a dense and varied web of cross-bordering ties. Encouraging exchange, diffused forms of solidarity, and generalized forms of reciprocity, business owners/operators thus contribute to the emergence of a transnational community.

Nothing comes between you and your dream. Not the hardships that come with working in a foreign land. Nor the loneliness of being far away from home. No matter what the distance, Express Padala helps you keep your promises. Our reliable remittance service reaches your loved ones fast and efficiently so you're never really far away.

Within the context of Philippine migration, enduring belonging to the country of origin and continuing responsibility and care for the ones left behind are, such shows the above advertisement of a Philippine money transfer business¹, turned into transnational merchandize. Quite directly, Express Padala (Tagalog for ‘shipment’) alludes to a sense of duty among those who left the country to maintain and reinforce their cultural-ethnic identity and solidarity with their native soil. This paper examines a line of business that first and foremost thrives upon the Filipinos’ strong inclination to stay close to the country of birth, especially to family and friends left behind: the freight forwarding industry, in the Philippine context also known as the balikbayan box business.

¹ This advertisement is repeatedly published in Munting Nayon (Tagalog for “little village”), a monthly publication published in The Netherlands, that discusses societal developments in the Philippines and within the Filipino community in the Netherlands.
While as a noun the term *balikbayan* refers to Filipino migrants coming home for vacation, as an adjective it is commonly used to denote the cardboard boxes in which overseas Filipinos send back goods to their loved ones left behind. The term was coined, and transformed into state policy, by President Marcos, during a major national speech in which he encouraged Filipino nationals abroad to visit their home country once a year during the holidays. Next to economic and legal means to facilitate the emigrants’ bodily return, he also promoted the sending of goods from out of their overseas residences through the installment of discounted tax tariffs (Glick Schiller, et al. 1992, Szanton 1996). While the migrants’ monetary remittances have for long monopolized the attention of the Philippine government, who is renown for its extended state-led labour export program and has been in the leading top of remittances-receiving countries for years\(^2\), also “remittances in kind” are increasingly acknowledged for their importance for the country’s economy and the well-being of its citizens.

Especially since in the last decades international transport and communication has become cheaper and easier, a massive industry has emerged in facilitating, maintaining and strengthening the long-distance linkages between the globally dispersed Filipinos and the stayers. Both within the motherland itself as well as beyond, Filipinos have seized this opportunity and put up cargo businesses to serve their migrated compatriots. Ranging from large, global carriers to micro companies operating bilaterally, these services are known to the consumers as “door-to-door (hereupon referred to as DrDr services)” as they (usually) pick up the packages from the sender’s home and deliver them right to the beneficiary’s doorstep in the Philippines.

This chapter puts forward the DrDr industry as a typical Filipino immigrant business industry, sprouted from and commercially exploiting Philippine-specific state policies to retain the loyalty of the overseas nationals as well as embedded in culturally defined normative expectations on the migrants’ lasting responsibilities towards their kin. The primary aim is to show how basically very simple business ventures initiated at the grassroots level actively stimulate transnationalization beyond the narrow kinship systems that migration usually engenders, as they expand these pre-existing social relations into a dense and varied web of cross-bordering ties. Encouraging exchange, diffused forms of solidarity and generalized forms of reciprocity, the business owners/operators hereby contribute to the emergence of a transnational community.

The material presented here draws upon personal fieldwork conducted for my doctoral thesis on Filipino entrepreneurship in the Netherlands. This fieldwork took place both in the Netherlands and in the Philippines, where I met with several “home country counterparts”, specifically the migrants’ families who were actively involved in the business operations\(^3\). While I may allude to findings among entrepreneurs in other commercial sectors, the obvious focus is

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\(^2\) In 2004, the country was fourth among the top recipients of remittances, after China, India and Mexico, with estimated remittances totalling US$13 billion in 2005 (World Bank 2006), and their contribution to the national economy steadily increasing; between 1990 and 2003 remittances, as a percentage of GNP, grew from 2.7 to 10.2 percent.

\(^3\) The entire survey exists of 34 cases of Filipino entrepreneurship, involving 39 first generation Filipino immigrants. In The Netherlands, the main data gathering method were oral interviews, based on a life history approach. Further fieldwork was conducted in The Philippines. This concentrated on 8 cases of ‘home country counterparts’, and took place in September-October 2001, January-July 2003 and January-April 2005.
upon the nine Filipinos in the survey who ran a DrDr service. This chapter is organized in the following manner: the next section describes the prevailing perceptions among the entrepreneurs of their own cargo company as “an easy business” and as “hardly business” As will be shown in the section thereafter, especially this latter perception ensues from the fact that the entrepreneurs generally would pursue a social and unselfish rather than a selfish, economic mission with their firm. Their social calling is to serve their compatriots and bridge the great physical distance between those in their adopted country and those who stayed behind. The chapter continues with the remarkable observation that some of these entrepreneurs, at the same time as their ventures uphold and expand a system of support and “giving back”, are, in fact, quite critical of this one-sided relation, and have established a structure of exchange in which also the stayers play an active, rather than a passive, role. The chapter then ends with the contention assertion that DrDr agents, and their transnational enterprises, can be seen as small though significant players in the consolidation and diversification of border-crossing ties and linkages, contributing to the emotional, symbolic and also material unification of a physically separated community.

Filipino DrDr services in The Netherlands: “easy business” and “hardly business”

Like in other destination countries, Filipinos have put up DrDr services in the Netherlands; in point of fact, it appears the sending of gifts (pasalubongs in Tagalog) of fellow countrymen to the Philippines is a fairly popular line of business here: during the fieldwork period I came across some 15 Filipino-owned DrDr services. Considering both the small size of the Filipino population in this destination country and the few entrepreneurs among them, this is a notable number, especially since nearly all of these 15 entrepreneurs simultaneously operated the same captive market.

Unquestionably, the attractiveness of this kind of business and, as a consequence, the relative crowdedness of this industry in The Netherlands can partly be explained by the general perception that it was “only a small step to become a DrDr agent themselves”, as one of the research participants phrased it. Each of the nine entrepreneurs interviewed repeatedly stressed the ease to set up and manage their transnational venture. Without exception, office was based at home, and while most enterprises were formally “woman-owned businesses”, nearly all were effectively run as husband/wife firms. Aside of (semi-informally employed) contact persons throughout the country, whose primary tasks were to call around within their own social network on the shipments’ schedule and to next inform the entrepreneur on where empty boxes were needed and/or filled boxes were waiting to be picked up, all business operations were carried out by the business owners themselves, usually together with the life partner. In this, the

4 Seven of these services were owned by Filipina women, one by a Filipino man, while one was a formal partnership of a Filipina woman and her Dutch spouse. Names used in this chapter are fictive to protect the privacy of these respondents.

5 In 2004, some 12,400 Filipinos resided in the Netherlands (CBS 2005). For the same year, Spaan, van Naerssen and Tillaart mention the existence of 194 Filipino enterprises and 238 Filipino immigrant (first and second generation) entrepreneurs (2005, 251).
most important activity comprised the distribution and pick up of the \textit{balikbayan} boxes, which in point of fact generally involved more than merely the transaction of the box and related payment. When passing by their customers, the DrDr operators were often invited in for a drink and snack, and a friendly, yet more than once also fairly intimate, conversation. While these personal visits demanded much of the operators’ time and energy, they emphasized it to be an essential and integral part of their works that was generally also the most enjoyable. Besides, as they generally only shipped three to four times a year, in the end, the business did on average not ask for more than a couple of hours work a week.

In the Philippines, all DrDr operators hired professional brokers to release the container from the customs. For the distribution and delivery of the boxes, some entrepreneurs contracted specialized services, while others had taken on relatives and friends to do the job, mostly on base of semi-formal arrangements.

All in all, operating a DrDr business was, as the entrepreneurs repeatedly suggested, a rather straightforward pursuit. Little capital or specific skills were required, the basic equipment (a telephone, computer and car) was often already part of the household effects, and the well defined nature of the tasks provided opportunity to run the service from home and combine it with other roles. Hence, in their view, this line of business was, as one put it literally, “open to just anybody.” At the same time - and not surprisingly in view of the saturated market-, their businesses were rather insignificant in economic terms like size, profit, or turnover. In that sense, a DrDr business was, as one of them formulated it, not only “an easy business” but also “hardly business”.

Yet, personal economic gain was seldom the main focus of the immigrant entrepreneurs. Only few (female) operators said they started their business to earn “something extra” next to the income of their spouse and/or their own earnings from a part time job. By and large, the entrepreneurs ran their business as a sideline and did not show an active interest to become involved in larger businesses. While some conveyed that the small market in the Netherlands and intense competition held back their opportunities to enlarge their business activities, the majority contended they did not wish to expand as they already had to juggle their time among a variety of occupations and interests - other (part time) jobs, hobbies, membership of organizations and their parental duties. Only three entrepreneurs seemed more “business minded” as they aimed for a bigger market share and had a more outspoken (though still not exclusive) economic goal setting. Yet, for none of the DrDr agents, “economics” comprised the sole rationale of their entrepreneurial activity; their motivations to start a DrDr service, or the objectives they pursued with it, were always accompanied by other non-economic motivations and objectives, which were usually held more important. This type of business thus appeared to offer opportunities not found in paid employment or any other kind of business. Indeed, as the following sections will show, the DrDr service lent itself exceedingly well for a variety of social missions.
The social calling: serving and connecting

Helping compatriots: at home and abroad

Unsurprisingly in view of the business premise, in all conversations I had with the DrDr agents, the poorer or more difficult living conditions in the motherland and the allegedly beneficial contribution of their transport activities on the well-being of the stayers played a prominent role. Accordingly, many of the entrepreneurs advanced this as an important incentive for them to start a cargo business. One woman said: “their hard lives are brightened by the goods their remote relatives send back to them; and I wanted to help in that, be part of that. That is why I decided to do this.” Some put it even more sharply and intimated that their “fellows back home” needed the shipped goods for their daily survival.

Yet, their role in “improving lives” was emphatically believed to be not only in the transfer of material aid to their compatriots, but also, sometimes considered even more important, in “sending the love” of their migrated relatives, as one entrepreneur romanticized the industry. As these entrepreneurs saw it, what is inside the boxes would not be as important as the idea of them: keeping the family close even over great distances. These immigrants’ choice of business therefore seemed strongly inspired by idealistic and/or romantic notions attached to the work, as well as by feelings of solidarity and a sense of duty towards their fellow countrymen back home.

Interestingly though, the first thing that several entrepreneurs answered when asked why they had started this particular type of business, was that, in this manner, they thought to be of help to their compatriots in the Netherlands. Rather than the receivers of the balikbayan boxes, they notably considered the senders, i.e. the members of their own ethnic community in the host country, as the primary beneficiaries of their undertaking. As it appeared, taking on the task of a balikbayan forwarder was seen as a means to place themselves in the service of the community. Their ventures helped their migrated compatriots comply with the moral obligation to support the ones left behind. In the Philippines, assistance patterns within the family are reciprocal and carry a sense of obligation. Apparent in nearly all conversations I had with Filipinos, these moral obligations extend from the nuclear family to the extended family, including uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces, grandparents and even fictive kin, and form crucial part of their Filipino identity. Cultural values such as utang na loob or “debt of gratitude” (Tyner 2002) and pakikisama, or the “sentiments of collectivism and mutual obligation among kin” (Parreñas 2001, 109) are the basic premises of the Philippine family – whether its members live close together or dispersed across the globe. By offering their co-ethnics in The Netherlands, according to the entrepreneurs, the “best price”, “quickest delivery”, “highest security”, or “most reliable shipment schedule”, they helped maintain the traditional kinship relations and so preserved an important aspect of “being Filipino”, even when physically remote from the native soil. Transporting balikbayan boxes made tangible the sentiments of belonging and helped generate propinquity with the distant home front.

At the same time, as shows the quote below, it is also the personal contact between the entrepreneur and the customers that was considered a support to the latter:
It is just a little business, I won’t get richer. How can you get rich with this business? …But what really counts is the excitement of being in contact with your countrymen, you know… to have contact them en to help them. To be in contact with them is also one action of helping them. It really is a community thing you know… you give it to the Filipino community in Holland, Belgium, Germany…. So I put up this business because it is helping to my countrymen. (Jessica, interview, 08-01-04)

Many of the business owners’ accounts highlighted how socializing with the customers comprised an important, if not the most important, part of the operations in this particular line of business. The business operators personally (often with their spouses) passed by their customers to pick up the filled boxes, which was most of the time accompanied by an invitation for a sociable talk and drink in the customer’s private realm. Accordingly, some of the entrepreneurs explicated that their business venture was in fact a kind of social work and they themselves were to be seen as social workers, rather than as businessmen: they assisted their co-ethnics not only in maintaining good relations with their relatives back home by sending their gifts, but also helped them by listening to their stories, telling about their own experiences, and giving them advice, often on life in The Netherlands. As the immigrant entrepreneurs could personally relate to the worries and needs of their customers and would practically as well as emotionally assist them in their adjustment process, in their perception, their DrDr service was not just a transport business but also functioned as a meeting place, or a help desk. While among all entrepreneurs in the survey, “the Filipino way of doing business” was commonly regarded to be “more social” than the “stiff and formal Dutch way” (Maas 2004), it seems especially the balikbayan box cargo industry is featured by close and personal relations between the business operators and the customers. In that sense, the strong sense of common identity/origin, and the shared migration experiences, was both a resource to as well as objective in business.

Helping themselves: maintaining ties with those at home and abroad

Many of the entrepreneurs thus advanced the desire to be of service to their compatriots, in The Netherlands and/or in The Philippines as the most important drive for their entrepreneurial engagement. Yet, while these entrepreneurs helped migrated co-ethnics adjust to life in the Netherlands and uphold ties with their loved ones back home, it also became clear from their stories that their businesses functioned in similar ways for themselves as well. Also for the operators themselves, the DrDr service served as a meeting desk with compatriots, as an outlet where they could vent their feelings and share experiences and through that cope with difficulties and hardships – which were often related to their migration and separation from home and family.

Moreover, besides forming a platform for adaptation and a vehicle of social integration into the Filipino community in The Netherlands, the transport services also functioned to support the entrepreneurs’ own personal ties to their country of origin. They themselves regularly sent private gifts to their relatives and friends in The Philippines too; or they sent boxes for free for relatives or friends who also resided in The Netherlands. Notably, in more than one case, these non-commercial transfers of private goods turned out to over time take on an increasingly more prominent role in the total volume of their forwarding
activities, since often friends in The Netherlands started to give the entrepreneurs their second-hand belongings to donate in The Philippines.

The DrDr business thus preserved not only the entrepreneurs’ own pre-migratory social ties to their remote friends and relatives; it also strengthened and expanded their post-migratory social network within their adopted country. What is more, donations made by friends and associates contributed to the expansion of the scope of the business beyond the original DrDr connection, that is, beyond the transnational but nonetheless bounded and intimate *kinship* connections as the primary axis on which it had its original premises.

*Bridging beyond the nearest and dearest*
A notable number of the entrepreneurs I spoke with indicated that, besides sending *balikbayan* boxes with private goods (for their customers as well as for themselves), they had in the course of time also begun to ship (second-hand) goods to civil organizations or community projects in The Philippines. Either they collected these goods themselves, within their own social networks or by going to clearance sales and asking around among hospitals, schools or other institutions in The Netherlands; or they offered co-ethnic associations in The Netherlands free container space to ship their aid to selected beneficiaries. Forging collaborative relations with private donors, ethnic associations and other institutions in both The Netherlands and The Philippines, these immigrant entrepreneurs capitalized on their venture to practice cross-bordering solidarity. They not only serviced their co-ethnics in the country of settlement but also used their enterprise as a relatively cheap and practical instrument for altruistic and humanitarian activities directed at the country of origin. Their small-scale cargo companies so additionally functioned to pursue a social mission that emphatically stretched beyond the core activities of their business. As such, these Filipino business operators made themselves known not only as economic actors, but also as a “philanthropic resource” (Opiniano 2003).

At the same time, transnational endeavours like these may provide immigrants political influence in the homeland. Flora, operating one of the older and seemingly more established DrDr services in The Netherlands, for instance explained that the charity activities she and her relatives back home carried out in their home village had certainly given her family more prestige and that her family was now, more than before, asked for advice or assistance in community affairs, such as in putting up an after-school child care program or equipping the new hospital. For some, eagerness to gain recognition, and some supremacy, in the immigrant community as well as in the place of birth may so have formed an incentive to engage in more dispersed acts of loyalty and solidarity.

In conclusion, whereas the nucleus of the DrDr business is in the immigrants’ personal familial obligations and whereas the business operators were first and foremost driven by the wish to help sustain these closely-knit bonds across the miles, the wider benevolent efforts that many of them in addition carried out through their business were grounded in their general sense of reciprocity with the native soil, their ethnic/regional identity and feelings of solidarity with their place of origin, and –less altruistic perhaps- the desire to maintain or strengthen one’s personal influence, at home and/or abroad. Bridging “beyond the nearest and dearest”, their enterprises extended the specific reciprocity, traditionally
expected from migrants towards the home front, to generalized reciprocity (Faist 2004, 19-21), and solidarity from a focused to a more diffused form. As such, these enterprises encouraged a more widespread set of cross-border alliances.

One final way in which the DrDr business was used to link up with the former homeland – and, hence, provoked further transnationalization- moves beyond “giving back”, as it shifts the role of the stayers from passive aid receivers into active partners in the immigrants’ transnational endeavours.

From giving back to exchange

Apparently, while DrDr businesses first and foremost serve to maintain interpersonal relationships over long distances, they also give expression to and in fact promote a broader sense of solidarity and companionship, first and foremost within the Filipino immigrant community and with the country or origin, but stretching also, in as far as the immigrant entrepreneurs’ Dutch spouses, friends and/or native institutions are involved, into the adopted society at large. All the same, these enterprises still basically thrive upon a unidirectional sense of belonging and a one-way set of commitments and obligations from the immigrants towards their relatives and friends back home, and, as we saw, sometimes towards the wider home village. In the end, it is the immigrant who “gives back”, either to specific people, or to the motherland in general.6

Fascinatingly then, several DrDr operators, at the same time as they in fact exploited their compatriots’ sense of duty and reciprocity towards the former home and also personally used their business as a means to contribute to better lives in the country of origin, voiced a rather critical stance on this one-way relationship between those abroad and those at home. As it seemed though, their resistance specifically centred on “sending money every time they [family and friends in the Philippines] ask for it” (Virgie, interview, 23-12-03). As these entrepreneurs explicated, for them, this request was just not always that easy to comply with, or else they simply did not consider it the desirable course to stay connected to the former home front. The transport of personal goods through the DrDr service can be seen within this context of ambiguity:

_The business is primarily a help. Not for me, for them [the stayers], you know. You know life in the Philippines, all help is welcome. And I can give them money, but then they do not buy food for it. That is a common grief among us Filipino migrants you know. They always send money but so often the money just disappears into nothing. So this is my way to help them._ (Roberto, interview, 06-01-04)

As can be read from Roberto’s argument, remittances in kind are deemed an appropriate or practical substitution for financial remittances and the _balikbayan_

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6 This is perhaps a somewhat myopic presentation of the situation. While presented here as a one-way set of commitments, it should be realized that support and charity activities carried out by Filipino migrants, as they themselves see it, are in fact indeed an act of reciprocity: they hereby repay their parents and families for their upbringing but also, more generally, repay their society at large for the lives they had on their native soil. Moreover, these acts for their part do not need to go unpaid: they may function as an assurance of future assistance from the receivers of support to the migrant. Alternatively reciprocity can take the form of visual signs attesting to the contributions of migrants, as in the case of memorials in their home villages or awards presented to Filipino associations or individuals for their contributions to the progress of the Philippine nation.
box system can be seen as an arrangement that assures the immigrants that their money is used as intended. Thus, the sending of gifts – rather than “simply money” – may not only be a mere sign of enduring love or responsibility towards those left behind, it may also be an expression of the urge of immigrants to control the format of the support expected from them.

More intriguingly however, the DrDr service also functioned to support the stayers in yet another way – and, while not openly expressed as such, likely the business owners themselves as well. Three DrDr agents explained that a DrDr business, more so than any other type of business, lends itself for active involvement of their relatives (and friends) back home: as an alternative to subcontracting professional forwarding businesses in the Philippines, these immigrants paid their own pre-existing social contacts to handle the delivery of the boxes. Employing the own relatives/friends supposedly helped save on overhead expenses, with contracting professional cargo enterprises most likely asking a higher price for their services. The entrepreneurs however first and foremost presented this business decision as an act of help to the ones left behind; as they explicated, providing the own relatives/friends with work, and thus offering them more or less steady wages, was a better way to help than by “slavishly” remitting money – as one of them put it – to them.

The gains for these stayers were, as the entrepreneurs also emphasized, not just financial. In point of fact, the direct income generated by the handling of the balikbayan boxes was in all cases rather limited, comprising no more than a sideline income (although the number of people receiving such a sideline income could be quite substantial, as shown by one case where some 15 to 20 people living all over the Philippines were involved in the business operations). More importantly, as not just the immigrant entrepreneurs but also their relatives back home elucidated, their transnational cooperation and shared interest had resulted in strengthened family bonds, the attainment of (business) skills, a greater confidence in their capabilities and, related to that, higher hopes for the future (Maas 2005).

This was directly observable in that the balikbayan forwarding linkages subsequently induced the formation of other, new businesses, put up and run by the immigrants’ close relatives. One sister, for instance, now felt confident enough to realize her dream of old, that is, to establish her own little shop in gifts and party goods. Whereas this woman purchased her merchandize on the local market and operated entirely on her own, the other newly established shops (in consumables, clothing and furniture) sold goods imported from The Netherlands and for that still relied upon the migrated relative. In point of fact, these businesses made use of, or were actually the direct offspring of the already existing balikbayan box linkage: the migrated relatives/DrDr operators in the Netherlands, also responsible for the purchase of the sales wares, simply added the merchandize in the shipments of these gift-cases. Remarkably, here too, the latter tended to portray this additional business activity first and foremost as a help to their families back home, and said they themselves “hardly earned” from the sales. Likely however, these material additions made their balikbayan box shipments at the very least less costly, and thus saved the entrepreneurs on their overheads.

Still, irrespective of the actual (financial) benefits for the immigrants themselves, what these observations show is an interesting change in the scope
and nature of the actual business pursuit. Using the balikbayan box system, actually meant to send private support to the ones left behind, these immigrant entrepreneurs initiated a more productive, and in a way also more truly reciprocal, relationship with their loved ones back home. These immigrants used their overseas social capital to establish an enterprise in their adopted country; at the same time, they themselves formed a resource for employment and business activity in their home country. The fact that the immigrants brought up only the latter as the advantage of running a transnational family business – in fact, as the reason to put up such business- is most probably expressive of the traditional Filipino kinship relations in which unselfish support to the more needy ones (those left behind in the motherland) is the norm. Yet, while DrDr businesses by themselves show how, within the context of migration, the expected practice of giving back has become an institutionalized phenomenon, encouraged and fortified from above, the instances described above, operating on the base of exchange within the family, show how the same practice may also be challenged and in fact modified from below, by migrants themselves. In my forthcoming thesis, I develop this point further (Maas forthcoming).

Conclusion: DrDr operators forge transnationalization

Transnationalism, or transnationalization as the process towards more cross-bordering alignments, is generally recognized to start at the level of the household or kinship. Reciprocity and familial obligations between those who left and those who stayed form the bedrock for initial transnational activities, which primarily centre on the –one-way- sending of money and gifts to the home front. Such primordial bonds form a lucrative base for business transactions. The focus of this chapter was on the Philippine DrDr industry, transporting balikbayan boxes full of pasalubongs (gifts) from abroad to back home, exploring why and how Filipino immigrants in The Netherlands run businesses in this field.

As it appeared, these immigrant entrepreneurs were strongly driven by the very same values that their ventures cater to: social commitment, collectivism, reciprocity and solidarity, with compatriots both in the adopted country as well as “back home”, were commonly advanced as their prime reasons to be active in the DrDr industry. Listening to their stories, their business decisions were guided by altruism or compassion more so than by selfish objectives. As such, their enterprises both ensued from and projected values which to them were recognizably Filipino and evocative of Filipino culture.

This chapter furthermore showed how the DrDr operators, and their grassroots transnational enterprises, while rather insignificant in terms of turnover or employment creation, were the vanguard of new and more substantial transnational ties. In the first place, these immigrant entrepreneurs thickened and diversified the economic ties with the home front, and in the process challenged traditional, obligatory kinship ties typical for first-generation migrants. Whereas the balikbayan box that formed the base and focus of their cross-bordering pursuits is emblematic of the enduring commitment of migrants towards those left behind, these immigrants used it to forge more truly reciprocal kinship relations. At the very least, they implicated the home stayers in the production
cycle, turning the role of the latter from mere “passive receivers of support” to “active participants” working for a shared interest. Moreover, actively involving the relatives back home in the business operations, and so using them as a resource to the business while simultaneously offering them a vehicle to social mobility, turned out to incite these “home country counterparts” to additional productive activity – with or without assistance of their migrated relative.

Hence, while operating their businesses, these entrepreneurs, sometimes in close cooperation with their relatives who stayed behind, have discovered new opportunities and formulated new goals. Interestingly, these new opportunities and new goals more than once also moved beyond the original business realm. Empirical evidence provided in this chapter thus supports Portes’ claim that “while the original wave of these activities may be economic and their initiators can be properly labelled transnational entrepreneurs, subsequent activities encompass political, social and cultural pursuits as well” (1997, 15). Using the business linkages also for more humanitarian pursuits, the immigrants forged “generalized reciprocity” and “diffuse solidarity” among larger groups within the host country as well as in and with their former homeland, which complemented the “specific reciprocity” and “focused solidarity” (Faist 2004, 19-21) that initially formed the basis for their transnational involvement. Besides the symbolic value of these transnational ties and their contribution to local economic and social development of the former home region, the findings moreover suggested that immigrants’ cross-bordering pursuits may also constitute effective mechanisms for creating or upholding personal political influence in the locality of origin.

All in all, these entrepreneurs have set in motion a cumulative process that in the end has led to a qualitatively distinct phenomenon: the transnational social space that they have created surpasses the strictly migratory chains of first-generation immigrants, including more people from different sectors of society and more numerous and qualitative diversified linkages that carry more resources back and forth between home and host society. As such, the case of the Filipino DrDr services illustrates how immigrants may not only be participants in a transnational field, but also active contributors to, and catalysts in the emergence and consolidation of so-called transnational communities, in which more and more people build their lives.

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Acting on Globalisation
African art and the Dutch art world – reflections from a practitioner’s point of view

Ankie van de Camp & Ben Janssen

We run a little art gallery in Oisterwijk, the Netherlands, called Tamai, where we trade in art and artistic craft predominantly from indigenous people communities according to the principles and practices of ‘fair trade’. The art and craft products originate from outside the cultural sphere of Western Europe and Western English-speaking nations. Ankie van de Camp founded the gallery in 2002 with a view to distributing art and craft from non-western societies. The name Tamai is a tribute to the Bushmen artist Thamae (Tamai) Setshogo. Initially there were two other initiatives like ours, one in Maastricht and the other one in Velp. Our gallery started out under the aegis of the Dutch Association of World shops (‘Vereniging van Wereldwinkels’), which considered fair art trade as a strategic expansion of its activities portfolio. We were able to obtain most of the craft and art products through importers that are assembled in the networks of EFTA (European Fair Trade Association) and/or IFAT (International Fair Trade Association). The fair trade import organizations turned out to be a useful starting point but they proved to be unstable providers of quality art. Art products were just occasional by-products for the fair trade import organizations as their core business is importing craft, textiles and also food. The supply was too erratic for us with the result that we started to look elsewhere. At present we have succeeded in developing our own network of artists, artist communities and fellow galleries. Nowadays, the gallery focuses mainly on African indigenous arts; modern art paintings and prints from San artists from D’kar, Botswana and from Kimberley, South Africa. Furthermore, we trade in indigenous art from Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ghana as well as from Inuit from Chukotka in Siberia.

We began as laymen, as real ‘amateurs’ in the business of both fair art trade and running a gallery with the result that when we started off setting up the gallery we came across many problems, one of which is the alleged position of African art and African artists. This essay is about the position of African visual arts in relation to the Dutch art world as we perceive it. It was Michel de Montaigne who initially coined the term ‘essay’ as an ‘attempt’ or ‘trial’ to put one’s thoughts on a particular subject into writing. This what we mean to do in this chapter. Our essay is like an essay in visual arts, which is a preliminary

1 We would like to thank Fridoline Veering for her greatly appreciated editorial work and Sef Slootweg for his valuable comments.

2 Amongst anthropologists and sociologists there is a debate on the notion of ‘indigenous’, see Coates (2004). Kuper (2003) asserts that there is no theoretical ground to use the term. Following Guenther (2006) we use the term indigenous, because people themselves, e.g. the Bushmen, use the term to represent themselves and to define their ‘cultural identity’.
drawing or sketch upon which a final painting or sculpture is based, made as a test of the work's composition.

When we use the term art or arts, we are referring to the ‘decorative visual arts’ created for its own sake and comprising painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, sculpture, installations, design and fashion. Craft in this essay should be read as the ‘useful arts’ being objects produced for everyday use.

The actual Dutch situation: negation and exploitation of African art

In the “Summer (of) 2007” edition of the Dutch journal ZAM Africa Magazine (Veldkamp, 2007) a number of prominent people in the Dutch museum art world made the observation that African art plays only a very small part in the Dutch art market, because there hardly is a market. Neither is there a good infrastructure of distribution outlets or an adequate exposure. According to Mirjam Westen, head of the modern arts department of the MMKA museum of Arnhem, most Dutch museums of modern art show a particular narrow-mindedness when it comes to modern art. African art is considered to be exotic, moreover it is scarcely explored and often minimized as ‘primitive art’. Els van der Plas, director of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, observes that there is a strong Euro-American bias in the processes of buying and exposing modern art. She asserts that Dutch museums actually exclude great parts of the world. The knowledge and experience of most experts is on Western art development. Because of this particular bias Africa is still a dark, frightening continent to most experts on African art. However, coming to terms with the unknown is difficult since the concepts for understanding African art are lacking, which threatens the privileged position of the modern art expert.

We have observed that African art does not only play a marginal role in the top segment of the Dutch art market. During six years of exposing and selling modern African art we have experienced that it also has an insignificant position in the middle segment of the market, with the exception of Zimbabwean stone sculptures. Only in the bottom segment there seems to be a market, albeit of a very particular character. Cheap imitations of African arts are sold in Dutch stores at ten times the price of the original copy, with the effect that African art is minimized as inferior and cheap mass art.

Why is this? Why does African art not only play a marginal role in the top segment of the Dutch art market, but also in the middle segment of the art market in which we are active? Guided by our experience after six years of dealing with modern art from the Third World, in particular from specific regions in Africa, we will sketch an outline of a theoretical framework, which hopefully will lead to a better understanding of why African art also plays a marginal part in the middle segment of the Dutch art market, the segment we are in with our gallery. The framework consists of three concepts and concomitant lines of approach:

• the ‘art world’ or, what are the social processes and institutions which define art?
• ‘artistry’ or, how does one see artistic calling as a profession?
• ‘infrastructure’ or, how are the processes of gaining access to the international art market organized?
We have drawn our inspiration from two sociologists: from Abraham de Swaan (2008 a and b) who has analyzed the development of modern art world and the rise of the professional artist brilliantly, and from Richard Sennett (2008) who has made a clear and lucid analysis of the value of craftsmanship in modern western society. In the second part of this contribution, using these concepts and the research of the anthropologist Guenther (2203), we will describe one particular form of African art: the art of the Bushmen in Botswana. But we will start with a very brief history of the development of sculpturing in Zimbabwe.

The social development of Zimbabwean sculpture art

Not all African art is unknown to the Dutch modern art market. Take for example sculpture art from Zimbabwe, in particular from Tengenenge. It is beyond dispute that some sculptures are amongst the finest of contemporary modern art. Namely sculptor Bernard Matemera who has achieved such international status that his works are shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Rodin Museum in Paris. In “Huis van Steen” (Stone House) Rob Rozenburg (1994) tells the story of the development of stone sculpturing in Zimbabwe. He shows that sculpturing already existed in the 14th century in this part of Southern Africa, alongside woodcraft and painting. Huts, tables, chairs and pots were decorated in colourful and vibrant manners depicting nature as well as the people’s culture and traditions. Art forms consisted of items used for celebrations or just for wearing such as jewellery and basketry. These art forms were termed as artistic craft but when English discoverers took home artistic artefacts and displayed them, apart from their original social context, some of them became ‘art’. It was not until the 1930’s that a market developed for this artistic craft. International tourism grew and with it the trade in carved wooden giraffes, birds, hippos and elephants; detailed and naturalistically carved and produced in series. By the way, these products were not considered to be art by western art experts.

From the 1970’s onwards Zimbabwean sculpture became ‘hot’ and artists like Bernard Matemera were included in the Western modern art world. They were said to be no longer producing artistic craft but ‘art’. This distinction, however, is typically European and Western. In practice not many Zimbabwean artists make a clear cut distinction between art and artistic craft. To them art is not an autonomous realm. Many sculptors, some of them internationally renowned, consider mass production as a means of subsistence, allowing them to make a living as artist. ‘Art’ and ‘craft’ are not dissociated; they coexist but differ. In ‘creation art’ the sculptor is free in making the sculpture, whereas in artistic craft the sculpture must be truly realistic. Most Zimbabwean artists are aware of this relation. They even consider making craft products more difficult than making pieces of art. Nevertheless, what the example of Zimbabwean stone sculpturing shows, is that there is a clear process of dissociation of craftsmanship and artistic creation.
An interpretative framework

Art world

De Swaan (2008a) has shown that this dissociation of arts and crafts is a general social process. Since the Renaissance arts have gradually dissociated from rituals and craft and gradually art has become autonomous. The development of markets and the rise of capitalist western societies have advanced the emancipation of art and artist. With the rise of a European bourgeoisie a ‘free’ market for art developed and alongside with it a world of people whose activities were related to the production and distribution of art; independent artists, gallery owners, art collectors, directors and curators of museums, art critics and theorists, art experts, arts publishers and the media. Social ethical standards in the production and evaluation of art declined and this has gone hand in hand with the increase of aesthetic criteria. More and more art became a means of ‘self-expression’ with different styles and movements following each other rapidly. Artists, the public and those who commissioned and traded art were no longer bound by a set of evident (social) rules. They all became subject to ‘uncertainty of taste’ with the direct result that the appreciation of art became the task of so-called ‘art experts’. Only ‘specialists in taste’ are able to recognize and value the quality of art work (Oosterbaan, 2005). Following the American sociologist Howard Becker (1982), De Swaan (2008a,b) uses the concept of ‘art world’ to define this ensemble. According to Becker the art world “...consists of all the people whose activities are necessary for the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define art. Members of the art world coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artefacts” In other words, the art world comprises the social processes and institutions which determine what is art and what is not, who is an artist and who is not, what is ‘high’ culture and what is ‘popular art’ or ‘folk art’. Or to use the terminology of the sociologist Manuel Castells (1997): the dominant western art and its ‘specialists in taste’ determine at the ideological level what is art and what is not, at the social level who is of included and who is excluded and at the professional level what is art making and what is not.

This social approach of art lays more emphasis on the interdependence of evaluators, buyers, commissioners, gallery owners, museum directors, and magazine directors and so on. This social approach looks at the interdependent relationships between the processes of artistic creation and the community. Furthermore, as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has shown, artistic preferences are very strongly functionally related to birth and education.

Following these lines of thought we can conclude that it is the western art world that implicitly and sometimes explicitly defines which art is ‘high culture’ and which art is not. Obviously most African art and artists are not part of it. However, there is one particular way in which African art seems to be related to the modern art world. African art has been a source of inspiration for many modern artists. One only has to look at photos of Picasso’s studio to see the relevance of African art and craft. But in this perspective African art is synonymous with ‘primitive’ or ‘naive art’ and is associated with ‘dark mystery’. In many statements about African art this suggestive connotation can be heard.
African arts and artist are placed in a primitivist slot. A reason why Western collectors, experts but also the general public are doing this, is that African art and the African artist are viewed not as individual and singularized, freely expressive but as collective, traditional, culturally uniform and tribally ethnic (Guenther, 2003: 104). This is what the Western viewer will look for, and consequently this is what he will find mostly: some kind of tribal or ethnic art; thereby dismissing modern African art as also individually conceived, often extra-ethnic and surely modernist.

Artistry, or artistic calling and craftsmanship
In order to be able to value African art on its own merits, we do not only need a more social approach of the interrelationships between the processes of artistic creation and the community, but also a re-valuation of craftsmanship. To paraphrase Richard Sennett in his latest book (2008): what gives someone the right to judge whether something is art or not? The sociological approach of Becker and De Swaan gives insight into why in the western art world it is the privileged right of ‘experts’ to determine what is art is and what is not. It also answers the question how only an ‘inner circle’ has access to this relatively closed modern world art system and how prevailing principles and standards are set and reproduced. In order to become an artist or expert, one has to go through a long educational system in order to learn to ‘understand’ the principles of art and artistry. But this approach does not satisfactorily answer the question whether art really differs that much from (artistic) craft as is alleged. If we look at the skills and competences required, whether it is art as a product of individual free expression, or whether it is artistic craft, the production processes of both art and craft are only feasible by virtue of acquired good skills and competences. The contrast of art as a unique or at least distinctive product of work and craft as a product of a more anonymous, collective and continued production process, blurs this common characteristic. Originality, accuracy and expression can be present in both forms. Sennett therefore argues to soften the demarcation line between artist and craftsman. In fact he argues for the reassessment of ‘the craftsman’. Three basic abilities are the foundation of craftsmanship. These are the ability to localize, to question and to open up (Sennett, 2008:277). The first involves making a matter concrete, the second reflecting on its qualities and the third expanding its scene. We can see these processes taking place both in art and in craft making. By taking this broader view of artistry, including craft related skills, there will no longer be such a sharp delineation between artist and craftsman and between art and (artistic) craft. Then a large, intermediate area unfolds itself, making room in the art world for more cultural diversity. In this respect, we agree with Joost Smiers, who argues in favour of more manoeuvre space for artistic expressions which do not fall within the standards of the western global art world, amongst which many forms of African art (Smiers, 2003).

Infrastructure
The concept of infrastructure relates to the question of how the processes of gaining access to the international art market are organized. Artists, in the
broadest definition, must be able to mobilize resources, to bring their products to the public and hence to support themselves. For this purpose the Western art world has developed a sophisticated distribution system with many intermediaries, forming part of the broader economy. We refer to this elaborated system as ‘infrastructure’. One could even argue that the educational system and the patronage system are also integral parts of the infrastructure, since it is the combination of all elements that determine the access to the (international) art market. Kennedy (1992) argues that one of the factors hampering the development of modern art and modern art movement in African countries was the colonial system of education, which emphasized Eurocentric values and viewpoints, employing European methods and curricula and which neglected to encourage ‘indigenous self expression’. Even in Uganda where there is now a lively modern art movement, Makerere University College in Kampala, followed the British pattern.

One of the biggest challenges for most African artists is the lack of access to this infrastructure. No matter how talented and gifted an African artist may be, visual artists need some kind of exposure in order to sell to the market and earn a living. In most African countries much talent languishes due to poor infrastructure, but also because of the disinterested national authorities. According to Musoke –Nteyafas (2008) African artists suffer a triple blow: that of being denied the natural growth and development of an artist, that of few distribution outlets and the lack of a true national market, and that of very little exposure on the international scene. The national internal market is not big. Most African countries do not have a substantial art-buying public. Furthermore, production is often influenced by the need to survive. The fabrication of products is dictated by the ‘taste’ of the market generating much ‘copycat’ production instead of independent art products. On the international market scene, Europe and North America are the rule, the rest is exception. Much African art is considered not to be quite up to the international standards. Njami (2008) speaks of the social and artistic invisibility of the African artist on the world market.

Modern Bushmen Art

Bearing in mind the perspective outlined in the two previous sections, we will now look at one particular form of African art, the Bushmen art from the Kuru art project in D’Kar, Botswana. For a thorough introduction into the cultures of the San or Bushmen people in Southern Africa, see Le Roux and White (2004).

The Art World

As said in the beginning, the main collection of our gallery consists of modern Bushmen art, mostly from the Kuru Art project. D’Kar is a village in the north-western part of the Kalahari region with a population of approximately 1,000 Nharo San. The art project is part of the Kuru Development Trust, a development agency which set up this art project in 1990. Although the number of artists in the project has fluctuated, it now remains constant, around 15 people, with an equal gender split. Prior to their artistic careers these men and women were farm labourers and domestics for Boer farmers. The central aim of the project was to
give a selected number of men and women the opportunity to learn lino printmaking and silkscreen printing. Artists that began painting in acrylics on boards have moved on to oil painting. Many of them have become ‘artists’ and have been able to provide of a new means of subsistence. Another aim was to use art as a new way for Bushmen of self-representation and expressing their identity, in the same way as Bushmen use dance. In the first years the Bushmen received much (foreign) aid and support. Nowadays it is up to the Busmen artists community to support it self. Some critics use the fact that the project was subsidized as a pretext to say that the project was not a ‘real art’ project but charity. Would these critics use the same argument for the Dutch situation in which many artists are subsidized? Nowadays, subsidies are actually largely considered to be a formal recognition of quality.

Another problem of mis-representation has to do with tourist promotion by the national and regional authorities of Botswana. Modern Bushmen art is said to be related to rock San Art. But actually, this is not the case. In fact, it is surprising how modern Bushmen art is essentially free from cultural precedents. It is loosely connected to traditional forms of decorative art of the Bushmen such as bead work and etched or burned patterning of ostrich egg shells or wooden objects. It is immensely innovative in style and content, different from artist to artist and to a varying degree within the oeuvre of each individual artist. (Guenther, 2003:95-96).

Figure 1: “Meerkats during the Rainy Season”
(lino print, Quetcvo Moses, 1998)
The art of the Kuru Bushmen artists is tradition-orientated. It is strongly figurative but at the same time highly individualistic. Quite a few art pieces tell the story of the modern life of the Bushmen. Others depict the old way of life of the Bushmen in the Kalahari desert: the “veld food”, the bush, the plants, the animals, the hunt. Modernity is juxtaposed to tradition. It is “story telling art”: the Bushmen artist expresses how he or she experiences life and her or his immediate surroundings, and he or she does this in a direct and very personal way. In fact story telling in the Bushmen culture has always been highly individuated! Sometimes the pictures even look post-modern: new motifs and old motifs alongside each other. A Bushmen artist not often paints people. And Bushmen art does not look political at first sight, except perhaps for a piece by Qwaa (Xgóa Mangana) of the ‘occupiers’ of the Kalahari desert. But at a closer look, in nearly all Bushmen works there is a political dimension present in a very subtle way. The themes used can be seen as echoes of growing self-identity and self-representation (Guenther, 2003:101).

Artistry
Nearly all Kuru Bushmen art bears signs of truly artistic craftsmanship. However, none of the artists has been formally trained or educated. Some are even illiterates. Their craftsmanship is the result of on-site training and informal learning. The men and women are highly individuated people, each with his or her own history, creative intentions and artistic skills.

All are strongly related to the tribal history while at the same time most of them are acculturated, Westernized, politically alert and have travelled around the world; from 1990 more than 50 exhibitions worldwide (Gaborone, Johannesburg, New York, Tokyo, Sidney, The Hague). Bushmen artists see art and the Kuru art project as a way to preserve tradition and to re-construct their (self) identity in a very rapidly changing environment. They define themselves as artists who are convinced that they are producing ‘real art’, although not every Western expert and collector is inclined to define it as art, let alone modern art.

The beauty of the Kuru Bushmen art is in the use of colours, the spatial arrangement of elements, the motifs and the themes. Visitors of our gallery are often struck not only by the harmony, the symmetry and the rhythm in the paintings and prints, but also by the high level of craftsmanship, of which the lino prints are an amazing example,. This artistic craftsmanship relates to the tradition of the carving and painting of ostrich egg shells and the ornamenting of leather bags and loincloths. The works of Dada (Coex’aq Qgam) and Thamae Setshogo are exceptional pieces of both high craftsmanship and individual artistic self-expression.

Surprisingly, it appears that many of our gallery visitors associate Bushmen art with the art of the Aborigines of Australia. Perhaps it is the atmosphere of the bush, the desert animals and the plants depicted that generates this feeling. Although there is no parallel, either technically or figuratively speaking, a delegation of artists and other Kuru people did in fact go to Australia in 1997 to discuss art and politics with the Aboriginals. However, this fact is not generally known to the visitors of our gallery.
Infrastructure
The Kuru Bushmen art is most favored by tourists, ethnological museums, Western collectors who cherish it for its alleged primitivism and by specialized galleries like ours. Kuru art exhibitions have always been an important component of conferences dealing with San or Bushmen identity and political rights. For instance, at the closing ceremony of the Decade of Indigenous People in The Hague in 2006 D’Kar artists were present with their works of art, alongside Sami and indigenous people from Surinam and Irian Yaja. One of the factors that hinder an effective distribution of Kuru art in the Netherlands is that Kuru art products is advocated not because of its inherent artistic qualities but from a charitable, and therefore, patronizing perspective. Another impediment is the ethnographic approach to Kuru art. It is positioned as ‘primitive art’ and the artist is viewed not as individual but as a representative of a collective, traditional, culturally uniform and tribally ethnic society. Kuru art is seen therefore, as some kind of tribal or ethnic art and in doing so, it is easily dismissed as not being modern art. One sees what one wants to see or has been taught to see, thereby completely neglecting what Frans Boas in his standard work “Primitive Art” (1955) said about art in different societies: art is a mental process, present in every society.

Epilogue
In 1972 one of the authors, Ben Janssen, took part in a collective reading of the book of André Gunder Frank “Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America” (1971). Ton van Naerssen was presiding this ‘reading collective’. It was Ben’s introduction into the theory on ‘dependence’ and ‘development of underdevelopment’. Later he followed courses by Ton van Naerssen on theories of unequal social and spatial development in the Third World. Ankie van de Camp has been trained as a sociologist, specialized in the relationships between labour, culture and organisation. This essay bears the signs of both academic educational histories, but also of their professional histories thereafter. What we have tried in this essay is to combine our education and professional backgrounds in order to analyse the relationship between African art and the Dutch art world in the context of the development of capitalist globalization.

References
Rocks and hard places: development research between neoliberal globalism and global neoliberalism

Frans J. Schuurman

Rocks and hard places: introduction

‘It was always a bit of a lie that universities were self-governing institutions. Nevertheless, what universities suffered during the 1980s and 1990s was pretty shameful, as under threat of having their funding cut they allowed themselves to be turned into business enterprises, in which professors who had previously carried on their enquiries in sovereign freedom were transformed into harried employees required to fulfil quotas under the scrutiny of professional managers….. If the spirit of the university is to survive….the real university may have to move into people’s homes and grant degrees for which the sole backing will be the names of the scholars who sign the certificates’ (J.M. Coetzee in Diary of a Bad Year, 2007).

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s development studies in several European universities was established in the form of new academic institutes. Through time these institutes evolved from a highly differentiated amalgam consisting of leftist students and lecturers towards representatives of an established academic discipline. Lately, a number of these institutes are celebrating or are preparing to celebrate their 35 or 40 years of existence (like the IDS in the UK in 2006 and CIDIN in the Netherlands in 2008). It is interesting to notice that these celebrations are specifically dedicated to a critical introspection which in the case of the IDS resulted in a conference entitled Reinventing Development Studies. Also the Dutch CIDIN will use the celebration of its 35 years of existence to critically reflect upon the current status and future perspectives of development research in general and that of development studies in specific.

There are reasons enough for these introspective exercises because the academic and political space wherein development studies moves is fraught with rocks and hard places.

Firstly, there is an undeniable trend that academic institutes in general have to increasingly operate according to a market logic. Input and output in terms of the number of students, the amount of publications in peer-refereed top of the bill journals, the yearly count of large-scale research projects, quotation indexes, ratings indicating the academic prestige of universities, etc. are nowadays grudgingly accepted as part of academic survival.

Secondly, this trend seems to stand in contradistinction to the original critical contents of the mission and scientific object of development studies. For example, it is increasingly difficult to find funds for development research which are either not directly related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or which try to critically assess the whole MDG-related media circus.
As such, thirdly, there is an increasing influence of neo-liberal thinking on determining the research agenda of development studies, making it increasingly difficult to maintain a critical research tradition.

Fourthly, although on the one hand the geographical scale of development studies research nowadays incorporates Eastern and Central European countries, and also Western European countries for that matter, on the other hand with respect to research in the traditional development countries the geographical focus seems to be reduced to Africa (also a consequence of the focus on the MDG-issues; if this trend continues we better might rename development studies into Africanism).

Fifthly, globalization (whether as an ontological phenomenon and/or as a discourse) has significantly challenged development studies in many respects (cf. Schuurman, 2001). Well, there are some reasons to suppose that globalization, theoretically that is, has currently turned from a challenge to critical development studies into a liability.

Lastly, interdisciplinarity which always was a hallmark of development studies’ approach, has increasingly become under pressure and currently is increasingly being substituted by a multidisciplinarity which is quite another sort of animal.

In short, there are enough reasons to indeed critically reflect upon the current status of development studies and to specify some of the most threatening rocks and hard places.

Rocks and hard places I: market logic in academia and critical theory

In his contribution to a Festschrift of the Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik Henry Bernstein (2007:20) vividly illustrates the tension between critical theory and the policy-orientedness of development studies. He quotes from an advertisement for Research Fellows at the University of Manchester’s new Brooks World Poverty Institute of which Joseph Stiglitz is Chair: ‘Successful applicants will have a demonstrated capacity to conduct innovative and rigorous research that refines and extends our understanding of poverty, while also identifying plausible and politically supportable options for what might be done to reduce it’ (Bernstein’s emphasis).

What does it mean for a development studies institute to be functioning in an academic setting which is increasingly being invaded by a market logic? As mentioned before, in the current academic climate what is considered as important is: size (number of PhDs and staff, number of publications, amount of students), large-scale research projects (preferably in combination with large quantitative data-banks) in combination with outside funding (an indication apparently of the relevance of the research activities and at the same time thankfully appreciated by the financial bureaucracy of the university), and the amount of evaluation missions (in behalf of the Ministry of International Development Cooperation and/or Non-Governmental Development Organizations in the Northern countries). In practice this means for development studies institutes that in order to survive concessions have to be made. Original mission statements, which were strongly normatively inspired, increasingly
started to act as barriers in the survival strategy. For example, when the current Centre for International Development Issues (CIDIN) of the Radboud University in Nijmegen (the Netherlands) started functioning in 1973 as the Third World Centre, one of the first publications concerned the negative role of multinationals in maintaining poverty-related issues in the Third World. The name of Third World Centre was changed into CIDIN in the year 2000 as the term Third World was considered outdated and in the Dutch academic collective memory too much connected to ‘ThirdWorldism’. Currently one of the research projects of CIDIN concerns the measurement of the efficiency and impact of development projects (in collaboration with a Dutch NGO which is financing this research). The purpose of this project is to deliver academically sound advice to NGOs to improve their project efficiency and impact.

In the 1970s, a common view in development studies circles was that development projects were an extension of Northern based imperialism (a basic view of ‘ThirdWorldists’ or ‘TierMondistas’) or at the most a way to evade more fundamental changes in North-South trade relations and political regimes in underdeveloped countries themselves. There is in fact little reason to believe that currently development cooperation has changed dramatically in its implicit intentions. Maybe this is an extreme example, yet it shows a number of dramatic shifts that the development studies went through in terms of its explanandum (object), explanans (explanatory framework) and subject (methodology). In terms of its object development studies (at least in this example but I venture that it is a general characteristic) went from a structural analysis of the mechanics of underdevelopment to studying the efficiency of development projects. In this shift an approach inspired by critical theory was entirely lost. In fact, in general the adjective ‘critical’ lost its original meaning. Many development studies students nowadays interpret ‘critical’ only in the dictionary sense of the word. In addition, the example also shows that there is an historic shift (not only in development studies but also in social sciences in general) from structural analysis to actor-oriented analysis. Studying c.q. evaluating development projects in terms of efficiency and impact means a shift from macro- to micro-level analysis. Now, there is nothing wrong with actor-oriented analysis as long as the structural context is not lost from sight. But this is exactly the point, the broader context in project-based evaluation studies remains often outside the analytical framework (partly also because it falls outside the sphere of influence of the NGOs which finance these studies in the first place). Another example of the shift within development studies from structural to actor-oriented analysis is the way that concepts like poverty and inequality are looked at. We see here a historic shift in the level of analysis from macro to meso to micro. Poverty in the Third World used to be conceptualized in terms of differences between rich and poor countries. Admittedly, the definition of poverty has been much improved through the years (from a purely income-oriented definition to a much broader set of indicators) but poverty is now often brought down to an individual characteristic with individual solutions (e.g. through micro-credit schemes). This trend is also reflected in analytical frameworks like for example the currently much favoured livelihood approaches where individual actors are plotted into a matrix according to their access (or lack thereof) to assets or different forms of capital (financial, social, human, etc.). Now, the livelihood framework is very useful to point out the heterogeneity existing within a particular local space,
something which has always been a notoriously weak point in critical theory. But this can hardly compensate for the lack of an analysis of more structural components. In other words, the shift within development studies from research inspired by critical theory to research according to a neoliberal agenda is accompanied by dramatic shifts in object, subject and explanatory framework.

Now the above probably are nothing more than the grumblings of an old development studies dinosaur. So let me turn to these issues from the student’s point of view (i.e. more precisely: my perspective on their perspective). Development studies still attracts a sufficient number of students. The reasons for studying development studies have not changed over the years. It is a genuine concern for the plight of the poor in the Third World, indignation about the unequal distribution of resources on a global scale and the urge to do something about this. Students also are still very active outside the university although the characteristics of their activities have changed somewhat. In the ‘old days’ students joined anti-imperialism working groups and as such were well equipped with theoretical knowledge which enabled them to discuss Marx’s 18th Brumaire on the same level with their professors. Nowadays students join United Nations Youth Forums and travel to Washington to meet their peers from other countries to discuss good governance. So, extra curricula activities still are there and still express a basic concern with the ‘Other’ which goes beyond studying at the university. In fact, these activities could be more appreciated than in the old days because a lot of students are working about 20 hours per week to earn their livelihood. The job market for development studies students is still largely composed of employment in the domain of international development cooperation although significantly less then before this means being sent overseas. Only a small percentage manages to proceed in writing a PhD-thesis. Although I mentioned earlier that development studies should not be reduced to development management and policy the reality is that a lot of the students end up in Ministries of Development Cooperation, NGOs, embassies or international development organizations which do nothing else then development management and policy-making. Here we have another reason why critical theory came increasingly under pressure, i.e. not only as a framework for research but also because of the knowledge required by future employers of development studies students. Of course the job market wants critical students but more in a generalized academic sense of the word. There is a need for students who know how to prepare, manage and evaluate development projects, who know how to measure efficiency and increase the impact of projects. The job market does not need students who think that the Millennium Development Goals are the latest example to depoliticize the development debate. All this does not mean the students are ignorant of what critical theory is but it seems to be more considered as something of the past than of any immediate use in research projects or in future jobs. Besides, by now every European university has implemented the Bologna Treaty which means that officially the academic period for students consists of a 3-year BA followed by a 1-year MA. Time for fieldwork is limited which means that students need a pragmatic ‘toolkit’ for local level research. Critical theory is rather abstract and needs a lot of operationalization to be used in short term micro-level MA-research projects. It can be considered as a major challenge for development studies to try to reincorporate critical theory into that pragmatic toolkit.
Rocks and hard places II: from inter- to multidisciplinarity

Through time the interdisciplinarity of development studies has become one of its most important trademarks which, besides the obvious advantages, also has its drawbacks. The big advantage is that the object of development studies is a major social problem (let's keep it simple for the moment: widespread poverty in the Third World) and social problems in general can only be studied adequately from an interdisciplinary perspective. These problems always have economic, political and socio-cultural aspects and ditto contextual influencing factors which are interrelated among them. It is specifically the attempt to take into account the interrelations between these aspects which makes development studies interdisciplinary.

For example, if we study the developmental role of civil society organizations (which is one of the hot topics nowadays) and one does not take into account the influence on the characteristics of civil society of 1) the type of the political regime (e.g. whether it is a weak or a strong state) and 2) the influence of modes of production (the relative importance of and the interrelation between a capitalist and a non-capitalist mode of production), then only a small part of the total picture can be captured. Just looking at a social problem from different disciplinary angles would make it multi- but not interdisciplinary.

The disadvantage of interdisciplinarity is that the training of students in the academic field of each of the major sciences which are reflected in the corner points of the interdisciplinary triangle (i.e. political science, economy and sociology) is sometimes considered insufficient as development studies tries to keep various balls in the air at the same time. Development studies students are not economists, sociologists or political scientists pur sang yet they compensate this lack of specific disciplinary knowledge with a better insight in the complexity of developmental problems. Yet, it is not uncommon, although mistaken, that development studies is seen as an applied science narrowed down to development policy and management. Looking at development studies from the outside, specifically given its problem-oriented object definition, it is to be expected that its focus seems to be on policy-oriented research, contributing to further developmental processes in the Third World. As such, development studies is sometimes looked at by the other branches of social sciences as lacking in academic status, also because of its interdisciplinary character as discussed above. It is, however, a common mistake to reduce development studies to development policy and management, thereby emphasizing an empiricist and solution-oriented approach to the problem of underdevelopment. The object of development studies is much broader, i.e. it takes as its explanandum the structural causes of the lack of emancipation of people in the South as well as in transitional economies elsewhere and the strategies (at a local, national and international scale) which are employed to solve this lack of emancipation. A lack of emancipation refers to an inadequate access to material (e.g. income) and immaterial (e.g. education) resources which leads to widespread poverty, exploitation, inequality and injustice. The emphasis on structural causes does not imply just a structuralist approach but combines this with actor-oriented perspectives in order not to lose sight of the actors’ views. Strategies to solve the lack of emancipation involve various actors in the South as well as in the North: social movements, NGOs, and national and international governmental
organizations. Of course, this is a subjective definition of development studies but one which I feel does more justice to what development studies is all about without reducing it to development policy and management.

A recent addition to the geographical scale of development studies shows that besides countries in the South and transitional economies in for example former Eastern Europe, also the emancipatory problems in multicultural societies in the North are increasingly incorporated into the object of development studies. Students of development studies are very much interested in the emancipatory problems related to multiculturality in their own societies. Also in this case, an interdisciplinary approach is the most awarding.

Nevertheless, the (short) history of development studies reflects a dialectical relationship between the advantage and disadvantage of an interdisciplinary approach. In the first place, climbing over the fence of the neighbouring sciences can lead to muddy feet. The paradigms and theories which are ‘imported’ from the three major social science disciplines (economy, political science and sociology) could for a long time only be fruitfully combined by development studies because of their common denominator which is the linch-pin behind the interdisciplinarity, i.e. the role of the (nation)state. The bulk of the paradigms and theories from these three major domains of the social sciences has its roots in the 19th century with an emphasis on the role of the (nation)state in, respectively, the establishment of national markets and international trade relations, the establishment of democratic governments, and the aim of these governments to create a national identity (thereby suppressing other forms of identity based, for example, on regional or religious affiliations). In short, development studies’ interdisciplinarity reflected right from the start the 19th century roots of other social sciences with the nation-state as the main actor in development processes and as the main geographical referent. These paradigmatic views on the role of the (nation)state have changed as we move closer to the so-called global era. Globalisation challenges the interdisciplinary character of development studies. Many globalisation authors agree on the decreasing, or at least changing, economic, political and cultural importance of (nation)states. A shift in analytical perspective from the nation-state to transnational social space does not make it any easier for the interdisciplinary approach of development studies. On the other hand, the ‘global-local’ as the new binary has surplus value above the established dichotomies of core-periphery and developed-underdeveloped exactly because it is less spatial and allows for inequality within the binary code. Leo Ching (2000) speculates that under globalisation traditional binary models of social analysis and political struggle (colonizer-colonized, First World-Third World, centre-periphery) are inapplicable to a spatial economy of power irreducible to geographical dichotomies. In the same line Appadurai is in favour of a ‘process’ geographies instead of a ‘trait’ geographies which considers areas as relatively immobile aggregates of traits (values, languages, material practices, ecological adaptations, marriage patterns, etc.) with more or less durable boundaries. A process geography sees areas as precipitates of various kinds of action, interaction and motion (trade, travel, warfare, colonization, exile, etc.). Current area studies, says Appadurai, consider areas as permanent associations between space, territory and cultural organization. It is not only that the globalisation debate gives reason to suppose that the role of the (nation)state has been and still is
declining but also that, as a consequence, the former conjunctive dynamic (i.e. following the same spatial and time paths) of economy, polity and culture - upon which the interdisciplinary character of many a development theory was based - has been replaced by a disjunctive dynamic (Appadurai, 1990). In a deterritorialised world the nation-state would have lost its role as a connecting linch-pin between the economic, political and cultural domains which now largely follow their own disjunctive dynamics which are only partly interrelated. The traditional interdisciplinary approach of development theories which, for example, used to draw upon the interrelation between national economic growth and processes of democratisation through the role of the (nation)state is now confronted with domains which follow different logics that are not necessarily interrelated as they form part of different transnational scopes. For the time being development studies seems obliged to withdraw towards a multidisciplinary approach (i.e. without a clear theoretical view on the interrelations between the economic, political and cultural domains).

Rocks and hard places III: glob-talk

‘It is time to tear of the neutral mask of globalization and make visible the raw imperialism beneath it’ (David Harvey).

Allow me to give the basic argument in this short paragraph in the following (perhaps overly simplified) proposition: ‘by following the culturalist turn in globalization discourses (shortly: glob-talk) development studies has allowed itself to be manoeuvred away from critical theory.’ Development studies has wholeheartedly embraced concepts like interconnectedness, network of networks, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, syncretism, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, glocalization, civil society, etc. Political economy seems to have disappeared almost completely in this culturalist turn; ‘culture matters’ a la Harrison and Huntington (2000), certainly, but not by substituting culture for political economy (cf. Rowbotham). Development studies has allowed itself to embrace the Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) approach to poverty in absolute terms instead of in relative terms of power inequality. It has been seduced to accept research projects meant to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of MDG-related development efforts without questioning too much the depoliticizing nature of the MDG-circus. Samir Amin has condemned the MDG-project in no uncertain terms as an imperialist project: extreme privatization, opening up new fields for the expansion of capital within a context of maximum deregulation, and, above all, no state interference in economic affairs. In fact, the way that development research has been involved with the MDGs is a fine example of what can be called academic governmentality in Foucauldian terms, i.e. the MDGs are used to discipline development research.

In the previous paragraphs I have attempted to explain a number of reasons why development studies finds itself in this non-critical cul de sac. In the last paragraph I will discuss the question whether the concept of neo-imperialism offers a way out of this cul de sac.
Beyond rocks and hard places: the neo-imperialist route?

In terms of the old imperialist theories, development originally was about core states monopolizing accumulation opportunities. In order to do this, these states used to establish at home a social order conducive to capitalist development, but at the same time established exploitative relations with colonies and if need be to engage in inter-imperialist wars with other core states which tried to protect their accumulation opportunities.

After the WWII the concept of development became used in the aftermath of a speech of the US president Harry Truman as a discourse in the context of the Cold War to lure nation-states in the Third World into the Western camp. No matter the degree of anti-democratic, exploitative, brutal and corrupt characteristics of a particular regime it was welcomed with open arms into the Western bloc and the development discourse was used to mystify the imperialist nature of these relations. The East should be contained with a cordon of countries not only to prevent Russia and China to export the communist ideology to the Third World but also to ensure access to vital resources and to bloc access to these same resources for the communist core countries. Development assistance was an important instrument in this imperialist strategy. So, we could add, in terms of motives to engage in development assistance, geopolitical arguments next to humane or humanist and economic arguments.

The wars in Korea in the 1950s and in Vietnam in the 1960s (in the latter case first by the French and then by the Americans) were essentially geopolitical wars. The current involvement of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan is a mixture of economic (securing access to oil, in the case of Afghanistan to secure the oil pipe-line from Turkmenistan to the Arabian Sea) and geopolitical causes. During the so-called Developmentalist Era (which in McMichael’s 2000 interpretation extends from the 1940s to the 1970s) the most abhorrent African and Latin American dictatorships were thusly welcomed with open arms into the Western bloc. Also the famous US development aid program in the beginning of the 1960s *Alliance for Progress* (where the development discourse played an important role) under president Kennedy was meant to prevent socialist revolutions in Latin America in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

The decolonization period of the 1960s changed the scene somewhat but not enough to change the imperialist relations between North and South. The difference being that some European countries lost a privileged entrance to their former colonies which further established the hegemony of the US (something which led the US to support the decolonization process in order to diminish the competitive edge that European economies had based on their cheap access to labor and resources in their former colonies).

Although McMichael divides the post-WW II era into the period of Developmentalism (the 1940s-1970s) and the period of Globalism (the 1970s and beyond) there are at least two remarkable commonalities which apparently escape McMichael. The first one is that Developmentalism as well as Globalism are intimately linked to the dynamics of capitalism based as it is on the extraction of surplus value from workers (in Marxist jargon called exploitation of labour value), on accumulation and class conflict but always within the context of a firm belief in endless growth.
The second commonality is that these basic characteristics of capitalism lead to different institutional arrangements which, however, do not change the basic characteristics though and that what binds these institutional arrangements is the imperialist relations between core capitalist countries and the periphery. So, imperialist relations continued to exist (starting as they did in the 19th century, and before that period we had of course colonialism with its own dynamics also tied to an incipient capitalist system basically constituted by plunder and at a somewhat later stage by unequal exchange) and as such continued to characterize in the developmentalist as well as in the globalist era the relations between rich and poor countries.

However, the specific characteristics of these imperialist relations changed through time as part of the changing dynamic of capitalism, i.e. from Fordism to Post-Fordism. Seen from this perspective Developmentalism as well as Globalism are both legitimizing discourses for the imperialist character of globalizing capitalism which currently is among other things characterized by the subordination of social reproduction to the reproduction of capital (the end of the welfare state in the West), the deregulation of the labor market (and we do not have to look specifically at developing countries to see how that functions: take the latest initiative of the Dutch Cabinet to ease the conditions for laying off workers), the globalization of liquid capital, the outsourcing of production to cheap labor markets, and the transfer of local capital intended for social services into finance capital for global investment (leading to disinvestment in health and education).

Now, what are the characteristics of the imperialist structure of globalizing capitalism which make some authors (cf. Biel 2000 and Harvey 2005, 2006) label this as New Imperialism. Before I come to that it is important to demystify at least one so-called globalization myth which is that nation-states have lost their erstwhile priority status. This is important because talking about new imperialism begs the question about the units of analysis. All the old imperialist theories referred to the relations between states or nation-states for that matter. If, however, globalization discourses are correct in pointing out the demise of the state as a component of neoliberalism and that to understand global capitalism it is the market as an institutional arrangement and not the relations between nation-states as actors then the imperialist perspective would lose its spatial and geopolitical connotations which still belong to its core definition. Mind you, this is a tricky issue even among authors which adhere to notions of imperialism such as Negri and Hardt (2000) in their best-seller Empire which represents in their view a globalized imperialist capitalism without a clear geopolitical center. Permit me to dwell not too long in an attempt to demystify this particular globalization myth about the demise of the role of nation-states in global capitalism by referring to Leo Panitch (2001, p. 10): ‘...globalisation is a process that is authored by active states; states that are not victims of the process but active agents of making globalisation happen, and are increasingly responsible, I would argue, for sustaining it, and even burdened with the increasing responsibility of managing its contradictions and crises.’

Panitch adds the following (and we’re now already moving into one of the characteristics of new imperialism):

‘... there was certainly a restructuring of states (but not a bypassing of states) in relation to: the rapid movement of capital; the changing balance of class forces transnationally towards financial capital; the increasing orientation of each of the
world’s nation-states to external trade. ’ [What was taking place in that context was]... a shift in the hierarchy of state apparatus, whereby those state departments that were more closely associated with the forces of international capital – treasuries, central banks, and so forth – were increasing their status at the cabinet table, if you like, vis-à-vis departments of labour or departments of welfare that were more closely associated with domestic subordinated class forces.’ (Panitch 2001, p. 10)

This remark of Panitch makes you think by the way about what this meant for the status in the Dutch cabinet of a department like International Development Cooperation. Recently, Minister Koenders was invited to give a short talk in Nijmegen to shed some light on the outlines of his thoughts on how to structure international development cooperation in the new cabinet. What struck me was that he cast Dutch international development cooperation primarily in terms of tasks which belong to other Ministries: humanitarian aid by sending troops to conflict areas (Ministry of Defence), to actively engage in diplomatic missions in order to convince the warring parties to gather around a conference table and to solve their differences there instead of shooting each other to Kingdom come (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and to establish trade relations with developing countries (Ministry of Economic Affairs). What is left for a Ministry of International Development Cooperation one wonders.

Another defining characteristic of new imperialism (in reference to older variants of imperialism) is that we have to take a new perspective on inter-imperialist rivalries which in the past has led to military conflicts between imperial powers (such as the first and second World Wars). In spite of the inter-imperialist economic rivalries between European, American and Japanese capital this did not result (as in ‘the old days’) in military conflicts between the imperialist powers. What is interesting concerning this particular issue is that imperialist powers have joined forces in some military operations in developing countries (although not always wholeheartedly) and that, what is considered as a specific characteristic of new imperialism, the US has taken the lead in many of these military campaigns. Columnist Thomas Friedman approvingly wrote in the New York Times in 1999 (March 28) the following: ‘... The hidden hand of the market will never work without the hidden fist . . . and the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.’ The increasing unilateral political ideology in the US (to go for it alone, so to speak, to boycott international treaties to regulate environmental pollution, to boycott the International Court of Justice in the Hague, etc.) is seen as an important characteristic of the new imperialism. According to Michael Peters Europe and the US not necessarily join a common strategic culture any more. He quotes neo-conservative Robert Kagan (senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) who stipulates that:
‘... Americans generally see the world divided between good and evil, between friends and enemies... They favour coercion over persuasion, tending towards unilateralism. They are less inclined to act through the United Nations or other international institutions and more skeptical of international law. By contrast, Europeans see a more complex picture... They are both more tolerant of failure and more patient, preferring peaceful solutions, 'negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion.’ (Peters, 2008, p. 9)

At the same time Kagan points out that the EU with the new members from Eastern Europe and possibly Turkey could become involved in a process of a changing identity, the importance of national priorities and changing international agenda's.

Let me move on to another characteristic of the new imperialism and that is that spreading the gospel of democracy and good governance should be interpreted as an ideological instrument meant to detain the poor, marginalized, exploited masses in the Third World from engaging in political upheavals. Political transformations through revolutionary changes do not form part of the game anymore once a so-called democracy is in place. Once the people are convinced that democracy is a sine qua non for progress, and once the political elites are convinced that by at least accepting the good governance discourse, they are assured of acceptance by the international community, then circumstances continue to exist through which surplus value keeps being transferred from the periphery to the center either through the production process, unequal exchange or consumption of marketed goods. Once the idea is established that economic progress can only take place through access to the market (also at the individual level, an ideology pushed forward for example by micro-credit projects) and that democracy is the best political institutional arrangement to guarantee that progress, imperialism has created the necessary conditions to solve the ever continuing threat of social conflicts as a result of the continuing threats of overaccumulation and falling rates of profit.

What is specifically interesting here is the role that civil society is supposed to play in this whole setup. Much has been said and can be said about the role of civil society, specifically in the context of the support it receives through international development assistance. Supposedly strengthening civil society forms part of good governance (empowering the powerless through participation in national or local forms of governance). In the context of a perspective from new imperialism the notion of civil society is created and supported by international donors, and functions (if it functions) as a means to keep a check on the state becoming too independent from the international community. Through supporting civil society imperialist powers can indirectly influence how government policies are shaped. According to Henry Veltmeyer (2005, p.91):

‘Radical political economists ... tend to view NGOs as instruments [Trojan horses], oftentimes unwitting and unknowing, of outside interests and regard both economic development and democracy as masks for an otherwise hidden agenda: to impose the policy and institutional framework of the new world order.’

Let me try to sum up the most important characteristics of the new imperialism perspective as follows:

1. There is no reason to agree with one of Ankie Hoogvelt's (1997, p. xii) notions that 'The familiar pyramid of the core-periphery hierarchy is no longer a geographical but a social division of the world economy.’ There
definitely still is a clear geopolitical spatiality attached to the core-periphery hierarchy.

2. At the same time it is true that the units within the triangular power hierarchy are not just nation-states but consist of an amalgam of actors among which supranational institutions, multi national corporations, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and social movements. However, nation-states can still be regarded as major actors.

3. The US take up a primordial position in the globalized power triangle. There has been an increasing unilateralism in how the US manifests itself based upon its military hegemony.

4. The dynamics in this power triangle are based upon changing characteristics of the capitalist mode of production which produces imperialist, exploitative relations between North and South and increasing worldwide inequality between and within countries. Imperialism by necessity was and still is closely attached to the survival strategy of the capitalist mode of production.

5. These imperialist relations are sustained on the one hand through an ideological legitimation in the form of Globalism and on the other hand through direct military intervention, specifically in a unilateral way by the US.

6. Methods of absolute surplus appropriation seem to have returned: intensifying work regimes, reducing real wages, and restructuring employment away from full-time and secure employment into part-time and insecure work, something which David Harvey (2005, ch. 4) has labelled as accumulation by dispossession which relies on ‘... power, with the use of numerous techniques, ranging from stock market manipulation, through debt crises, to the commodification of nature, and open military conquest.’

7. Development assistance, currently with the emphasis on good governance, democracy and the involvment of civil society depoliticizes the development debate and prevents the rise of alternative forms of social order with an emancipatory potential for the world’s poor.

So, does new imperialism offer interesting perspectives to development studies, wedged as it is between global neoliberalism and neoliberal globalism? From the point of view of critical theory the answer is potentially affirmative. However, there are a number of drawbacks attached to adopt new imperialism as a paradigm for development studies in the 21st century. To conclude this chapter let me mention these drawbacks in arbitrary order:

1. In building up a scientific paradigmatic perspective based on the concept of new imperialism one has to take care not to be dragged into conspiracy-like theories which are often fascinating but cannot form the basis of a reconstruction of critical development studies. However, the same, can often be said about globalization theories which have been labelled by Justin Rosenberg (2000) as complete follies.

2. The second drawback is that the new imperialist perspective in order to lead to empirical research, has to be operationalized. In other words, if new imperialism exists at a paradigmatic level it should be connected to middle-range critical theories to enable research ‘on the ground’. There are some examples of how to do that but it needs more systematic attention. An
analysis of power relations is undoubtedly a central element in such an exercise. For example, research focussed on local government and the participation of the local community through participatory budgets could be organized by using concepts of Gramsci and Foucault where power relations within the local community and between the local community and local and or national governments is central instead of using a frame of analysis inspired by the likes of Robert Putnam who focus on social capital.

3. If new imperialism, together with radical political economy and critical theory, is incorporated into the academic curriculum of development studies there will be issues of strategy and tactics involved. Rocks and Hard Places mentioned in the previous paragraphs make a cautious routing necessary.

References

Global governance, NGOs and the politics of scale

Bas Arts

Introduction

"Globalization currently means liberalization and privatization of the means of production, but this does not necessarily need to be. Particularly social movements can change today’s world."

The above citation is typically Ton van Naerssen’s (2002: 186), being a critical thinker and a normatively involved analyst at the same time. The citation is analytical in the sense that current globalization patterns are criticized (with a legacy of neo-marxist jargon) and it’s normative in the sense that an alternative is believed in (especially in the potential of the anti- or other-globalization movement). My contribution to this Liber Amicorum builds on this ‘double’ perspective of Ton. On the one hand, global governance as a mode to deal with planetary issues is critically assessed by confronting it with the politics of scale literature. The latter puts the ideas of ‘global scale’ and ‘top down governing’ – so easily implied in the notion of global governance – into critical perspective. By doing so, NGOs as bearers of another type of political globalization – or better: glocalization – are addressed at the same time. Also, a rather (post)positivist approach is replaced by a social-constructivist one, preventing the analyst to fixate and reify notions such as ‘scale’ and ‘politics’.

To illustrate my argument, I will go into the case of forests. Since deforestation (particularly of topical rainforests) has reached the global agenda in the 1980s, all kind of international initiatives have been undertaken to address this topic, e.g. from FAO, UNEP, ITTO, EU and others. Together, these initiatives can be considered forms of ‘global forest governance’. Yet from a ‘politics of scale’ perspective, another picture emerges. Now the framing of the issue itself comes to the fore (the definition of local deforestation as a global issue), the scaling aspect (from the local to the global level and vice versa) as well as the constitution of the forest arena by various stakeholders, including NGOs. To my mind, the politics of scale approach is better able to fully and critically grasp the nature of international forest politics than the notion of ‘global governance’.

The format of this chapter is as follows. Firstly, the notions of governance and global governance are introduced as well as critically assessed. Particular attention will be paid to the role of NGOs and the different theoretical perspectives in this regard. Then the politics of scale perspective will be elaborated upon and subsequently applied to the case of global forest governance. The chapter will be concluded with a short résumé.

Although my analysis below is probably not (entirely) synonym with Ton’s ideas and convictions, I am sure he will like both its critical-normative undertone
Governance and its global dimension

The buzzword of the late 1990s and early 2000s in political sciences, public administration and management sciences alike is the concept of governance (Held and McGrew, 2002; Heritier, 2001, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Pierre, 2000). To most, it refers to a ‘paradigm shift’ in the way we govern (post)modern societies and organizations. Due to processes such as ‘relocation of politics’ (from the state to international and sub-national organizations), ‘de-territorialization’ (the emergence of new political spaces beyond the territorial nation state), ‘diffusion of political power’ (from public authorities to semi-public and private actors) and ‘de-legitimization of the state’ (crisis of the welfare state, state failures, lack of performance), the old ‘paradigm’ of top-down, state-led, command and control ways of steering do no longer suffice (Bovens et al., 1995; Dubbink, 1999; Hajer, 2000). Instead, we find new forms of governance and policy instruments: network-like arrangements of public and private actors, self-regulation by business organizations, public-private and civic-private partnerships, emission trading schemes, certification programs, etc (Kickert et al., 1997; Kolk, 2000; Meidinger, 2002; Bendel, 2000). Some refer to this as a ‘shift from government to governance’ or as ‘governance without government’ (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992).

The concept of governance knows many definitions. For example, Pierre (2000) distinguishes three meanings, Hirst (2000) five and Rhodes (2000) seven. Analytically, however, one may distinguish between ‘old’, ‘new’ and ‘all’ types of governance (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002; Pierre, 2000). ‘Old’ refers to traditional state steering, ‘new’ to innovative modes of governance, and ‘all’ to both categories. Normatively, one may add a fourth category, namely the promotion of a renewal of public and/or private management under the banner of good governance. Examples are new public management (NPM) and corporate governance (Table 1).

In the study of international relations (SIR), the concept of governance has become popular too and is generally referred to as ‘global governance’ (Nye & Donahue, 2000; Held & McGrew, 2002). In this domain, it has a slightly different meaning and has provoked some other debates, because the international system lacks a central authority anyway, so that we always deal with ‘government without government’ (Rosenau and Czempiel, 1992). Even in the traditional meaning of international diplomacy, organization and law, one may speak of global governance, since we lack an institution like a global government. Yet some theorists make similar distinctions as in the above, because we observe similar innovations in policy making and public steering at the global level compared to the domestic one. Therefore, Heritier (2001), for example, distinguishes between two meanings of global governance: one ‘restricted’, referring to only new governance mechanisms (such as global issue networks of public and private actors, for example on climate change) and one
‘broad’ conceptualization, referring to all modes of public and private co-
oridination in the global arena (Heritier, 2001). Also, good governance is often
distinguished in the SIR literature too. Under this label, programs of the World
Bank and of IMF to promote democratic, effective and transparent government
in Third World countries are referred to.

Table 1: Four conceptualizations of governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptualization</th>
<th>General definition</th>
<th>Global dimension</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| ‘Old’ governance  | ‘state steering’   | ‘intergovernmental
 | (top-down, command & | arrangements’      |
 | control)          | (international diplomacy, |
 |                   | organization and law) |
| ‘New’ governance  | ‘new modes of    | ‘new modes of global |
 | governance’       | governance’       | governance’        |
 |                   | (from public-private | (from issue networks to |
 |                   | partnerships to private | private standardization) |
 |                   | self-regulation)    |                  |
| ‘All’ governance  | ‘co-ordination     | ‘co-ordination     |
 |                   | mechanisms to provide | mechanisms to provide |
 |                   | for public          | for global goods’  |
 |                   | goods’              | (either public, private or |
 |                   | (either public, private or | mixed)             |
 |                   | mixed)              |                  |
| ‘Good’ governance | ‘programs to renew  | ‘programs to renew Third |
 |                   | public or private    | World government’  |
 |                   | management’         | (World Bank, IMF)  |
 |                   | (new public management, |                  |
 |                   | corporate governance)|                  |

Most conceptualizations of global governance include the (potential) relevance
of so-called non-state actors (NSAs) – for example NGOs, firms and epistemic
communities – for governing global issues. Even more so, most approaches
consider NSAs as being internal to the global governance system. This position
not only transcends state-centred approaches, such as neo-realism, but also the
classical pluralist view on international politics, in which NSAs are considered to
be external, influential lobbyists at best (Reinalda, 1997; Willetts, 1982, 1996).
However, formally and informally, NSAs are ever more an intrinsic part of
international networks of governance.

Non-state actors (NSAs) are all those actors that are not (representatives of)
states, yet that operate at the international level and that are potentially relevant
to international relations (Arts et al., 2001; Furtak, 1997; Higgot et al., 2000).
Generally, five groups of NSAs are distinguished in the literature: 1.
Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs such as UN, OECD, WTO, etc.)
2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs, which are non-profit, non-violent
pressure groups), 3. Corporate Interest Groups (CIGs) and Transnational
Corporations (TNCs), 4. Epistemic Communities (international networks of
experts) and 5. a remainder category (including terrorist networks, professional

1 Not all would agree that an IGO is an NSA. Some consider an IGO as an ensemble of states, thus
being a state actor; others believe that IGOs exhibit degrees of autonomy and authority vis-à-vis
states, thus constituting a non-state actor.
organizations, scouts, churches, etc.). In this chapter, however, we are mainly interested in the role of NGOs (given the professional background and scientific interest of the author; see for example Arts, 1998).

**Governance critique**

The concept of (global) governance is contested. Particularly its lack of theorizing about power, the state, non-state actors and scaling is criticized (Arts et al., 2008; Gilpin, 2002; Hewson and Sinclair, 1999). Too easily, relationships between public and private actors in different arenas and at different levels of policy-making are considered ‘free of power games’. If politics are to be placed on a continuum between ‘rationality’ and ‘power’, which is often done so, then the governance literature is definitely at the ‘rational side’. But the governance of (controversial) issues is more often than not going beyond rational argumentation and technocratic management, including interest-driven bargaining and crude power games.

Another criticism concerns the role, power and transformation of the nation state, which remain under-theorized. All too often, it is (implicitly) assumed that an increase of (new) governance practices is accompanied by a ‘retreat of the state’ (Albrow, 1996; Pierre, 2000; Strange, 1996). Although it is certainly the case that the state has (partly) retreated from certain domains, like economics or environmental policy, this claim cannot be hold true in general. As Hirst (2000) makes clear, the state remains dominant in those fields where it is traditionally considered ‘the sovereign’, such as the legitimate monopolization of collective violence, internal and external security, taxation and currency, law and order and social consensus-building (although we may observe some shifts in these fields too, like UN peace forces, private armies, the introduction of the Euro, and private initiatives to maintain law and order in neighborhoods). Even more so, the power of the state has *increased* in some instances, the Internet being an example (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 2002). All this points at the fact that we do not witness a general retreat of the state, in the light of governance, but a *transformation* of the state.

At the same time, the role of non-state actors, including NGOs, is not well articulated too. Although the (global) governance literature acknowledges their inherent relevancy for the management of social and political issues, they are often considered new players in a sort of ‘given’ governance arena (Held and McGrew, 2002). The idea that NGOs might also have played roles in the *constitution* of these (new) governance arrangements is however hardly recognized. Again, this does not mean that NGOs have become more important than – or even overrule – states, on the contrary. The point here is to neither over- nor underestimate the role of both states and non-state actors in global governance. On the one hand, states remain the key power containers in international politics, given their power resources, formal authority and social legitimacy (Hirst, 2000), but that does, on the other hand, not necessarily exclude a (co)constitutive role – either formal or informal – for NGOs in the emergence of new governance practices (Arts *et al*., 2001).

Finally, although the (global) governance literature does acknowledge the multi-level setting of governance practices, its view on the scale issue is quite
static in general. In many cases, the traditional hierarchies of sub-national, national, European and international politics is rather uncritically reified as is the search for the optimal scale for the governance of certain issues (Arts et al., 2008). With that, the formation of issue-specific multi-scalar practices as well as the emergence of new state and non-state spaces in global governance, beyond the ‘given’ levels of public administration, remain under-theorized.

Below, we will introduce a perspective on global governance that seems to overcome the above shortcomings. In the politics of scale perspective (see Brenner, 2001), the structuration of scale(s) is put central. As a consequence, multi-level governance is not perceived as a fixed theatre in which both states and NGOs can play their pre-given roles, but as a dynamic universe that is continuously (re)constituted during plays with open ends. Such a metaphor also gives room for the inclusion of power games. Who constitutes what? At whose expense? Or jointly with whom?

Intermezzo: different perspectives on NGOs

As written earlier, this chapter particularly focuses on the role of NGOs in global governance. At this point, it is good to realize that this role is conceptualized very differently by various theorists and their schools of thought (see Table 2).

Table 2: Four perspectives on NGOs in global governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>NGO perspective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neo-realism</td>
<td>NGOs are irrelevant in international politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International pluralism</td>
<td>NGOs may be effective lobbyists in international politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global governance</td>
<td>NGOs are an internal part of the global governance system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics of scale</td>
<td>NGOs have co-constituted the multi-scalar, global governance system</td>
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This is already touched upon in the above, but needs some further clarification. Traditionally, within the study of international relations, NGOs are considered epiphenomena. They are active in international relations, that fact is of course not denied, but they do not really matter for political outcomes. When the crunch comes, as neo-realists claim, states make the rules and determine the outcomes by which other actors, including NGOs, have to operate (Waltz, 1979). Theorists who have focused on international organizations, however, have nuanced this position. Research showed that NGOs could for example make a difference in decision-making within the United Nations (Willetts, 1982, 1996). Still, NGOs are conceptualized as external actors within this perspective, namely as political lobbyists who try to penetrate political arenas from which they are officially abandoned. Governance theorists have further radicalized this pluralist view, now considering NGOs as an intrinsic part of global governance arenas (Held and McGrew, 2002). As research shows, NGOs do not only lobby decision-makers (something they still do), but have become formally accepted policy and rule makers themselves within various issue arenas. As argued in the above, much of the governance literature however takes such arenas as pre-given.
theatres, neglecting the potential (co)constitutive role of NGOs in the formation of such arenas in the first place. Here the theory of the politics of scale introduces the fourth perspective on NGOs (see below).

**The politics of scale perspective**

In defining the concept ‘politics of scale’, I follow Brenner (2001), who distinguishes two meanings. In the *singular* meaning, politics of scale refers to the structuration of socio-spatial organization - e.g. a household, place, locality or nation - *within* one bounded geographical arena, e.g. the local, urban, national or global. In that sense, the analysis is *horizontal* in nature, at one level of scale. However, the *plural* meaning of politics of scale refers to the structuration of socio-spatial organization - e.g. a global city, an EU member state or an NGO-network - *among* geographical scales. Here the analysis is *vertical* in nature. According to Brenner, this second meaning should be the primary one, because within one level, the ‘scalar content’ of socio-spatial organization cannot be presupposed. In other words, it does not necessarily play a relevant role in shaping socio-spatial organizations within the boundaries of one level, whereas it does by definition so in multi-level settings. Moreover, one does not need the vocabulary of the politics of scale to analyze socio-spatial organization within one bounded geographical arena. Other concepts, which are already broadly used in human and political geography, suffice, according to Brenner, e.g. territory, locality, space and place. I think Brenner’s distinction is a useful one, and his choice for a plural interpretation of the politics of scale is correct. Moreover, it fits this article’s objective very well, which is the analysis of NGO networks and activities in multi-level governance settings.

Before theorizing on the role of NGOs in the politics of scale, the basic concept of ‘scale’ vis-a-vis the one of ‘level’ should be given attention to. Following Collinge, Brenner (2001:597) defines ‘scale’ as the vertical ordering of social systems and relations within a hierarchical scaffolding of intertwined territorial units, stretching from the global/worldwide, the supranational and the national downwards to the regional, the metropolitan, the urban, the local and even the individual body. It is important to realize that such ‘scales’ are neither pre-determined nor fixed in any social organization. They are produced, reproduced and transformed in human activity and history. In contrast, ‘level’ as used in concepts such as ‘two-level games’ and ‘multi-level governance’, refers to vertical orderings of interdependent political-administrative units – from the international to the domestic (two-level games) or from the EU to the Euregion to the member state (multi-level governance) – which are generally, but not necessarily, related to territory and territorial authority (Hooghe and Mark, 2001; Putnam, 1988). In this literature, the notion of ‘political-administrative level’ is generally interpreted in a rather static and pre-fixed way.

To sum up, ‘scale’ particularly refers to dynamic socio-spatial organization within a hierarchy of units, whereas ‘level’ particularly refers to pre-given political-spatial organization.
NGOs and the politics of scale

Having elaborated upon the concept of the politics of scale in the previous section, the following question still remains: How does all this relate to NGO practices? Below, three claims will be identified, namely that NGOs have: (1) linked scales, (2) re-articulated scales and (3) organized beyond scales during their short-lived history so far. To start with the first claim: it is obvious that many NGOs had an international focus right from the start, given the nature of the issues dealt with, while their establishment and action radius was mainly local in nature, at least in the 1960s and 1970s (Korey, 1998; McCormick, 1989). One might think of human rights groups, nature conservation organizations, environmental organizations, developmental groups and peace organizations. For example, the green movement has been very well known for grass-root activism since the early 1960s, while propagating a worldwide view at the same time (Nelissen et al., 1997). “Think globally, act locally” has been their famous slogan. Later on, environmental NGOs, together with scientists, were the first to define the ‘new’ global environmental issues in the 1980s: the ozone layer, climate change and loss of biodiversity (Arts, 1998; Benedick, 1991). They also propagated for political action to combat these problems at different levels, including the global one. Consequently, they now upgraded their action radius, expanding their slogan to “thinking and acting globally, as well as locally”. Also, at domestic levels within countries, the impact of foreign and international NGOs has grown as well (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Risse-kappen, 1995; Risse, 2000). Here we observe ‘multi-scalar games’, by which governments are put under pressure, from above and below, to change their policies, or even prepare for regime change. Hence, the local-global nexus operates in two ways, from the global to the local as well as from the local to the global. In either way, the national level has become ‘sandwiched’.

But there is more than that. NGOs did not simply link up different socio-geographical scales and political levels, they also challenged their definitions. Traditionally, in international politics, certain issues are considered to be covered either by national politics and jurisdiction or by international politics and law (Putnam, 1988; Ray, 1987). Desertification, for example, seems of national origin; it simply occurs within the boundaries of nation states and therefore it seems bound to national jurisdiction (Correll, 1999). Yet NGOs (and others, e.g. African states) have argued that desertification is a regional, if not a global problem. For example, the problem is caused by transboundary processes – such as adverse water management and agricultural practices in neighboring countries in sub-Sahara Africa – and even by global processes, such as climate change. Therefore, according to NGOs, it is legitimate to consider desertification as a regional and global issue. In making this claim, NGOs have not only interchanged arguments with mainstream politics, but also interchanged local and global political interests. For example, victims of so-called local problems were brought or invited to international fora to tell their stories (Princen and Finger, 1994). Also, those who (unconsciously and unintended) caused problems at the other end of the globe have been confronted with the victims of their acts. For example, Greenpeace invited indigenous chiefs whose forests had been ruined by commercial logging in Canada to the Netherlands, where ‘their’
tropical timber was in fact used, making people aware of the global nature of this so-called local issue.

This above went along with an ‘glocalization’ process of the NGOs’ organizational structures. Ever more, international NGOs and networks have been established. Examples are the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Human Rights Watch, Climate Action Network, A SEED, Jubilee 2000, World Rainforest Movement, etc. In the late 1980s and 1990s, however, an opposite trend emerged too, whereby the global movement has involved ever more national and local groups in its global practices. An ‘institutional expression’ of this trend has been the acceptance of ‘non-international’ NGOs as observers and participants at UN meetings and organizations since the middle-1980s (Willetts, 1996). As a consequence, the movement has built up very complex local-global links and networks around the world, with which it has created an own niche in international diplomacy (Princen and Finger, 1994). It could be argued that, due to the ICT-revolution, this multi-scalar mobilization capacity of social movements has increased (Hajnal, 2002). A dramatic expression of this trend has been the so-called anti- or other-globalization movement, initially organized around thematic, local and regional groups. These have intensively communicated through the internet in preparing protest marches at global meetings of international institutions, such as the WTO, World Bank, IMF, G7/8, World Economic Forum and EU (Seattle, Washington, Nice, Quebec, Genua, Davos, etc.; Dale, 2001; Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). Although this movement is much broader and, in general, much more radical than the NGOs referred to in the above, many of these have nonetheless established links with it (such as Greenpeace, Oxfam and Amnesty International).

Of course, it should be stressed that NGOs – while linking, re-articulating and organizing beyond scales – ‘contribute to’ outcomes and that they do not ‘determine’ them. They are just part of much broader social and political networks of states, intergovernmental organizations, firms, epistemic communities, etc., that together constitute the politics of scale. Also, NGOs have been challenged and counter-forced by others. For example, countries are not always happy when – in their eyes – local issues, such as human rights or environmental deterioration, become globalized.

Global forest governance: an example of multi-scalar politics

The issue of deforestation hit the international political agenda in the early 1980s (Humphreys, 1994). At that time it became clear that for several reasons – commercial logging, cultivation of agrarian lands, mining activities, building of infrastructure, lack of forest regulations, large-scale burning, unjust land rights, etc. – huge areas of forests had disappeared. Special attention drew the tropical forests, and the region of Amazonia in Brazil in particular. Figures (although always contested) pointed at an area of forests of the size of the Benelux which disappeared in this region each year (Kolk, 1996). Later on, unsustainable forest management practices in other countries (Canada, Ivory Coast, Russia) and other types of ‘endangered’ forests (boreal forests, ancient forests in general) became part of the agenda.
These problems led to a number of responses. First, NGOs like Greenpeace, WWF and the World Rainforest Movement started world-wide campaigns to stop these practices. Second, timber importing and exporting countries established the International Timber Trade Organisation (ITTO) in 1986, to deal with trade problems as well as environmental issues, and launched the voluntary ITTO 2000 target. This target aimed at basing the entire global timber trade on sustainable forest management practices in the year 2000, but obviously failed (Kern et al., 2001). And thirdly, governments in the United Nations decided that a global forest treaty to enhance conservation and sustainable management should be decided upon. However, this initiative also became a failure, due to fierce contradictions between developed and developing countries, the former emphasizing the need to conserve (tropical) forests, the latter the need to exploit them for economic reasons (Humphreys, 1994).

In the meantime, given these regulatory failures, several environmental organizations had expressed their wish to do business with industry on sustainable forestry themselves. As one NGO-leader said: “You cannot just sit back and wait for governments to agree, because this could take forever” (Bendel, 2000, p. 69). For example WWF started a dialogue with industry under the slogan Forests are your business in the UK in 1991. At global level, similar developments – dialogues between NGOs and industry – took place. In 1993, 150 organizations from the business sector, the environmental sector and the human rights movement founded the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in Toronto (Kern et al., 2001; Meidinger, 2002). Today, its headquarters are in Bonn, Germany. The main merit of the council is the design of a certification program for sustainable forest management, based on certain FSC values, criteria and standards and recognizable through its trademark.

The overall aim of the FSC is to stop large-scale deforestation and unsustainable forestry around the world by certifying those management practices which enhance the conservation and sustainable use of forests. After certification, forest owners and timber producers may use the FSC trademark, so that wood processors and consumers can recognize this timber. With that, the FSC promotes sustainable forestry through the market mechanism. Therefore Cashore (2002) labels the FSC forest certification program as a ‘non-state market-driven’ governance system. This system is based on ten principles (Meidinger, 2002): forest management, property rights, rights of the local community, labor rights, sustainability, ecology and biodiversity, planning, control of adverse social and ecological effects, conservation of forests with high ecological value, and plantation. These principles are elaborated upon in a number of more practical criteria.

FSC standardization can follow two routes, the national or the global one (Kern et al., 2001). Either national sustainable forestry standards can be developed, e.g. by national NGOs and businesses (and in co-operation with governments), which at a later stage apply for FSC accreditation. Or national standardization groups immediately take the global FSC principles and guidelines as the starting point to formulate their own standard, adapted to national circumstances. In that sense, the FSC certification program is quite flexible. Besides the accreditation of national initiatives and standards, the FSC also operates as an accreditation organization for certifiers and verifiers (Cashore, 2002; Kern et al., 2001). In order to be able to monitor and enforce in
a credible and trustworthy way, an independent system has been set up by the FSC. This means that certification and verification are undertaken by independent private organizations, such as KPMG in Canada, SKAL in the Netherlands and Smart Wood in the USA.

The FSC initiative has, according to several observers, been successful (Kern et al., 2001). It started in Mexico in 1991, where a forest area of nearly 90,000 ha. was certified. Today, about 6000 products and 900 forest areas in nearly 80 countries around the world have been certified. This amounts to about 100 million ha. in total, which is about 25 times the size of the Netherlands. To mention another success indicator: about 13% of the Dutch timber market, both primary and secondary products, was certified in 2005. In addition, FSC has become a so-called first mover in the certification market. It has challenged mainstream industry to design its own standards too. Examples are the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) of the American Forest and Paper Association and the Pan-European Forest Certification (PEFC), initiated by European forest owners and companies in the context of the intergovernmental Pan-European Helsinki process (Cashore, 2002; Meidinger, 2002). These business-originated standards come close to ISO-type environmental management systems and are therefore less demanding than FSC.

If one reads the above case with the three ‘claims’ on linking-up scales, re-articulating scales and organizing beyond scales by NGOs in mind, the following conclusions remain. NGOs were the first to politicize the issue of deforestation through their (international) campaigns. They also re-framed it into global terms, although the process of deforestation itself takes place within the boundaries of individual countries. In other words, they globalized the issue. Moreover, when governments failed to agree upon international regulation, NGOs took over the initiative. They became policy makers themselves, together with some parts of the forest industry. This process took place at two levels at the same time, within countries, linking local initiatives to global processes, and internationally, the other way around. The final result was the establishment of the FSC. Also the implementation of the standard knows two routes: the national and the international one. In that respect, it really represents a system of (private) multi-scalar governance.

Conclusion

The main challenge of this chapter was to confront the global governance literature with the politics of scale perspective in order to further scrutinize the role of NGOs in – for example – global forest governance. The reason to do so was unease with (mainstream) global governance thinking, in which the issues of scale and politics, including the role of NGOs, are (often) under-theorized. These are generally considered pre-given and static facts, while their constitution is neglected. The politics of scale perspective does nonetheless take these issues on board, thus providing another account of NGOs in multi-scalar, global governance. The forest case, in a next step, validated these topics empirically. This leads us to draw the following conclusion: NGOs are not just external

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2 Source: www.fsc.org
lobbyists or internal networkers seeking for political influence in multi-level governance. They are also change agents (co)constituting new social realities, including multiple, intertwined scales of activism and political regulation.

References


A tale of two countries: perspectives from the South on the coherence of EU policies

Paul Hoebink

Introduction

Coherence of European development policy with other European policies has been in the debate for a series of years. This debate started, as we will see later, with the introduction of the concept in the Treaty of Maastricht. As such it was taken up by some Member States, but also by European development NGOs. At the end of April 1993 for example European NGOs started lobbying against the meat exports to West Africa (or rather the subsidies on such exports). They maintained that these exports could be regarded as dumping and that they therefore disrupted the local meat markets. Over the years it has been in particular the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) which was in the middle of the debate, strengthened in the last years by criticisms from international development institutions, like the World Bank, and by the Doha-round of negotiations in the World Trade Organisations (WTO), in which groups of producers and exporters of agricultural products filed several complaints against protectionist policies and market distortions of the EU.

In this debate voices from the South are mostly heard indirectly, via NGOs in Brussels or in the capitals of the Members States, via their lawyers in the WTO. It is the intention of this paper to show some Southern perspectives on the coherence of European policies vis-à-vis developing countries. This research started from the question: What kind of incoherencies in European policies with regard to developing countries are identified by important actors in developing countries themselves? It is based on a series of interviews with high ranking officials of government institutions and civil society organisations, like employers’ federations, trade unions, chambers of commerce, women’s organisations and human rights NGOs. Since we are restricted in space in this article, I will in contrast to the larger report in both case studies concentrate the analysis on trade and fisheries.

Policy coherence: Definitions and background

Policy coherence is a relatively new concept both in politics and in the political sciences. There is in fact no mention of it in the standard textbooks on the social sciences. Even in dictionaries on European politics it is absent. To arrive at a

1. The effects of the CAP on export possibilities for developing countries of course has been under discussion from the end of the 1960s, from the beginning of Ton van Naerssen’s academic career, in particular via the cane versus beet sugar campaigns, but only partly under the denominator of ‘policy coherence’.
definition we must therefore first consult the dictionaries. As said these suggest that (in common parlance or philosophy) coherence is synonymous with consistency. Consistency and coherence of thought and statement therefore mean ‘free from self-contradiction’. Policy coherence could therefore be defined as: ‘The non-occurrence of effects that are contrary to the intended results or objectives of this policy’.

For this purpose coherence can be defined either narrowly or broadly (see below). A narrow definition would be that objectives of policy in a particular field may not be undermined or obstructed by actions or activities in this field. And a wide definition would be that objectives of policy in a particular field may not be undermined or obstructed by actions or activities of government in that field or in other policy fields.

The concept of policy coherence gained influence or, to put it more correctly, was introduced into European policies by the Treaty of Maastricht. The Treaty referred to coherence/consistency in its foreign policy in Article C (see below), but for development cooperation policy Article 130U and 130V were in particular important. Article 130 V of Title XVII of the Treaty on European Union - the Maastricht Treaty - states that [CEC/CEC, 1992:61]: The Community shall take account of the objectives referred to in Article 130 U in the policies that it implements which are likely to affect developing countries.’

This article could be called the Maastricht Treaty's ‘coherence article’ in the field of development co-operation. It was sustained in the Treaty of Amsterdam under Title XX as Article 178. Article 130V refers to Article 130U.

There are different ways to classify coherence. We will not go into detail here, but it is important to present a classification to be able to define the different elements of policy coherence and the causes for incoherence. This classification of coherence stems from the perspective of the viewer. Coherence can have a narrow or restricted angle, or a broad one. With regard to policy coherence this means that it can focus on one terrain or field of policy only, or try to make links with other fields or domains of policies. The restricted definition places coherence within one terrain of government policy. We could also call this internal coherence, because the assessment of policy coherence stays here within the limits of the domain of a given policy. At a contrast, the broad definition will look at the way the attainment of a given set of goals of government policies in a certain field are stimulated or hampered by government policy or policies in another field or other terrains.

The restricted (2) or internal (2) type is incoherence between different sets of foreign policy and development co-operation policy, e.g. between trade policies and development co-operation, between security policy and development co-operation, between human rights policies and development co-operation.

The third type is the broad or external one, including incoherence between development co-operation policies and policies in other fields, which can in theory, be all parts of European policy making. In principle it will be those policies most likely to affect also developing countries. In effect this will mean the CAP, CFP, certain consumer protection policies, parts of (global) environmental policies, industrial policies.

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2 For a more detailed overview see. Hoebink (1999 and 2004).
Notwithstanding the efforts to achieve coherence of policy, incoherence is often a given. First, as government has to deal with many parties and pressure groups, it may well be impossible to find optimal solutions that satisfy all parties concerned and achieve all objectives. This is, of course even more so in the European Union, where the number of stakeholders and parties is much larger than at a national level. Second, government is not a unitary whole, but generally consists of a large number of departments, institutions and corporations. These departments and institutions take a large number of policy measures, monitor their implementation and are quite often faced with conflicting interests. Third, it is difficult to weigh all the factors, interests and parties and their reactions to an initial policy decision and even more difficult to weigh them on prognostics of an unknown future. Consequently, it is often unclear what will be the precise effects or side effects of the policy.

**Morocco and EU Policy Coherence**

*Morocco and the EEC after the Treaty of Rome.*

Morocco has a long standing relationship with the EEC/EU. Morocco’s strong historical and cultural links and its economy heavily dependent on the French market, integrated in the Franc zone, should have led to an early association with the Community. Such an early association should also have been in line with the Joint Declaration of Intent to the Treaty of Rome, in which it was promised to start quickly with negotiations with Morocco (and Tunisia) to safeguard traditional trade flows. It nevertheless lasted thirteen years after Morocco’s independence before in 1969 the first limited special association agreement (under Article 238) came into force. This could be seen as symbolic for the relationship between Morocco and the EEC/EU, or even for the incoherent policy of the EEC/EU vis-à-vis the Maghreb/Mediterranean countries.

Cooperation with the Mediterranean countries started with a case by case approach, allowing for full association with Greece and Turkey at the beginning of the sixties and limited association with Tunisia, Morocco (end of the sixties), Malta and Cyprus (beginning of the seventies). Other countries (Yugoslavia, Israel, Lebanon) however got non-preferential agreements. Morocco and Tunisia were said to be in the midst of the Pyramid of preferences competing with its citrus and olive oil directly with Italian producers. Negotiations were often difficult, in particular with those wine, citrus and olive oil producers, from which Italy feared competition. The Community was thus not able to ‘follow a coherent policy vis-à-vis this important neighbouring area’. The general line was that industrial products could freely enter into the Common Market, what was also in line with the reallocation of European textiles, clothing and shoe production to for example Spain, Tunisia and Morocco, but that agricultural products faced high tariffs or quota limitations. Its is clear that production in the Maghreb countries was and is not complementary to (southern) European production as it is with most ACP countries and thus led to a more protectionist policy from the

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3. Weatherford [1994], emphasises that in the economic literature government is, however, often regarded as a unitary actor.

side of the EEC/EU. This was reinforced with the accession of in particular Spain to the EU and has more or less been the line since then. Political elements weighed heavily in the relations what in particular can be read from European reluctance to go into deeper relations with authoritarian regimes in Greece, Spain, Morocco and Turkey. Aid was very limited in this period up to 1979, consisting mainly of loans.

A second phase in this relationship with the Mediterranean began, when in Paris in 1972 the European Council adopted the so-called ‘Global Mediterranean Policy’. ‘Global’ only meant in this case that the treatment of the Mediterranean countries should become more systematic, but this new policy also included cooperation agreements that had a bit broader scope, including next to trade issues also aid. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria signed more or less identical cooperation agreements in 1976. The negotiations were described as being ‘bitter’, in which the Northern partners were willing to extend more concessions to industrial products, while Morocco and Tunisia were looking for better prospects for their agricultural products. With Greece, Spain and Portugal as newly coming EC-members, it could not be expected that many concessions with regard to agricultural products could be made. It meant that in particular Tunisia and Morocco lost out. It meant also that quantitative restrictions on textiles and clothing imports from Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt were introduced. The trade preferences thus stayed far from the French proposal at that time of establishing a free trade area in the Mediterranean. In the so-called ‘pyramid of privileges’ the southern Mediterranean countries were clearly lower than the ACP countries. A series of Cooperation Agreements though and financial protocols attached to them allowed for a modest increase in technical and financial grants and loans. But due to the economic crisis of the seventies, it meant also that the amounts of aid stayed modest.5

In those years Morocco filed a formal application – after an informal one was rebuffed in 1984 – to become member of the EC in 1987. The Moroccan application was rejected on basis of Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome which is said to reserve membership to European countries.6 At the positive side of this application was that it gave Morocco a better place at the European agenda with a first visit of Jacques Delors in the autumn of 1987.

Europe’s little coherent policy vis-à-vis the southern Mediterranean had a new change in 1989. After the second enlargement which brought the ‘Mediterraneans’ Spain, Portugal and Greece into the Community the focus of the EU was clearly more southward. Added to this was that the economic crisis of the 1980s did hit countries as Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt heavily. Morocco was hit in particular by a strong reduction in aid from the Gulf States and by low phosphate prices on the world market. Europe’s so-called ‘New Mediterranean Policy’ initiated in 1989 should address the problems of youth unemployment, growing poverty and immigration. The new policy aimed at introducing market reform (and in this following at a distance IMF policies), stimulating private investment and giving better market access. At the same time when European

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5 Under the first financial protocol for four years (1978-1981) it was ECU 659 million for eight countries, for a major part EIB loans. Egypt was the main receiver with about ECU 43 million a year; Jordan received ECU 10 million a year. Under the third financial protocol (1987-1991) the total amount grew to ECU 1.5 billion. (Cox/Chapman, 1999: ch.4).

6 Haddadi, 2002, pp.151-152.
institutions came with quite substantial criticism on European protectionism vis-à-vis the Mediterranean countries (in particular with regard to agricultural products and textiles) however, very little changed in this respect. Aid flows did grow between 1987 and 1991 with 62 per cent, but still clearly lagged behind what was invested in other programmes.

After the Luxembourg Council declaration on human rights (1991) the European Parliament voted in favour of a freeze of development assistance to Morocco on ground of human rights abuses in the Western Sahara and in Moroccan prisons. The discussion was fuelled by international NGOs and by Gilles Perrault’s book about human rights violations, Notre Ami le Roi, published in 1990. Morocco answered strongly by cutting of the negotiations on a new fishing agreement. It all led to more diplomatic exchange, to more discussions in Europe on its relationship with the southern Mediterranean countries and finally a Spanish proposal to intensify relations with the Maghreb. The Euro-Maghreb Partnership quickly lost momentum but found its way to Cannes and Barcelona. Also at the Moroccan side Hassan II introduced democratic reforms, amongst others creating a Consultative Council of Human Rights.

This all is said to have become part of the past in 1995. The European summit in Cannes in June 1995 and the following Barcelona Summit with the Mediterranean countries in December in the same year are in the European Union’s documents described as a ‘watershed’, a major change in which issues as: common security, peace and stability, an ‘area of shared prosperity’, the development of human resources and relations between civil societies are said to be integrated into a broad cooperation. What is clear is that the fear for the upcoming Muslim fundamentalism in particular in Algeria, forced the European Union to take a new position vis-à-vis the southern Mediterranean countries. In the follow-up of the Barcelona Summit negotiations again appeared very difficult. Only small steps were taking into the direction of a free trade area that should be created in 2010. A series of Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements are replacing the old cooperation agreements. Each of these agreements contains articles on a gradual elimination of custom duties, but for agricultural products special provisions are made. The agreements are thus more comprehensive and covering all areas of the Barcelona Declaration, but are not going very far or deep.

After a Euro-Mediterranean Summit in 1991 and the Barcelona Summit aid commitments and disbursements did gradually grow again in the second half of the 1990s, since the Council in 1995 devoted € 3.4 billion up to 2000 for the special MEDA I budget line, created in October 1996 as a follow up of the 4th financial protocol. The main aid receiver stayed Egypt, with in a second echelon Morocco. Water supply was the main sector for European aid, where it was agriculture in earlier years. Morocco signed its European Mediterranean Association Agreement (EMAA) already in 1996 and thus, with Tunisia, was the first to become part of the European-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP).

The MEDA programme has been substituted by the Neighbourhood Programme and Morocco is by far the biggest receiver in this programme. The

7 Idem, p.153.
8 Also this is seen as an example that the EU is not willing to allow competition in this sector with its southern Member States.
European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) is endowed with €11.9 billion for 2007-2013. For the period 2007-2010 the funds allocated to the Moroccan government amount to € 654 million. As the Commission puts it: ‘These funds will be spent in contributing to Morocco’s ongoing economic reform’.

Trade between Morocco and the EU.
The EU is Morocco’s biggest trading partner. In particular the export dependency of Morocco is standing out with between 66 and 75 per cent of its exports directed at the European market. In terms of imports more than half stems from the EU. The balance of trade is still positive at the EU side. Trade between the EU and Morocco did grow fast in the 1990s. EU imports from Morocco grew with 85 per cent between 1993 and 2002 (growing from € 3,394 million to € 6,265 million). Since 2002 trade stagnated. EU imports from Morocco went up to € 7.8 billion in 2007. EU exports to Morocco grew a bit slower with 80 per cent between 1993 and 2002 (from € 4,237 million in 1993 to € 7,624 million in 2002), but went up quicker after 2002 to € 12 billion in 2007.

Morocco’s traditional and main exports to the EU are still food products (citrus fruits, vegetables like tomatoes and fishery products). The export of citrus fruits is more or less stagnant, while fish and crustaceans exports are increasing and vegetable exports are more important than fruits. More recently also flowers became an important agricultural export product, but exports are dwindling. Agricultural products account for a fifth of the EU’s total imports from Morocco, and 6 per cent of its total exports. In 2002, the EU imported agricultural products from Morocco for a value of over € 1,318 million, while it exported for a worth of € 428 million. Industrial products exported are mainly textiles and clothing, although recently also automotive parts gained in importance. Textiles and garments represent about the same value as agricultural products. Main imports are fabrics for the textile and clothing industries, various types of machinery and equipment, chemicals, and wheat. Industrial products enter the EU duty-free. Agricultural export products are bound to quotas, seasons and duties. Under the Association Agreement the EU and Morocco granted each other some trade concessions for certain agricultural products. In Article 18 of the Agreement it is stipulated that discussions should be held with the objective to come to a further reciprocal liberalisation of agricultural trade.

Problems with Exports
According to the entrepreneurs, the Moroccan economy can potentially profit tremendously from trade liberalisation. They esteem that (internal and external) liberalisation that has already taken place over the past decade has boosted the Moroccan economy, created jobs, and decreased poverty. Main opponents of liberalisation are those with stakes in the former economic state monopolies, which produced low quality products for high prices. Since the internal liberalisation, prices have gone down and quality has gone up. Decreased import tariffs and a reduction of corruption have also had positive effects. The association agreement is positively evaluated as such, but on the condition that its functions well. There are severe doubts on the ‘equity’ principle: Up to now,
concrete policies like agrarian protection, the very difficult circulation of business people, and the de facto low support to increase competencies of Morocco’s labour force (e.g. through education, internships, etc.).

Tariff and non-tariff protection is a problem, but this can eventually be solved through negotiations. EU support for sectors like agriculture is seen as a much bigger problem. However, the most fundamental problem is the lack of competitiveness of the Moroccan economy. Entrepreneurs esteem that it is absolutely necessary to improve competencies of Morocco’s enterprises and labour force. This so-called mise à niveau operation is not only important to increase efficiency of production, but also – and which is equally important – in the interest of the vital process of standardisation. The latter means that Morocco will be able to comply with EU’s quality standards for export commodities (to circumvent non-tariff protection), that management processes comply with ISO standards, harmonisation of commercial law, juridical procedures, and accountancy standards, and mutual recognition of diplomas. This can only be achieved through support from outside and through education and training of Moroccan professionals.

In general industrial products have a duty-free access to the European market, but the exceptions are in sectors that are of particular importance for Moroccan industries. High tariffs, in comparison with ACP-countries, still prevail on textiles, apparel, and footwear. Duties are double in comparison with ACP-countries. The ‘production-complementarity’ with the southern European states also in these sectors plays a negative role as seen from the Moroccan perspective.

No cases of unfair competition from European imports were reported. The general fear of ‘rough’ competition from China is much more prevalent among officials and employers, but also from the side of independent economic analysts.

Fisheries

Most probably the most contested dossier in the relation between Morocco and the EU are the fisheries agreement or, better formulated, the negotiations on the fisheries agreement. It is a general feeling among Moroccan officials as well as Moroccan NGOs and entrepreneurs that during the negotiations ‘the door was slapped in the Moroccan’ face’, because it was more lucrative in the final end for Spain not to come to an agreement. Spain then would be able to look for financial compensation in Brussels. From the other side the general statement is that Moroccan demands were too high to being fulfilled by the Union. But the issue is so sensitive and delicate that for example officials from DG Fisheries hardly dare to touch it. What is clear, is that a compensation of about € 72 million a year was already paid in 2000 to Portuguese and (mainly) Spanish fishermen.

The third Fisheries Agreement between Morocco and the European Community expired on 20 November 1999. Under this agreement nearly 500 vessels in total and more than 400 Portuguese and Spanish vessels were fishing in the Moroccan waters. The financial went to € 500 million over the life of the agreement, making it the most important and most costly fishing agreement. These agreements could be seen as an extension of the agreement Spain had with
Morocco before. In discontent with the results of the agreements the Moroccan government tried to get a larger compensation at the same time reducing the number of European (Spanish) vessels in the Moroccan waters. Therefore a first agreement was concluded already in 1988. In the 1990s Morocco ‘absorbed about 40 per cent of the EU budget for third countries agreements and accounted for about 54 per cent of the total value of catches. Of the 477 vessels allowed to fish in Moroccan waters 404 were Spanish, coming mainly from Andalusia, Galicia, and the Canaries). With the second agreements of 1992 compensation were already increased with 50 per cent. The negotiations on a new agreement were already very difficult in 1995 and nearly collapsed. In the third fisheries agreement financial compensation took a new height and € 145 million were added for projects of scientific research, training and co-operation.

During 1999 and 2000 continuing negotiations took place in Brussels as well as in Rabat. The Moroccans offered several options to the Union. The first was an agreement at cost of € 90 million a year with increased landings and a reduced number of European vessels. The second contained an agreement with 100 percent landing obligations in Morocco. The third and the fourth offered fishing rights only on non-sensitive species with proportional or no financial compensation at all. It was in particular the high financial compensation that was seen as disproportionate by the Community. It was suggested that on the number of vessels, landing obligations, fishing zones and biological rest periods agreement could be reached. In line with Morocco’s discontent on the low level of cooperation and landings in Morocco, it offered the Community a choice between a high compensation and a low level of cooperation or limited and largely reduced access. Finally the negotiations went into a deadlock in March 2001. According to Commissioner Franz Fischler ‘the Moroccan expectation went far beyond any reasonable evaluation’. It was stated that the EU was keen to conclude an agreement which would also take account of Moroccan interests and was also willing to accept that most EU vessels would have to land their catches in Moroccan ports.

A main point of divergence was said to be the fishing levels (vessels, biological rest periods, gear) for ‘key commercial fisheries, notably cephalopods and shrimps’. Morocco wanted a reduction for these species of 60 to 80 per cent. It was concludes that what Morocco was offering, was ‘not interesting to major sections of the fleet’, e.g. Spanish vessels. Under the earlier agreement 113 shrimp trawlers and 86 cephalopod vessels did have access to Moroccan waters.

Two opinions can be heard on the collapse of the negotiations. One states that Morocco negotiated too hard and overplayed its hand. It now lost as well the compensation as well part of the landings. It is said that Morocco misses the economic and technical capabilities to operate a large scale fishing fleet. Now Japanese, Korean and Russian ships are seen fishing in the Moroccan waters. Some state partly illegally because the Moroccan marine is not able to control the Moroccan fishing waters, but at least with little financial compensation to Morocco. Recent figures of the Ministry show that in particular catches of crustaceans and cephalopods have gone down in recent years.
Another observation most heard in Rabat and Casablanca states that it was the EU, in casu Spain, which blocked the negotiations. Moroccan officials all indicate that they were disillusioned with the three earlier agreements in the light of the limited development benefits they brought to Morocco. The agreements were seen as exploitative alone, offering European vessels the richness of the Moroccan waters for just a financial compensation not on a basis of cooperation for development. The fear was underlined that Morocco would sell the riches of its seas and that it would end being overexploited and empty as the Mediterranean.

What struck the Moroccans hardest – and is seen as the ultimate example of the hand of Spain in these negotiations – that as a result of the collapse of the negotiations also fisheries projects were ended. If these projects are part of the development cooperation relation between Morocco and the EU, why then would they be suspended, if negotiations on a commercial agreement can not be concluded, is the question most commonly asked. If the EU is serious about the support of 200.000-250.000 small fishermen why then stop the technical support? Why stop the support for research on fish stocks?

**Senegal and the EU**

*Senegal, the Treaty of Rome, and the Lomé and Cotonou Conventions*

Senegal has been part of the Yaoundé and Lomé Conventions from the beginning. It was already part of the group of Associated African and Malagasy States (AAMS) consisting mainly out of French and Belgian colonies in Africa (in total 18 states in 1963), which together with the Overseas Territories were the negotiating body with the Community after the signing of the Treaty of Rome. With the independence of several African states at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Articles 131-136 of the Treaty of Rome were not binding them anymore. Negotiations started on new forms of association with the EC. Senegal became independent in 1959 and is said to be also one of the very active members of the group in these negotiations which finally resulted in the Convention of Yaoundé of July 1963 (with 18 African states) and six years later to Yaoundé II, which was mainly a copy of Yaoundé I. Unilateral association thus became ‘negotiated association’ (Grilli 1993:19) and Senegal’s Leopold Senghor, as one of the more moderate African leaders played an important role in it.

Since the 18 of Yaoundé I, mainly former French and Belgian colonies, did not have to fear the competition of former British colonies yet, aid levels and access to the European market remained more or less unchanged. It did put the AAMS group of countries in a privileged position. In exchange European access to their markets and rights of EC citizens put the EC in a favourable position. Senegal

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9 It has to be noted that Spain received € 170 million (Portugal € 24) in 2000 and 2001 alone as compensation for fishermen and vessel owners affected by the non-renewal of the Morocco agreement.

10 One of the sensitive issues at stake here is of course the fact that most of the artisanal fishermen fish in the coastal waters of the Western Sahara.
took part in all this, as also in all the structures (Association Council, Parliamentary Conference) that were created alongside.

Senghor also played a pivotal role in the negotiations on Lomé I in the beginning of the 1970s. Under his leadership and that of the Nigerians the AAMS group quickly found themselves in a ‘cohesive and aggressive negotiating group’ (Grilli 1993:27) of ACP-countries. It led to an inclusion of the export revenue stability instrument Stabex financed by the Community and the abandonment of reciprocity in trade relations between the ACO and the EC. Furthermore the Sugar Protocol, making a first small inroad in European agricultural protectionism was part of these ‘aggressive’ negotiations.

The privileged position of West-African, Sahel and other Francophone countries however changed little after in 1975, when in Lomé I Eastern and Southern African countries were integrated. Aid per capita, also to Senegal, stayed on average four times higher. Lomé II and Lomé III also brought only minor changes in this position. This became even more obvious in the second half of the 1980s when Senegal (and Ivory Coast) were hit by economic recession. Both countries, which economically did quite well since independence, then suffered from their integration in the Franc zone, weakening their position in the international commodity markets. As a consequence direct EU aid to Senegal in that period increased tenfold, from $ 6 million to $ 65 million in 1988.

In the line-up for the negotiations on the Cotonou Convention also criticisms on Senegalese economic policies grew. It was indicated that Senegal lost a fifth of its export markets since the 1980s, because its exports made no progress at all.11 It was one of the signs that trade preferences in the Lomé Conventions only worked for a small number of states. The Economic Partnership Agreements are one of the new instruments of the Cotonou Convention to foster trade between the EU and the ACP-countries and among regional groups themselves. New Country Strategy Papers should also in the case of Senegal in anew format plan for old and new instruments and be a monitoring instrument to follow progress. Several local participants, among which Civil Society organisation should take part in the process of the formulation of the new CSPs.

There is also quite some discussion on the EPAs. One of the issues put forward is about the necessity of the institution of an EPA, when there is already a WTO which is already covering issues as reciprocity and market access. Some NGOs also indicate that there are two types of countries in the region, Least Developed Countries and others, and that, if the LDCs get a better access to the European Market, this might lead to dislocation of a certain set of activities to these LDCs. Whereas cooperation between these countries is a major goal of the EPAs this could lead to collisions. The situation in West-Africa is seen as even more complicated as one has to deal also with differences between Anglophone and Francophone countries (apart from Arab phone) with all the differences in culture attached to it.

Also the philosophy behind the EPAs is criticised. It suggests that free trade leads to more economic growth and that thus what African countries are going to gain by it will be more than they are going to loose by the termination of the

11 Statement of the EU-delegate Manuel Lopez Blanco, Le Soleil, 5 June 2004. It is important to note that Lopez Blanco was the main architect of the trade paragraphs of the EU Green Paper containing the EU’s proposals for the renegotiation of Lomé.
trade preferences. This philosophy is qualified as dubious. What African countries might win on some products, they are certainly going to lose on others. These losses might be compensated within the EPA, but this is at the level of the state and is not a compensation for producers and labourers. In this respect in particular European protectionism in agriculture is under criticism, with which we will deal later.

**Trade**

**Exports**

Senegal’s exports are highly concentrated in the primary sector and primary products represent 90% of export income. Its exports consist mainly of groundnut, phosphate and fisheries. Of them fisheries is the most important, contributing between 35 and 40% to export income. Fisheries exports even contributed 56% to total exports in 1995. In the first five 1990s there was only a very slight growth of exports of manufactured goods, concentrated in a very limited number of firms and a negligible impact on employment.\(^{12}\)

Over the years since independence Senegal lost considerably in market share. Its per capita exports are among the lowest in the world. In the 1990s there was even a drop in export incomes of about 2 per cent per year, while at the same time other SSA countries saw a growth of on average 5 per cent per year.\(^{13}\) This drop was in particular caused by the high and unrealistic exchange rate of the CFA. In money terms exports regained from 1995, after the devaluation of the CFA. But in the second half of the 1990s in particular reduced prices and reduced volumes of phosphate, vegetable oils, shrimps and lobster caused a new slide in exports. Fisheries exports fell dramatically again in 2000 and 2001, good prices however kept income more or less stable. Also the groundnut (oil) exports did relatively well.\(^{14}\)

Traditionally 40-45% of the Senegalese exports have Europe as destination. But exports to the EU are going down in relative terms and are less than 30% at the moment. This is mainly due to the fall of fisheries exports. Main European importers are France, Italy and Greece. About 30% of the exports are going to African countries, mainly to the ‘Hinterland’, countries in West-Africa. The market of the Americas is negligible and collects not more than 1% of the exports. Senegal’s exports to the EU were thus reduced from € 453 million in 2001 and € 521 million in 2005 to € 372 million in 2007. 78% of these exports in 2007 were still agricultural products. The EU exports to Senegal were € 1.8 billion in 2007.

Groundnuts are the most important product for cash income for the rural population. Whereas more than half of the Senegalese population is considered to be poor, 75 to 80% of the rural households were poor. Growth in agriculture is stagnating and also is the production of groundnuts, although since the devaluation of the CFA franc (1994) is slight increase occurred from 1997 to 2001. Half of primary sector output comes from agriculture. Since the


\(^{14}\) Ibidem.
millennium there was strong growth of agricultural production, but this growth is seen as very fragile and with little effect on rural poverty yet. In 2000 agriculture contributed 21% to exports and 17% to Senegal’s GDP, while half of the labour force was employed in agriculture. Senegal is the 6th producer on a world scale behind China, India the USA, Nigeria and Indonesia. Its share in world production however was more than halved between 1970 and 2000, from 5.5% of world production to 2.3%.

It is a general feeling under Senegalese producers that European agricultural policies need to be restructured. This holds for the problems Senegalese producers are confronted with when European products are ‘dumped’ on the Senegalese market (see below), but also with regard to the access for Senegalese (African) products to the European market. Access of agricultural products might be without problem ‘off-season’, but they are directly confronted with high tariffs at moments that European products are harvested and brought onto the market. Senegalese tomatoes (and Moroccan beans) are quoted as examples.

Phyto-sanitary regulations are a second problem here. The EU-regulation of aflatoxin is quoted as the main example here. The EU regulation allows for much lower levels of aflatoxin than the Codex Alimentarius. It has been argued that maximum levels set in the Codex stem from a deliberate legislative process of weighing by international health experts in the FAO and WHO, while European levels were set as an average of levels set by the Member States. These higher levels cause serious problems for producers of nuts, groundnuts and dried fruits. In the legislative process the EU did not take did not take their interests into account, not in terms of what are reasonable maximum levels, neither in granting developing countries a transitional period. Senegal, as an important producer of ground nuts, is one of the victims. Of course reducing aflatoxin levels is a matter of training and improvement of agricultural practices of Senegalese farmers, but changes in these practices, as has been concluded in the quoted study on this case, take time and a huge effort of extension services. It is suggested that the EU could have been more complaisant. The introduction of the new phyto-sanitary regulation by the General Food Law coming into force from January 2006 show the same lacunae as those observed in the aflatoxin case.

Imports
There are a series of imports stemming from Europe which are said to be incoherent with European policies. The two main incoherencies indicated are: 1 that import hamper or even destroy local Senegalese production; 2. that some imports are bad for the environmental conditions in Senegal. In both cases NGOs and employers federation state that the Senegalese government has not the will or the power to regulate these imports better. It is said to be under pressure of WTO trade-rules or that it does not want to complicate relations with the EU and thus not is able or wants to counteract on these imports.

To the first type of imports belong in particular imports of agricultural products. Some stem from Asia. The liberalisation of the world market also for food products makes competition with rice imports from Asian countries very difficult for producers in the Fleuve region. Import surges from Europe, in

\[15\] I.Moonen (2004:6 and Chapter 4).
particular from the Netherlands, most recently have created serious problems for Senegalese producers. They were reported not only by some NGOs but also in the Senegalese newspapers. Most strongly brought forward is the case of chicken legs. Other cases appearing in the local press in Senegal are onions and potatoes. Other products quoted, but not sustained with case material, are milk powder and wheat.

In the 1990s food imports in Senegal more than tripled. One of the main reasons is said to be the general reduction of import tariffs by the successive implementation of structural adjustment programmes. Tariffs on poultry meat imports were thus in several steps lowered from 55% to 20%. The Senegalese government requested the WTO for a waiver to maintain a system of reference prices for a series of 20 food products, including poultry and milk powder. This request was partly granted. While imports of poultry meat were negligible at the mid 1990s they grew to more than 11,000 tonnes in 2003, mainly consisting of frozen cuts (legs) from the Netherlands (about two thirds) and Belgium. At the same time local production declined. Imports thus grew from only 1% of local consumption to 19% in 2002, according to the FAO statistics. A similar pattern can be established with the imports of milk powder (from France), but here local production remained fairly stable. Producer organisations indicate that 70% of broiler farms around the urban areas have closed and that the sector is in a crisis. A spokesman of the Ministry of Agriculture reports a production decline of 30%. Up to mid-2003 small export restitutions were given by the EU on about a third of the total volume exported in the last seven years. The Senegal case, together with similar cases from West-Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ivory Coast) served as an example in a campaign of French and Belgium NGOs under the title ‘L’Europe plume l’Afrique’.

Similar problems are reported on onions and potato imports. Imports of onions have surged to 30,000 tonnes in the last years, 50% more than in 2002. In principle Senegal is self sufficient with a production of 100,000 tonnes and a consumption of 70,000 tonnes. Post-harvest losses however are rather high. Imports of potatoes have increased to more than 10,000 tonnes. In the case of potatoes local production stagnated and there were also problems with conservation. Urban consumers in these cases seem to prefer the quality of imported potatoes and onions, because prices of these are reported to be 25% to 50% higher than those of local products, according to the season. Recent reports indicate that local products show a better resistance to foreign imports.

The second incoherence is addressing the import of second hand cars and computers. Total imports of second hand cars were around 24,000 a year

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17 According to the FAO study it was 16,600 tonnes. Other figures indicate 11,950 tonnes in 2003. This last figure seems more reliable, looking at the national production of about 25,000 tonnes in 2003.
between 2000 and 2004. A decline has been reported in 2004, due to new legislation on imports.\textsuperscript{19} Senegalese NGOs indicate that these imports create enormous environmental problems in particular in Dakar. They see it as dumping of European of European garbage in African countries. The Senegalese government is preparing a law which should stop the import of second hand cars that are more than five years old, but at the other side these imports are generating quite some custom revenues for the Senegalese government. Custom revenues on second hand cars were estimated at more than a quarter of total customs income of the Senegalese government in the first three years of the new millennium.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Fisheries}

\textit{The Fisheries Agreement is a commercial agreement and those who state that it isn’t, is not honest}, is a statement one can hear from fisheries officials in Dakar: ‘\textit{Europe has bought itself access to Senegalese fishing waters for its vessels}’. They also stress that there is a total incoherence between the agreement and its goals at the one side, and the goals of conservation of fishing resources and of development at the other side. Senegal has limited possibilities to control foreign vessels. Even the money that the EU offers in return for the access is seen as a danger, since the Ministry of Fisheries now had to fight with the Ministry of Finance for every penny to develop the sector and for conservation. It is then easy to conclude, stresses a spokesmen from the Ministry that there is a total incoherence between the official discourse and the practice.

The situation in the Senegalese fisheries is very complex. To describe it as a competition between Senegalese artisanal fishermen and modern Spanish vessels, as is sometimes done, is a clear simplification. There are several actors involved and a series of species that are not all overexploited. Its is important to keep in mind that one out of 6 active Senegalese tries to earn his money in fisheries.

The demand from Europe is growing not only for the noble species, but also for other fish to be reproduced into fish meal and to be integrated into cattle feed. All this is said to create heavy pressure on the Senegalese resources. All Senegalese actors indicate that it should be the central goal of Senegalese fisheries policy to enlarge the added value and to have landings and transformation to take place in Senegal as much as possible.

The export conditions for the Senegalese fisheries are rather difficult. The Senegalese position in the international competition is not very strong, since production costs are high, due to the high level of employment and low per capita production. 600.000 people work in the fisheries sector. Production costs are also high because, the Senegalese banks are not fit to finance this sector and thus are loans expensive. Interest rates are high and high bank guarantees are needed to get finance. Furthermore prices of electricity and water make it difficult for the Senegalese fisheries to compete. Also in this sector there is a general feeling that Senegal has much to loose with the institution of an EPA.


\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Le Quotidien}, 8 April 2003.
Now Senegal is in the advantage, since Asian producer have to pay a 24% customs tax and Senegal nil. It is afraid of loosing this advantage.

Phyto-sanitary regulations present another problem. European regulations are rather strict, but clear. They are not tested under the conditions of a tropic country though. Beside that the way the regulations are put into practice in the Member States might differ quite substantially. Member states should comply with the norms and standards of Brussels is the general feeling. The European Commission itself does not have a control bureau in Senegal. France is quoted to have supported projects in this sector to make it easier to comply with norms and standards.

The negotiations on a new agreement in 2001-2002 were depicted as ‘very tough’. Nine rounds of negotiations were necessary to come to an agreement. The EU started the negotiations by demanding a 60% increase in tonnage compared with the former agreement. The Senegalese from their side wanted a reduction in tonnage and fishing zones and no fishing rights for European vessels for some socially sensitive (sardinelles) or overexploited species. Other sensitive issues in the negotiations were technical matters as duration of the licences, fishing gear, biological rest periods, boarding of fishermen and controllers, and fishing zones. The negotiations were blocked during six months over Senegalese propositions to change the fishing zones. For the first time Civil Society organisations as organisations of fishermen and of the fish industry took part in the negotiations. This strengthened the negotiating position of the Senegalese, forced the EU to several concessions and led to an agreement on several technical matters. But in the last negotiation round as well the negotiator of the Ministry of Fisheries was substituted and the Civil Society organisations were not welcome anymore. There are suggestions that the EU forced the Senegalese government to change negotiators, as happened later, in 2004, also in the negotiations with Mauritania.

The agreement was finally signed in June 2002 for the period July 2003 until 30 June 2006. It gives 68 European vessels, of which 45 tuna trawlers, the right to fish in Senegalese waters. Additionally some 84,000 tonnes per year of demersal species could be fished, of which a small part should be landed in Senegalese ports. Compensation paid for the agreements amount to 16 million per year (from € 12 million in the former agreement). This was far less than what Senegal originally demanded. € 3 million of that amount is reserved for special activities to foster sustainable fisheries (€ 500,000), for security in artisanal fisheries (€ 500,000), for research (€ 500,000) and for inspection and control (€ 700,000).21

Criticisms on the agreement focus on four aspects. The first is that the compensation that the EU pays is only for a small part reserved (€ 3 million) in the fisheries sector in research and training. The ‘décaissement’ of these projects is very slow, because there are rather strict rules on counterpart funds. The Ministry of Finance is said to use the existence of these special funds to curtail the Ministry of Fisheries organisation complain that two years after the signing of the agreement the Senegalese government did not start any project yet for the development of the fisheries sector. Several organisations indicate that the Senegalese government lacks a strategy for the development of the sector.

Organisations of fishermen and industrialists indicate that in their opinion a major part of the compensation that the EU pays, should be invested in the fisheries sector. The EU does finance also, together with the French AFD, the project PAPA Sud which is meant to promote a better quality of fish products.

The second point of critique is that the agreement also gives access to fishing grounds and species which are overexploited, like most wanted species as the thiof. These are species which are of interest in particular for Senegalese fishermen and are in majority exported to France to be consumed by African immigrants. Access to the coastal zone for European vessels is thus seen as incoherent with European development cooperation policy but also with those of sustainable fisheries. These zones should have been left for artisanal fisheries to have these more involved in the export game.

The so-called ‘compagnies mixtes’ are seen also as a way to transfer overcapacity in Europe to a developing country. But the situation is complex here also, since it are not alone European ship-owners which create this type of companies. Also some Koreans are reported to be involved, in particular in the ‘bateaux de rammassage’, which go out with a number of pirogues on their deck to fish also in Mauritanian waters.

In general, by all Senegalese actors, the fishing agreement is seen as a commercial agreement, with little to no comprehension for the sustainability of Senegalese fisheries or for development goals. It is indicated however that the ‘pauses biologique’ in September and October in the Senegalese case are well defined, but at the same time people interviewed pointed at the Mauritania Agreement in which after quite some pressure from the European side the biological rest period is October and November, with the effect that European vessels can stay in the region to fish. It should be noted that the biological rest period in the former agreement was only optional. The more general comment here is that it is still very difficult for Senegal, with its limited technical capabilities,\(^{22}\) to control European (and other third countries’) vessels.

The general conclusion then is that the European Commission is forced by the European Parliament which follows this dossier quite closely, to use a ‘langue du bois’, when it present the fisheries agreements. The Commission promotes them as ‘partnership agreements’ while in effect and on basis of a closer analysis they are purely commercial and negotiated in an intransigent way.

Conclusions

Policy coherence is a relative new concept both in political science as well as in the formulation and implementation) policy itself. It is defined in this article as ‘the non-occurrence of policies or the results of policies that are contrary to the objectives of a given policy’. You don’t need to be a visionary or utopianist thinker\(^{21}\) to assess that there are many causes for incoherencies to exist. One of the most important ones is that the interests of important producer groups or consumers are at stake and that these have a heavier weight in the formulation and implementation of policies then the interests of producers in developing countries.

\(^{22}\) It is said that there is only one plain for surveillance, but that this is not functioning.

\(^{21}\) As van Naerssen (2006) depicts Mao Zedong: a visionary thinker and merciless leader.
In Morocco incoherencies that were presented by the respondents dealt in particular with external coherence issues. Incoherencies that were put forward in most obstinate form were in the fields of migration, market access and fisheries. In its relations with the EEC/EU Morocco has in the last 48 years been a victim of a lack of complementarity in production structures with Southern European member states. Morocco had to try to get access for a series of the same products (citrus fruits, vegetables, textiles and clothing) for which old and new member states were looking for protection in Brussels. From this perspective European policies vis-à-vis Southern Mediterranean countries like Morocco and Tunisia have not been very coherent giving priority first to member states’ interest at cost of old trade links and the development of these with Morocco and Tunisia.

In particular Europe’s agricultural policies did hamper the development of the agricultural sector in Morocco, giving all the chances to citrus production in Spain, not leaving any space for Morocco’s production to develop and extend its export. Since Morocco stayed most of the time in the midst of Europe’s trade preferences pyramid, clearly behind the ACP countries, the EU was also not very coherent in its own stated goals with regard to Article 138 of the Treaty of Rome, safeguarding old trade relationships, neither to its regularly stated objectives of creating a zone of peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean.

Fisheries is one of the most sensitive dossiers in the European-Morocco relationship. The Moroccan side sees a clear incoherence here between the stated objectives of Europe’s Mediterranean policy and the way the EU gave preference to Spanish interests. A second hotly debated theme is immigration. It is generally felt in Morocco that the EU connects immigration too much with security and ignores the development issues that are at stake also.

In Senegal respondents put forward a mix of Internal and External coherence issues. Again fisheries and migration issues, but also ‘calendar incoherence’ (long time delays) and problems with dumping of agricultural produce. The Senegalese fisheries sector is very complex with a large number of actors on the stage. The depletion of fisheries resources, of some species, is clearly at stake. Since Senegal is one of the few African states with a huge fishermen population and an important position of fish in the daily diet, the EU should not have allowed – in this sense its policy is incoherent - that under the Fisheries Agreement European ships again got access to fishing grounds close to the coast.

Senegalese producers clearly suffer from import surges of agricultural products from Europe, leftovers of a ‘spoilt’ market and dumped in Africa. Most cited examples are onions, potatoes, and chicken legs. The latter are sold in Dakar’s supermarkets in plastic bags, frozen without any specification of country of origin and limit of consumption dates. If the EU at the same time tends to foster agricultural development in Senegal, its policies could be considered as incoherent when it subsidizes these exports in direct or indirect ways.

References

The geopolitisation of natural resources in an era of global transition - the EU response

Cor van Beuningen

Introduction

The world map is being overhauled. The new scarcities of raw materials, energy and food have direct consequences for the relative position of countries on the economic as well as the geopolitical world map. This conflict ridden process adds up to the ongoing global transition process from a unipolar to a multipolar world. If not properly managed, these two interacting processes will be accompanied by and generate large scale scarcities, poverty, climate disaster and destruction of biosphere; as well as strife and conflict between competing power blocks. A spiral of distrust is threatening global viability. What is the EU response?

New scarcities and power shifts

Shifts in the economic domain do not fail to have their impact on international relations. Political leaders in energy rich countries such as Russia and Venezuela show a renewed self confidence, both internally and on the international scene. Inversely, the governments of the countries that depend on others for their supplies of energy or food are increasingly aware of the vulnerabilities involved, and they set energy and food security high on their agenda. Subsequently, their policy intentions – such as a substantial increase of renewable energy – are reflected in the prices on the different markets. Biofuels compete with food for scarce resources, cross-integrating both markets at the global level. Increasingly, public concerns about climate change and loss of biodiversity are making themselves felt in the economic and political landscape as well.

Strategic commodities – connecting market and power

What is really new, though, is the sudden realization – after two decades in which the liberalization paradigm reigned supreme - that energy, water and food (EWF) are not just commodities, of which supply, demand and pricing are mere data to politicians. Of course, they effectively are commodities, traded on markets which are more and more globally integrated. But they are much more than that. EWF have become strategic commodities, perceived by states as crucial to national interests, security and sovereignty and thus deserving their direct monitoring and intervention: national energy and food security. At the
international level, they are assets in negotiations, power relations, alliances and conflicts: re. the scramble for resources, blood for oil, the energy weapon, the food weapon. The conduct of states is increasingly influenced by the access to and control over those commodities, and by the ongoing shifts in the structure of prices and incomes. The current price increases may well continue for some time to come, before settling at new, high levels. On the demand side new parties such as China and India are swiftly developing, while the supply side is hampered by a number of structural limitations. Energy and food are peculiar commodities, the production and supply of which will follow price changes only with a certain delay. Fossil energy sources are not inexhaustible, and the increase of energy and food production is bound by natural, physical and climatic constraints. At the same time, EWF are peculiar commodities in the sense that they satisfy primary needs and that as such they are irreplaceable. Increased scarcity has an immediate and eventually disastrous impact on the life of persons – first of all, of those with limited purchasing power - and of societies.

In fact, these peculiar features of EWF have since long been recognized by politicians and states, that have treated them as strategic goods that deserve their close attention. This political definition of EWF, i.e. beyond their strictly economic definition as commodities, was unquestioned well into the 20th century. It is evident, for example, in the 1957 Treaty of Rome (establishing what was to become the European Union), and the CAP - Common Agricultural Policy, with its stated objective to secure food supply at reasonable prices, next to increasing agricultural productivity and ensuring a fair living standard for the farmers. In a similar way, the supply of energy and water at reasonable prices was the responsibility of state owned public utility enterprises in most countries.

Neoliberal depolitisation
Only towards the end of the 80’s this state of affairs began to be questioned, triggering a broad trend of liberalisation of the markets for energy and water and privatisation of public enterprise. As for food, its political definition (i.e. in terms of food security) was first questioned in the context of the Uruguay round of the GATT (later: WTO) of 1986. Subsequently, the CAP was stripped of its initial focus, i.e. to secure food supply at EU level, and it was reduced to income support to farmers; not anymore in their function of food suppliers, but motivated by social and environmental considerations. As with energy and water, food supply was left to the globalizing market, where the invisible hand was supposed to optimize allocation and innovation, thus securing the best outcome for both consumers (lower prices) and society as a whole. Government could withdraw to a role of overseer, with the specific task of securing open market conditions and a level playing field, intervening only in case of obvious market failure. In short, during the 90’s EWF lost their political definition and became to be seen as commodities like any other one.

Strategic and green repolitisations
Of course, this shift of policy paradigm was never uncontested. But a real challenge to neoliberalism only built up in the last couple of years. A number of major power cuts in the US and the UK raised the question whether energy
supply could be left to profit driven market forces. The climate debate increased the urgency of the energy transition (from fossil to renewable) and raised the question whether this revolution was in the right hands with oil and energy multinationals. In the energy market, already flawed with oligopolistic imperfections, new parties made their appearance, with the peculiar feature of being state owned and controlled: Gazprom, Petro China, Petrobras, Venezuelan PDVSA… The US led war in oil rich Iraq; Putin and his political use of the supply of gas to neighbouring and other countries; China’s way to procure energy and raw materials in African countries; Chávez’ petrocheques for friends in Latin America and elsewhere – facts like these further triggered politicians all over the world to reframe energy again as an issue of state interest, in terms both of supply security and of international power correlations.

The efforts of energy poor states to reduce their dependency on outside sources of fossil energy are gaining momentum now that they converge with policies to increase the use of biofuels as a response to international agreements to reduce CO2 and check global warming. The strategically motivated repolitisation is fused with the green repolitisation and it is increasingly difficult to disentangle the two policy discourses in actual political practice. In turn, these new policies themselves reshape the markets for fossil energy and for biofuels, as well as for competing soil based / agricultural products such as food. Its impact is felt amongst both consumers and producers, creating new social and political facts (cf. the corn belt boom in the Mid West and the tortilla crisis in Mexico). In short, what we are witnessing is a fundamental (re-)politicisation of energy cum food issues, propelled by both geopolitical and green purposes; and this, both at the domestic, regional and global level.

Complexity and policy dilemmas

At the present conjuncture, EWF are the object of both depolitising and repolitising policy discourse. This explains the current atmosphere of misunderstanding and avoidance in the policy arenas. On the one hand, free marketeers are struggling with the remnants of governmental interventionism, left over from a period marked by nationalism, welfare statism and protectionism. These remnants are to be removed as soon as possible, as they generate inefficiencies, higher consumer prices, suboptimal allocation and hampered innovation. On the other hand, a variety of policymakers - strategic, nationalist, leftist and green - insist on the pitfalls and risks of short sighted neoliberalism and reintroduce a number of political policy definitions.

Scarcities, the emerging world system and the EU

The EU is heavily dependent on outside supply of energy: 76% of its oil and 49% of its gas is imported, and these figures are expected to further increase – as a matter of fact, to 94 and 81%, respectively, in 2030. Energy security declaredly has become a priority issue in the EU foreign policy, and intense activity is deployed, ranging from policy papers to treaties and agreements with a number of third countries (See European Commission 1996, 2006, 2007). The core of the EU external policy on energy is the promotion of rules-based behaviour on open
markets (i.e. a perfect extension of its constitutive internal policy). This involves doing away with obstacles to the well functioning of the market, such as lack of transparency, corruption, monopolies and cartels, as well as with physical impediments, promoting the interconnectedness of energy systems; while other rules refer to legal frameworks, the promotion of foreign investment in the energy sector and to safety and environment considerations.

A contested policy paradigm

In reality, however, it is precisely in the energy sector that EU policy making is encountering major obstacles, both internally and externally, as well as opposition, both from within and from outside. The internal energy market is far from being completed, neither physically (interconnections) nor policy wise, and de facto various member states obstruct the opening up of energy markets, especially with regard to the ‘unbundling’ of production/transport and distribution, and to free foreign investment in, and the ownership of energy companies (energy nationalism).

Externally, a unified EU policy is effectively undermined by the fact that member states prefer to further their own energy security interests through bilateral deals with supplier third countries. On the other end, those same third countries are very hesitant or even outright refuse to incorporate the EU rules package in their agreements: the cases of Russia, Algeria, the Middle East countries.

In the face of those obstacles, the EU policy paradigm itself has become the object of second thoughts and outright criticism by policymakers from member states as well as from inside the EU bureaucracy. The policy paradigm is considered to be unworkable and ineffective, because it is both politically idealistic and geopolitically naïve. In fact, alternative policy proposals have been brought forward, which follow these two – diverging – points of critique. Politically idealistic; so the first alternative proposal is to depoliticise the EU external energy policy, in the sense of disconnecting simple commercial transaction (the buying and selling of oil or gas) from difficult talk on democracy, good governance or human rights: i.e. a plea for economic ‘realism’.

Geopolitically naïve; thus the second alternative proposal is to effectively geopolitise the EU external energy policy, in the sense of approaching the energy issue as set within the framework of international power relations, and in this way respond in kind, directly and unequivocally to the geopolitical definition of energy as practised by the major producing and consuming countries. This is a plea for geopolitical ‘realism’ and for an EU that is self-consciously playing the geopolitical power game in the global arena.

No choice

So the EU policy paradigm – i.e. rules based market liberalisation, a combination of market and governance principles - risks to be overtaken and made obsolete by actual developments both from within and from outside. In fact, the EU is confronted with the fact that this paradigm (nothing less than its own constitutive paradigm) presupposes a certain amount of trust between all concerned parties; and where and when this trust is absent, its proposal will not ‘work’ but be
perceived as naïve and unviable. This of course is just another illustration of the problem connected to collective action: trust is needed for parties to refrain from individual degrees of freedom now, for a better outcome for all in the future. In the absence of trust, parties are left with negotiation or conflict, with the market or the battlefield; with either economic or geopolitical realism.

But the EU has no choice but to stick to its original proposal, and clearly should reject both alternative proposals. The first one, short sighted economic ‘realism’, because it implies major risks of instability and disruption both of their energy supply and of the economy. Energy can not anymore simply be left to the market, in the face of the complexities of the energy transition and of the scarcities-related political and geopolitical vulnerabilities in a period of fundamental transition in the world order. The second proposal, geopolitical ‘realism’, is even riskier, as it reinforces tendencies that are already generating increasing instability and the disruption of the world system as a whole. It is hard to see how the geopolitical power game would ever more produce a peaceful, viable and rules based international order, encompassing a functioning global market and a functioning energy system.

If not through short sighted ‘realism’, how then connect policy wise the energy issue to the actual developments in international and geopolitical relations? How to understand and process the geopolitisation of the energy issue and its implications for EU policy making?

Geopolitisation of the energy issue and its implications for EU policy making
The geopolitisation of energy – and of other scarce natural resources, food and water - is to be understood as the product of two coinciding developments. On the one hand, there is the rather sudden imbalance between the sharply increasing demand for, and the only slowly responding supply of, these essential but peculiar commodities, giving way not only to steeply rising prices but also to political sense-making in terms of power and national (in-)security. On the other hand, these scarcities are produced in a quite peculiar period of world history; i.e. one that is marked by the transition of the world order, from a unipolar system as we have known it since 1989, to a multipolar system. The unipolar world was ideologically dominated by western liberalism, and geopolitically by the US as the only one superpower. This period is now believed to be closing to an end, but the features of the situation to come are not yet clear. The geopolitisation of natural resource scarcities is to be understood in the context of this transition process; in turn, those geopolitised scarcities influence this same transition process from uni- to multipolarity with regard both to its rhythm and its direction.

The new world system
Regarding the new world system, there is a growing consensus among researchers about its economic features. In about ten years time, the world economy will be dominated by three mayor blocks, China, the US and the EU, each one accounting for 15 - 20% of the Gross World Product, followed by India with about 10% and Japan, Brazil and Russia each with 5%.
Now, the big question is of course how this new economic configuration will be processed in the ideo-political domain; that is to say, how the present and future political actors will react to and manage the complex process of change and re-accommodation at the global level. Will they be willing and able to facilitate a peaceful transition to a viable and sustainable new world system, or are we in for a prolonged period of rivalry and conflict? To illustrate the point, we might refer to Mark Leonard’s interesting thesis according to which four political blocks are presently evolving and already competing for supremacy (Leonard, 2007). Those blocks are, one, the US and two, the EU. The difference between the two is that while the US rely on a ‘realist’ security approach and a balance-of-power order, the EU would favour a rule based international order and an effective multilateral system with well functioning international institutions. The third block then would be composed of the autocratic axis China-Russia, two countries that put much emphasis on national identity and sovereignty but which share with the EU the option for a rule based international order – perceived in their case as a protective device against Western domination. The fourth block would be the Islamzone, stretching from Morocco to Indonesia, not bound by democratic procedures nor eventually by international institutions.

Such a scenario, of evolving and competing geopolitical blocks, might well be an extremely bleak one, first of all because it might go along with the strengthening of nationalist and militarist tendencies, including eventually the massive use of energy, food and/or water as weapons; producing, if not outright military conflict, a world wide economic recession, shortages of energy, food and water, and the spread of poverty and hunger. And secondly: in an atmosphere of generalized and spiralling distrust, the solution of the present time world problems – problems which typically presuppose collective action in order to be tackled with any chance of success: climate change, loss of biodiversity, security and poverty – will be illusionary.

EU: soft power for the good

Such is the context and the challenge for the design of a EU policy for energy- and food security. All efforts should be directed now to divert the ongoing process of combined geopolitical block formation and polarization; but instead, to facilitate a peaceful transition to a viable and sustainable new world system, necessarily multipolar by nature, and one in which the different actors feel recognized in their existence and in their legitimate interests, generating and fostering a broad willingness to accommodate, negotiate and participate, and eventually commit themselves to a rule based order and functioning international institutions. This is, of course, the proper and original EU model, and in order to promote it, the EU should act and behave consistently as the champion of multilateralism, of international rules, order, institutions and cooperation. The EU is to be the force for the good, and it should be willing to go as far as it takes in denying to accept the power and polarisation game, in generating and fostering trust although this implies increasing its own vulnerability, in convincing and connecting, in applying soft power only. It cannot behave otherwise, if only because the fate of Europe – and its security and prosperity,
including energy and food security – is dependent upon a viable international order and world system.

The EU - Latin America partnership and alliance

In this perspective, the first partner for Europe in this enterprise – and one that could prove to be of invaluable importance – should be Latin America. For too long now, Latin America has been the big absentee in the EU foreign policy. The continent possesses almost one third of the world’s fresh water, favourable physical conditions for the production of food and biofuels, the most important oil reserves outside the Middle East, gas, copper, iron – you name it. These assets will not only be important for the economic development of the LA countries and – eventually – the EU. They will also be crucial in addressing and solving some of the global problems of our times: energy and food security, climate change and biodiversity, and poverty reduction. But most importantly, LA shares with the EU its preference for multilateralism, for a rule based international order and institutions. On a more profound level, Europeans and Latin Americans share a common set of beliefs and convictions regarding how we should live together and what kind of society we really should strive for, both at the national and at the global level. It is easy to recognize the real existence of such a shared value base, as soon as we compare it with Chinese, Slavic or even Anglosaxon basic beliefs. Surprisingly however, Latin Americans seem to be much more aware of this fact than Europeans. Also, to Latin Americans, the strong historical and cultural ties that connect the two are much more alive. From their side, there is still a very real interest to develop a partnership and alliance that goes much deeper than the rather sterile negotiation ritual of the EU-LA summits. What is required is dialogue, mutual trust, the will to invest in a durable partnership and in an alliance for the good on the world scene. The issues that used to frustrate the Latin Americans – the agricultural protection and the fact that the Europeans are partners with the US on this crucial issue in the WTO, the migration issue, the way Spain is enabled to use the EU to further its own interests in Latin America – should be dealt with immediately, as a sign announcing a new era in the relationship. Both sides should be working within an integrated framework that gives due weight to the interests of each partner as well as to the pursuit of common purposes. Thus, energy policy should be made part of a framework that incorporates security and defence, food production and poverty reduction, economic and commercial relations, and political and institutional cooperation.

Latin America: energy and distrust

This new partnership/alliance between LA and Europe might also be instrumental in addressing a number of problems that LA societies are currently facing. These problems have been given different names: bad governance, young democracies, fragile states, or better fragile societies. The bottom line is that LA societies suffer from a growing lack of public trust; and that distrust is gaining the upper hand in the relationships between groups, between citizens and their government, as well as between the nations on the continent. Of course, this
problem is not new, and it is not exclusive to LA; but it is becoming more serious. Where distrust is spreading, social unrest will block economic growth. Nationalism and militarism will frustrate development and fruitful regional cooperation, and protectionism will come in the place of profitable exchange on open markets. And where distrust is spreading, the common effort to address the shared challenges of our times: energy and food security, climate change and biodiversity, and poverty reduction, will turn into a hopeless enterprise. The logic of distrust and confrontation is a spiralling process, one that is self-feeding and self-propelling.

Problems related to spreading distrust and inflammable societies threaten to interfere with a rational and fruitful use of the rich natural resources of the continent - for growth and development, and for the fruitful integration of LA economies and societies in the world community. In stead, energetic resources are used as an asset in a spiralling process of distrust, of hegemonic power and conflict. And when distrust comes to dominate the relationships, the vicious circle of distrust – when left to its own - will end up producing widespread energy scarcity on the one hand, and conflict and war on the other hand. Let us illustrate the point with a few concrete cases, taken from LA reality in the last couple of months (second semester of 2007).

**One.** Last June, July, in the southern winter, Santiago was confronted with power cuts and with heavy air pollution. Its power plants received only a small fraction of the gas that it has contracted with Argentina, so they had to return to expensive imported diesel and coal. Argentina itself had a shortage of gas, receiving only a fraction of the gas that it has contracted with Bolivia. So it had to buy expensive electricity in Brazil, and it had to subsidize the owners of gas driven cars to compensate for the price differential with gasoline, in order to save gas needed for residential heating. The gas shortages also seriously affected Brazil, especially its industrial zone and power plants in Sao Paulo and Rio. Chile, Argentina and Brazil are currently building gasification plants, to import and process LNG that is much more expensive than the gas from Bolivia.

All these problems are being caused by the fact that Bolivia is not able to fulfil its contractual obligations for the delivery of gas to Argentina and Brazil. The reason behind this is, that since three years now, no investments have been made in exploration and exploitation. Foreign investors and companies are very cautious to invest because of the political situation in the country. In October, the Bolivian Minister of Energy made a trip to Miami, Washington and Brasilia, trying to attract new investments, but he met with a lot of distrust. Now, finally it seems that Brazilian Petrobras will come to rescue and invest in a mixed enterprise for the exploration and exploitation of gas. Petrobras felt that it was the principal victim of Evo Morales so-called nationalisation, so they were reluctant to deal with Bolivia; but Petrobras itself is under heavy pressure to deliver gas to Rio and Sao Paolo. But also, there was political pressure, through the intervention of Marco Aurelio Garcia, Lula’s principal political advisor on external relations. His motive is a geopolitical one: not leave Bolivian gas to the PDVSA, that is to Chavez’ mercy.

**Second** case. on gas in Bolivian society. Gas is a hot issue in Bolivia for some years already. Former president Sánchez de Lozada’s plan to sell gas to Mexico and the US (involving eventually Chile) produced a popular uprising that led to his retreat and flight from the country. The present crisis in the country is, again,
related to the control and distribution of gas revenues between central government and the opposition concentrated in the regions where the gas is produced. In Bolivia, gas has become the fuel for a spiralling process of distrust and conflict. Gas, that should be an essential asset for the development of the poorest country of the continent, is setting the country on fire.

Three, on energy nationalism and regional confrontation. In November, Lula proudly let the world know that Brazil had found huge reserves of oil and gas, in the deep sea in front of Rio. It should be clear by now, he said, that God is Brazilian, referring to the Brazilian wealth of natural resources.

Just a few days later, Lula announced a 50% increase in the defence budget for the acquisition of new weaponry in 2008 and following years. Already in 2008, 5 billion dollar will be spent on this item. Brazil, Lula said, is the happy owner of fresh water, of energy, minerals and food, and those are exactly the things that the world now is in great need of; so we have to be able to protect ourselves and these valuable assets. In that same week, the magazine Veja published the results of a survey conducted among high army officials: it turns out that almost two-thirds of them consider that an armed conflict with neighbouring Venezuela and Bolivia is very well possible. In the past two years, as a matter of fact, Venezuela has bought Russian armaments for more than 4,5 billion dollar. The point here is not, of course, to picture Brazil as a warlike country, as it would probably be the last one on the continent that is interested in promoting instability; but Brazil’s behaviour might be seen as expressive for a sense of alertness that is spreading all over the continent.

Four, more on regional hegemony. In the first week of August, Lula and Chávez both made a trip to a number of LA countries. Lula visited Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Jamaica. In Mexico he promoted an agreement between Pemex and Petrobras for the deep sea oil exploration and exploitation in the Gulf of Mexico; an idea, by the way, that was heavily criticised by opposition leader Lopez Obrador who warned for the sell out of national interests. Lula’s other mission in Central America was to promote partnerships for the production of ethanol and biodiesel, or, in his own words, ‘to promote a world market of clean, cheap and renewable fuels, and to diversify the energy mix, generate new jobs, democratize the access to energy sources’. Of course, Brazil is in need of CA partners because these countries have free access to the US market, while the Brazilians pay a tariff of 54 cents per gallon of ethanol.

Chávez for his part visited Argentina (where he signed a contract to build a LNG plant), Uruguay (where he signed a treaty on energy security), Ecuador (where he committed to invest 5 billion dollars in a new refinery in Manabí) and Bolivia (establishing a new mixed enterprise, starting with an investment of 600 mi in new explorations).

Quite a spectacle: two leaders simultaneously on an energy tour through the continent!

While the Brazilians are very careful not to address any matter of competition for regional leadership let alone confrontation with Chávez, Chávez himself is not so shy. According to Chavez this is however not a dispute on continental leadership but a confrontation of different energetic models. Venezuela promotes regional integration on the basis of sharing petroleum and gas, while Brazil is fighting for a model based on agrofuels, similar to the model that is promoted by
the US. Indeed, Bush made a biofuel trip in LA in March, after signing a cooperation agreement with Brazil on the production and commercialisation of biofuels, in January 2007. The Brazilians of course hope that this cooperation eventually might lead to the lifting of the US import tariff on ethanol; which would involve a significant geopolitical re-alignment in the Western hemisphere.

To sum up:

Latin America is to occupy a prominent place on the new world map.
- Energy and politics are intricately intertwined, both in the EU and in LA and elsewhere.
- The energy issue threatens to disrupt integration and development processes both in the EU and in LA.
- A solid EU-LA partnership, covering topics such as energy, biofuels and food; institutional development and regional integration; and technology and scientific research, will be of great benefit to both continents.
- At the same time, there is an urgent need for a EU-LA alliance on the global scene, marked by the geopolitisation of the new scarcities (the redefinition of energy and food commodities in terms of national security and strategic power) and the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world order.
- Together, the EU and LA should act as the force for the good. They may divert the ongoing process of geopolitical block formation and polarization, and act and behave consistently as the champions of multilateralism, of international rules and institutions.

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Redefining Regions and Identities
Walking the middle path: contested democracy in Thailand

Luuk Knippenberg en Saskia van Bruchem

Despotism then, which is at all times dangerous, is more particularly to be feared in democratic ages. The legislators of America did not suppose that a general representation of the whole nation would suffice to ward off a disorder at once so natural to the frame of democratic society, and so fatal. They thought that it would be well to infuse political life into each portion of the territory. The plan was a wise one (Tocqueville, 1835).

Preamble

Ton van Naerssen and I (LK) share a passionate interest for South-East Asia. In 1998, we published an article about the causes and consequences of the Asian crisis. The impact of that crisis was huge: financially, economically and socially, and politically. This article is about some of those political consequences, i.e. its effect on the democracy in Thailand.

Good soldiers never lie: good governance or democracy.

Thailand has a constitution since 1932. This constitution stipulated that the country formally is a constitutional, parliamentary monarchy. This introduction of parliamentary rule, however, also signalized the start of a long period of military coups. Since 1932 Thailand has had more (semi)-military governments than democratic ones. The economic boom of the mid eighties seemed to change this. The democratic forces gained power. The aftermath of the military coup of 1992 showed that the military were no longer able to run a fast developing country. They had to resign. Thailand entered a period of democratic rule, based on a revised, very democratic constitution. This development was welcomed by everyone, including parts of the military and the monarchy. Then Thailand was hit by the severe economic crisis of 1997 (see Naerssen, 1998). The crisis tempered the economic and political optimism. It unveiled serious flaws in the governance structure of Thailand, and forced the government to give all its attention to economic and financial issues, whereas boosting the new frail democracy should have been its main focus.

In 2001 a populist leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, won out of the blue a landslide victory on the promise that he would overcome the consequences of the crisis. He introduced a Keynesian economic reform program, partly based on the policy to transfer from money from the city to the countryside. This program was successful, especially for people living in the countryside. The social problems caused by the crisis of 1997, problems that first and for all hit the poor living on the countryside, or retuned to their home village because they had lost their jobs,
were mitigated and even partly resolved. But Thaksin did not restrict himself to economic reforms; he also used his popularity and position to amass more and more political power and eliminate his political competitors.

In 2005 Thaksin was re-elected. His party gained an absolute majority, a unique event in Thai history. His reelection was, however, not undisputed, especially in the capital, Bangkok. Protesters against and in support of him flocked the streets. In September 2006 his regime was toppled by a military coup, the 11th successful one since the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932.

The military who staged the coup declared that it had become necessary to oust the government of Thaksin because of the disproportional corruption of him and his cronies, and his undemocratic behaviour. Both arguments are weak.


This implies that this allegation probably is fake and invalid as long as the real underlying cause is not addressed, i.e. the reason why every Thai government can be accused of being corrupt. But there also is an even more fundamental objection. Corruption can never be an argument to topple a chosen government, and replace it by a non-chosen one. A non-chosen administration is by definition less transparent and accountable than the worst democratic one. It is predestined to create favourism, nepotism, plutocracy, and as a result corruption. This is inevitable in all situations where controllers themselves are not controlled.

The other argument of the Thai military for toppling the elected government of Thaksin, the argument that they did this to safeguard democracy, is even stranger. It resembles the reasoning of that military commander who was pleaded that he had to demolish the village he was supposed to protect, in order to defend it. Even downright abuse is in a democracy no viable reason to overthrow a regime. There is no possible democratic argument to do this. The idea that it is defendable to topple a democratic government by non-democratic means, can by definition only be based on a non-democratic notion of good-governance, i.e. the conviction that democracy is just means to a higher, non-democratic, idea of political justness. From a democratic perspective this viewpoint is illegal and immoral. In a democracy content and procedure are completely and irresolvable interlinked. In a democracy there is no pre-given or definitive definition of the morally good, except for the basic-premise that the people as a whole of a given society have to decide that in permanent interaction and debate with each other, on the basis of given democratic principles and thresholds. Content and procedure refer to each other. They jointly define what is good, to what extent, and under what circumstances, and for how long. In a democracy the question of what is politically just and fair is a matter of permanent debate. The answer differs according to the circumstances, the wishes of the people, the possibilities, etc. There is in short no middle path between democracy and any other form of political governance. You are either a total democrat or you are no democrat at all (Robert A. Dahl, 1989; R.A. Dahl, 1998; Rawls, 1971; Schumpeter, 1942).
But that is not the whole problem. Opting for a non-democratic interpretation of political fairness and good governance generates a very tricky problem. You have to define what (political) fairness is and what a good society is. For this you need criteria. But in order to that you already need criteria to select these criteria, or to select persons to select these criteria. In other words you already need a solid conception of what is fair from the start on, but that notion is always randomly selected and questionable. This is an insolvable problem. You are in the middle of a Catch-22 situation. In a democracy this problem does not exist (See also (Kuflik, 1984; Rawls, 1971, 1993).

The implication of the above reasoning is that the people who staged the recent coup in Thailand either had a vision on supra-democratic vision on political fairness or no interest whatsoever for political fairness, whatever their arguments were.

Let’s for a start suppose the first. The aim of the Thai military, so they said, was to repair flaws in the existing democratic procedures and the existing constitution. After that was done, new elections would be held, and the army would withdraw into their military barracks. The by the military appointed government was only a temporary one, a caretaker.

The problem with this reasoning is not only that it was unconstitutional it was also contradictory. The military defined political rightness in democratic terms, and in notions that refer back to the ‘wellbeing of the people’. However, only the people themselves can define and decide what their wellbeing is. This makes it also a democratic notion. All the arguments of the Thai military to topple the elected government of Thaksin and suspend the democracy are in the end based on democratic arguments. The military stalled democracy for the sake of democracy. A strange line of reasoning, even stranger if one realizes that this is completely unacceptable in a democracy. All types on non-democratic intervention in a democratic process are prohibited. The stagers of the coups must have known this. So, what extra political valid argument could they have had?

Was there perhaps an immediate threat that the country was disintegrating? There was indeed political turmoil, but such a danger was not imminent. At least, there is no prove, or even a plausible indication. In that case Thaksin could not have got such an overwhelming majority, at least without forging the whole election process, which he did not do. Besides, notwithstanding this majority, Thaksin accepted to write out new elections and stepped down. Whether or not he did this totally out of his own choice, or with a hidden strategy to come back later, is of no importance. He did this, which is even more than he had to do. What even more imminent thread could there be? Were the perhaps signs that Thaksin was planning to change to constitutional fundaments of the Thai state? If so, the first remark would be that this was in principle his legitimate right, as long as he did it according to the procedures laid down in the Constitution. There are, however, some extra remarks to be made. What was the worst path Thaksin could take; if we postulate – which is not the same as knowing - that he had that intention?

Let us discuss some Dutch examples to go into this, and explain why a Dutch government cannot and will not put through certain constitutional reforms, even if the legal possibilities are there. No Dutch government will remove the constitutional article that guarantees the freedom of organisation and speech.
Doing that would be the same as destroying the constitution itself, and the underlying fundament on which that constitution, indeed every constitution, is build. A Dutch government also never will try to abolish the monarchy, at least in the foreseeable future. There is a constitutional rationale behind this, but that is not the main reason. The monarchy still is for the overwhelming majority of the Dutch an integral part and of their identity and that of their society and country. It is an untouchable symbol.

Monarchy and democracy are a strange combination. The founding fathers of the Dutch constitution understood hat the only way to combine the two was to shield the democracy from interventions of the monarchy and to protect the monarchy against democratic erosion by strengthening its symbolic function. They had a clear insight in the problems generated by their efforts to combine democracy and monarchy, problems that could simultaneously damage the monarchy, the democracy, and the cohesion of the society.

Democracy is based on the need and possibility to disagree, oppose and criticise, and the possibility to elect and to vote down political leaders. A monarch who is involved in democratic politics will become an object of debate and opposition. This will undermine the possibility of the monarchy to function as a neutral national symbol. But it can also easily harm the democratic process, and in the end even destabilise the country. A monarch cannot be voted down, nor would many people accept that. A political active monarchy will, in a democratic setting, damage itself or undermine the democracy. That is the why the Dutch constitutionalists did everything they could to keep the Dutch monarchy aloof from politics, as well legally as practically.

In Thailand, the role of the monarchy a symbol and fundament of society is perhaps even more essential than in The Netherlands. It is unthinkable that any Thai politician would even consider changing that. It is beyond his capabilities and interests. This was also true for Prime Minister Thaksin. If there is some truth in the accusation, that he was planning to diminish the role of the monarchy, than this could only refer to possible efforts to reduce the political and economical influence of the monarchy. This implies that the monarchy was in fact involved in daily politics. Non-involvement would protect it adequately against the assaults of any politician, regardless of his intentions or power. No politician would dare to undertake any action against the symbol of the nation, nor would he in fact have any reason for it.

Trying to take on a political active monarch is a dangerous venture, even for a very powerful politician. Protecting a politically active king against this kind of attacks is, however, even more dangerous, although it may appear easier. The only way to achieve this in a democracy is to discredit elected politicians or stall democracy. This solution solves nothing; on the contrary, it generates new even deeper problems. The allegations against the politicians have to be false, for a monarch should in fact not be politically active in a democracy, whereas stalling the democracy in order to rescue a constitutional monarchy is the same as killing the patient to cure him; moreover, it compromises the monarchy, legally and morally.

This implies that all the legal and moral arguments of the stagers of the coup were flawed. It is highly unlikely that the military intervened for the sake of good governance or democracy. Perhaps they did it to protect the monarchy or to be more precise a certain influence of the monarchy, because the monarchy as
such needed no protection. That would be an understandable reason, but a
defective one, and also one that had to be concealed

The above-mentioned defects are so obvious and far reaching that it seems
highly improbable that the stagers of the coup and their advisors did not signalize
them. That is even more disturbing. It means that the coup probably was not
staged out of moral or legal reasons. They perhaps only were used as a cover-up.
The real reasons must be sought elsewhere, such as the aspiration to protect or
expand certain particular interests and power positions.

Good soldiers never try: democracy as good governance

There is nothing strange about this line of reasoning. Power struggles between
and within factions about power and income have marked the history of
Thailand, since the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932, and even long before
that time. Since the study of Riggs (Riggs, 1966), who depicted Thailand of the
1950s as a country ruled by self-appointed bureaucrats, only accountable to
themselves and permanently mixed up in internal struggles, students of Thai
political history are used to see politics in Thailand as a kind of permanent power
struggle. The main players are high-ranking bureaucrats, the military, the
monarchy, the police force, and from the 1970s onwards, Bangkok based big
business, provincial strongmen, and politicians. Those politicians often came out
of the ranks of above-mentioned groups, or were financed, supported or
appointed by them. Politics in Thailand is a struggle to get control over and
access to the most rewarding fruits of the economic growth. That ambition also
forms the cement that keeps political parties together. A successful political
leader guarantees his party members access to economic resources. Ideology and
political programs are not important. A leader who fails to deliver loses his
support. His party can even dissolve overnight or move over to more promising
competitor.

This is the reason why normally every Thai administration is based on a
coalition of several parties, organised around strong leaders. It is also the reason
why corruption is so pervasive. There are simply too many competing groups,
competing for the same positions. That is also the reason why everybody was so
alarmed when the party of Thaksin won an absolute majority. The fact that was
able to attract and bind so many politicians, voters and businessmen seemed to
imply that he was on the brink of controlling everything and everybody.

This implies that the coup against Thaksin perhaps just was staged to break the
power of Thaksin and protect the interest of some or more of the above-
mentioned groups. There are, however, some reasons to doubt this.

In 1991, the Thai army also staged a coup. This coup, at first broadly
welcomed, especially by parts of the Bangkok middle classes, ended as a
nightmare for the military. They were visibly no longer able to rule the country,
and had to resign. After that period, the army lost much of its influence and
access to the economic resources. They did not seem to care.

The military probably did not stage a coup to protect and strengthen their own
interests. They already had lost most of their economic influence, certainly since
the coup of 1991 which had made it very clear that were no longer able to run the
country. Already in the 1980s the Thai economy and society had become far too complex to be controlled by the military (Knippenberg, 2003).

The coup also was not staged for the sake of the rural poor; in the old time the main supporters of military rule. The rural poor now supported Thaksin. He had done far more for them more than any previous administration. Nor was a request of certain influential Bangkok based businessmen the rationale behind the coup -based business?
The relationship between the corporate sector and the Thai military never has been warm, and many of the big businessmen had rallied around Thaksin.

This leaves us with only one plausible explanation. The coup was ordered by acting or high ranking retired military commanders who thought that the stability of the nation was or could become in danger, not so much because of political turmoil, which could be easily controlled without staging a coup, but because of in their eyes unacceptable political reforms of Thaksin, or just the other way around, because necessary political changes could in their eyes not take place without disturbing the national stability as long as Thaksin was in charge.

The last reason is the most probable one. The present king of Thailand rules more than sixty years. His succession is imminent but at the same time very problematic. His person and position is as undisputed as the person and position of the heir to the thrown is disputed. The succession has to be carefully orchestrated, preferably in period without political turmoil and without the possibility for overactive strong politicians to manipulate the process.

This brings us back to our first line of reasoning. It implies that the military staged the coup for the sake of a principle, for what they believed to be a just cause. Believing in the justness of a case, does, however, not imply that the cause is just, or that an alleged just cause justifies the means. There is no way to stage and defend a coup in contemporary Thailand, even the grounds that it is only a temporary measure to rescue the democracy. That is why we again and again hear the same allegations, see the same solutions, and witness the same failures. The staggers of coups have no constitutionally or legally defendable arguments. They have to use pseudo arguments, or more precisely arguments that only partly touch the real reasons and causes. Moreover, they have to spend a lot of their time after the coup to cover up the fact that they know this, and that they know that that everybody else knows this. The misfortune of it all is that democracy does not work well in Thailand, also a fact know by everyone. But it is a problem that cannot be solved by coups or other autocratic measures.

The real underlying tragedy, however, is that the staggers of the coup had an extra, in theory defendable cause, one that is as important for the functioning of Thai society, as democracy, i.e. safeguarding (the future) of the monarchy. The only problem is that this cause and the underlying arguments cannot be put forward, without destroying precisely that what is to be protected, as already explained above, by referring to The Netherlands.

But, the main, and in fact really disturbing factor is that the only valuable solution, also mentioned in that example, i.e. reducing the political role of the monarchy, cannot realised in Thailand, even if the will is there. There is not enough time, the democratic preconditions are lacking, and it is even taboo to talk about it.

It is yet another Catch-22 situation. There is no way to guarantee and legitimize good government in Thailand outside a democratic setting. The is true
because of the already mentioned reasons, and because a non-democratic form of
good governance will always compromise the monarchy, in one way or another,
and in the end start to undermine it. But democracy, as it functions in Thailand,
has the tendency to undercut good governance and even its own functioning.
There is also no way to repair this destitution by autocratic means, and no
solution to be found in an appeal to the good will and intentions of politicians.

**Good citizens always act: civil society and democracy**

It is a stalemate, but not one that cannot by broken. The solution has not be
sought in the stalling, redrafting or restricting of the existing democracy, but
exactly in the opposite direction, in strengthening and enlarging democracy by
strengthening citizenship and civil society. A democracy without a functioning
and blossoming civil society is bound to end in despotism, as De Tocqueville
already made clear, a long time ago (Tocqueville, 1835). Democracy requires
permanent involvement of the citizens of a state, but that is only possible if they
have the possibilities, awareness and will to do this.

Those possibilities have to be created by the government. The first step is to
decentralise the government where possible, based on the principle of
subsidiarity, i.e. the idea that governmental matters should be handled by the
lowest competent authority, and if possible the citizens themselves. Citizens
have to be empowered to organise themselves, take decisions, and undertake
action wherever this serves their interests, does not undermine the higher public
good, or blocks the possibilities of other citizens to do the same. In other words:
citizens have to be enabled do all those things themselves which they can best or
better do themselves, individually and collective.

This is, however, up to a certain extent, another Catch-22 situation. Central
governments will only create the needed conditions after strong societal pressure.
But this pressure is often absent in societies with a strong central, authoritarian
government, whereas in states with a weak government both the possibilities and
the pressure often are lacking. It is also not very probable that local politicians
will be inclined to support this process. They often are the linking pins between
local interests and the central government. It is not in their interest to empower
the people they represent.

The best solution is to start at the other end, and foster awareness and will
amongst the citizens. This starts with the presence of a middle class. The middle
class is seen as the backbone of society, economically, socially, politically, and
ideologically, and the main buttress of democracy. But it is also a very
heterogeneous category. Members of the middle class are inclined, educated and
even permanently informed to see themselves as individuals, as persons who can
and have to make free choices and create their own future. But precisely those
reasons predispose them to overlook the fact that in reality their freedom of
choice is rather moderate. The mutual competition is to strong, if only because of
the presence of so many ‘equals’, i.e. people in the same position who think and
act the same and want the same things or positions. Their real strength, at least
politically, rests not in their individual capability but in the fact that there are
with so many, equally looking for the same things. But that it is a potential they
neglect, often even deliberately. Members of the middle class are so busy with
their own life and so focussed on their own business, and so possessed by the idea that this attitude is best guarantee for success that they are inclined to transfer this attitude to the political domain. This easily engenders indifference for supra-personal issues. This kind of public apathy easily creates room for populism and even despotism, as De Tocqueville and Hannah Arendt already made clear (Arendt, 1958, 1972; Tocqueville, 1835).

This problem is perhaps even more urgent in societies that only recently have become rich and where the middle class is a new phenomenon. But this is no longer true for Thailand. Its middle class is neither that new nor that small. Thailand no longer is a bureaucratic polity. There is no hidden conspiracy to keep the majority of the people poor and powerless, although the powerful and the rich have a lot of space to do as they please. It is the middle class that fails to take its political responsibility, and develop a real functioning countervailing power, more in special their intellectual vanguard.

Someone has to clarify to them what they have to do to have a functioning democracy, what they have to gain by taking part and to loose by just minding their own business. Someone has to elucidate that good political solutions never come from above or originate spontaneously. They need a joint and permanent dedication of all layers of society in an ongoing process of trial and error, based on permanent discussion and reflexion, within a political framework that rests on a balance of powers. There are no given, no quick and no perfect solutions. That is what democracy is about and that is where its real strength lays. Procedure and content go hand in hand. Every effort to break this up-for instance to speed things up-will destroy the whole and everything in it (Dahl, 1989, 1998).

Democracy is debate, about the right and the plight to disagree about ideas and solutions, between equals on an equal basis, and within certain limits, with as most important ones: no physical violence, no military coups and no democratically unaccountable political leaders.

References


Associationalist regionalism: from ‘powers of association’ to ‘associations of power’

Bas Hendrikx and Arnoud Lagendijk

Introduction

Since the 1980s there has been an important shift in thinking about territorial governance. This involved both a move away from technical, hierarchical modes of government towards more open and participatory forms of decision-making (governance), and a rethinking of multi-level governance contexts in general. In response to (global) economic, technological, political and intellectual challenges, policy-makers in the western world therefore increasingly turned to a previously underexposed level of territorial governance: the region. Being attuned to the level of daily socio-economic interaction, regions would be better able to achieve the twin goals of economic competitiveness and socio-political cohesion than the traditional governance frameworks dominated by the central state (Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Keating, 1998; Keating, 2001; Storper, 1997). Within this new current of thought, two general trends of ‘new regionalism’ can be distinguished.

First there are the attempts of national states to scale up their economic and political authority through the development of multi-lateral systems of cooperation and coordination. Structures such as the EU economic zone, the NAFTA and Mercosur are examples of these. The second strand of ‘new regionalism’, which is perhaps more dominant in the western world (MacLeod, 2001), aims at the development of regional governance structures at the sub-national scale. By decentralising political decision making processes to regional agencies, policy makers aim to achieve more flexible structures of governance that can design and deliver policies better attuned to local circumstances.

In this chapter we explore the development of regional governance structures of the latter sort. We are particularly interested in the rhetorical and discursive grounds that are at the basis of these new regionalist strategies. What claims are made and how do such claims affect the actual practices and performances of regional governance institutions? Building on the idea that the region has become an overloaded concept to which too many (often conflicting) tasks and goals are ascribed, we will discuss the limitations of associational approaches. Employing a discursive exploration of new regionalist practices and a brief empirical analysis of the multi-level governance framework in the Netherlands, we will illustrate that tensions between the substantive and political grounds for regional governance are severely hampering the performance of regions in multi-level frameworks.
Associationalist regionalism: substantive and political claims for regional governance

Over the last decades, a myriad of extolling theoretical accounts, broad observations and political laudations has emerged in favour of regional governance. Alongside this, a great number of policy initiatives has been launched to try out new forms of regional governance and to learn and circulate the ‘lessons’ drawn from policy innovation. Lagendijk and Cornford (2000) speak of the development of a ‘regional development industry’ in this context, a mushrooming of development agencies, technology transfer centres, consultancy companies and research centres focusing on improving the competitive positions of regions through new forms of (regional) governance. In line with Thrift’s conceptualisation of the ‘cultural circuits of capitalism’ (Thrift, 1999; Thrift, 2005), Lagendijk and Cornford explore what could perhaps be best labelled as the cultural circuits of regionalism - an important discursive apparatus of academics, consultants, EU officials and policy makers that engages in the circulation of regional governance concepts, discourses and practices across Europe. The impact of this discursive apparatus on the field of regional governance practices is considerable. Blending theoretical ideas with success stories of regional development, these circuits of regionalism bring concepts and ‘stylised facts’ such as ‘innovative milieus’, ‘clusters’ and ‘learning regions’ into the field. Through ‘endless presentations and representations in seminars, conferences and publications’, together with many practical applications and try-outs, such concepts and discourses have circulated widely and have influenced the working and setting up of a wide array of regional governance practices across Europe (Lagendijk, 2005; Lagendijk and Cornford, 2000). Generally speaking, regional governance is favoured on two grounds. First, there is the substantive case for regional governance where the region is described as the most apt level of governance to address spatial-environmental problems in a common governance framework. Second, there are the political claims (organisational-administrative) for regional governance, providing a means to facilitate a shift from government to governance. Both strands will now be discussed in more detail.

The substantive case for regional governance

The region plays an important role in discussions about the ways to approach substantive policy problems and goals. It features here as a more flexible scale of governance that is better able to confront problems arising from external trends, such as globalisation and growing global economic competition, and is believed to be a more appropriate site for policy coordination and collaboration. A wide variety of arguments and narratives on the substantive tasks and roles of regional governance circulates through policy making circuits and many of them are influencing regional governance practices across the world. Sorting the core claims from strong to more modest, the following summary emerges:

- **Political:** Regions are endowed with political significance in scalar accounts on political power and competencies and accounts of ‘destatisation’ (Jessop, 2004). In such accounts, economic globalisation and the enhanced mobility of capital produce selective processes of (induced) ‘hollowing out’ and (intentional)
devolution. The result is a shift in power from the national towards the sub-national level, as well as to other governance arenas such as the market and associational structures. In a positive sense, regions feature here because, they are pictured as the nexuses of interdependencies between state and non-state bodies that come up with novel, potentially radical, solutions and models sustaining regional performance (cf. Storper). In a more negative sense, regions are considered suitable places to carry the brunt of globalisation in terms of coping with rising social inequality and deprivation, ecological problems and the urgency of providing and maintaining a well-oiled, and hence competitive, infrastructure (e.g. high-profile business estates, luxury housing and amenities, modern consumption spaces, congestion-free transit and global connections)

**Economic:** Close in line with the political story, regions are presented as economic powerhouses, partially or largely substituting for the significance of national economies, due to a shifting basis of economic competitiveness. As the story goes, in the past, macro stability, basic infrastructures (e.g. education) and major state projects (and ‘national champions’) were key; now it is the relational synergy between spatially concentrated and embedded networks of businesses and knowledge organisations that is seen as the key to wealth (Keating 2001). The latter is fostered, moreover, by the specialisation of the local labour market and the educational sector that, together with economic specialisation, supports the development of particular regional clusters.

**Policy-making:** The latter role also draws on a notion of the region as an ‘integral’ site of policy making and customisation. A crucial shortcoming of what is considered as the old-style, technocratic and centralised policy making is sectoral and territorial fragmentation. Together with other spatial levels, notably the neighbourhood and the municipality, the region is thus considered as a suitable site for developing area-based policies, that, through integrating multiple sectorally defined fields of policy in an encompassing spatial framework can deliver more effectively in a way more in tune with local needs and conditions (Herrschel and Newman, 2002).

**Territorial collaboration:** Yet, picturing the region as a site of policy integration is not only a response to the alleged shortcomings of fragmentation between top-down sectoral policies. It is also seen as a solution for another form of territorial fragmentation, namely that between adjacent municipalities. In the most basic form, regionalisation can stem from the need for (or simply the benefits arising from) the co-ordination of services such as health, police, education et cetera. Another problem is that of inter-municipal rivalry, which, especially in larger city-regional areas, often presents serious bottlenecks for addressing local problems and shaping strategic policies. To address these problems, the municipalities involved, often assisted by the central state, embark on processes of shaping regional forms of governance that, in a negotiated style, produce shared views and common solutions.

The political case for regional governance

Regional governance also features as a response to debates on political decision-making and representation. Recent moves from ‘government’ to ‘governance’, and, in this wake, from technical to participatory forms of policy-making, can be seen as manifestations of a dominant transformation in political and policy
processes. Was the past, in broad terms, characterised by top-down, technocratic and sequential modes of decision making and policy implementation, over the last decades we have witnessed the rise of more inclusive and recursive models that aim at balancing bottom-up initiative and responsibility and top-down facilitation, monitoring, and the provision of knowledge exchange (Bruszt, 2005). Subsequently, it is a small step from such a move towards inclusiveness and participation towards the interest in the sub-national level as a key arena of policy-making and even political initiative. Healey’s work on collaborative planning, for instance, portrays the region as a core level to forge inclusive networks to promote broad engagement and the infusion of new ideas. After a period of strong top-down national control, the growth in co-operation between regional authorities, professional organisations and civil society groups is seen as an expression of a move towards bottom-up, participative forms governance and hence from technocracy to democracy (Herrschel and Newman, 2002).

Regions, according to Keating (1998), should thus be interpreted as nexuses of interchanges, involving government and civil society. Regions function as meeting places and systems of action, but they also present the basis for the shaping of identity and political mobilisation. As ‘social constructs of a relational nature’ (Gualini, 2001:7), they are “a meeting place and an arena for negotiation of functional and territorial systems of action, in economics, society and politics” (Keating, 1998:184). Through such dynamics they acquire a more stable and recognised institutional shape. The consequence is that regions increasingly have to compete with national and other levels of government not only for resources but also: “in the provision of solution of policy problems” (Keating, 1998:185).

The latter conclusion bears directly on a second issue, that of legitimacy. In addition to policy change in a substantive sense, regions in a multi-level governance setting are to provide a response to what is conceived as a major governance gap, namely that between systems of representation and actual processes of decision making (Heinze and Schmid, 1994; Herrschel and Newman, 2002; Keating, 1998). Regions are thought to close this gap by building two bridges, namely between different state levels and between state and non-state actors. The EU, in particular, has embraced regional governance as part of a wider set of multi-level governance strategies to promote the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of its actions. From this perspective, participatory approaches at the regional level can serve to enhance the legitimacy of policy actions that have a national or international scope. Especially interesting in this respect are the way the ‘bottom-up’ cross-border initiatives of the EU are part of the European project of territorial integration and cohesion.

At the national level, issues of legitimacy often stem from problems local and national authorities face when trying to develop and implement major infrastructural projects. It is no coincidence that regional governance structures often stem from the need to find support, both amongst state and non-state actors, for major transport investments and business estates (Jensen and Richardson, 2004; Vigar et al., 2000) Regions as part of a wider multi-level governance framework then serve to find an appropriate structure for wheeling and dealing between the various agents and scales, in such a way that sufficient levels of resources and commitment can be mobilised to carry on particular projects. However, as many cases show (e.g. Horan and Jonas, 1998), such
models do not always manage to stem the problems of political fragmentation and territorial conflicts. On the contrary, the search for administrative fixes always turns out to be illusive. While new forms of governance are able to address certain issues more efficiently and effectively, they also create new tensions and conflicts. In other words, whatever the ‘logic’ followed, governance remains deeply political. There are no simple administrative fixes for complex social, economic and spatial problems.

**Irritatingly Full?**

One can take the discussion one step further. As shown above, various ‘functional’ logics serve to ascribe regions with many virtues. However, regions are not outcomes of these logics; they result from political projects and ambitions that employ these logics, although they generally fail to endow regions with clear cut objectives and mandates. The leading imaginary of the region is one of a synergetic powerhouse that is economically, socially, environmentally, politically, democratically and spatially rewarding. But taking it all together, the region appears as over-determined and ‘irritatingly full’ (Miggelbrink, 2002). In reality the narratives, notably in the action they imply, are fraught with tensions and ambiguities. As an example, the political account of regions against globalisation inspired Amin and Thrift (1995) to call for nurturing “powers of association” that present “an attempt to set up networks of small firms and intermediate institutions that can act as a counter to the power of the networks of large corporations and dominant institutions”. The more policy-oriented perspectives, on the other hand, present an image of horizontal and vertical collaboration, based on a more consensual notion of the overall (economic, social, environmental) aims of regional development. Where they see oppositions to address, it is more in the area of administrative competencies and ‘petty’ rivalry between adjacent territories and scales than in the struggle against the ‘forces of capitalism’.

Partly in response to these tensions, state actors and policy-makers have turned to approaches that present the local/regional as a kind of learning ‘laboratory’ for developing joined-up solutions, within a broader (inter)national setting producing overall aims and conditions, facilitation, monitoring and learning (cf. Gualini, 2004). This translates into a policy learning ecology that, through cycles of variation and selection, may overcome the problem of mono-cropping that characterises many fields of policy-making. According to critical voices, for instance, the field of regional development policy is replete with ‘boilerplate approaches’ that even frequently succeed in repeating previously failed approaches (Storper and Scott, 1995). Such configurations can be found in national policy programmes in which the development and implementation of area-based policies is guided by interregional or national ‘centres/networks of expertise’.

An interesting question is now to what extent such an ‘irritatingly full’ region can meet the promise of moving from ‘old’ top-down, technocratic and sequential modes of decision making and policy implementation. On the one hand, these configurations can be labelled as ‘non hierarchical’ in the sense that they have generally more scope for offering bottom-up and novel perspectives
with the potential of uprooting mainstream notions and practices of policy-making, at least at the local/regional level. In the words of Bruszt (2005:4), regions are thus presented “as sites of institutional experimentation to counter deficiencies of the defunct hierarchical steering of development and correct market failures.” On the other hand, the central level (national or international) continues to set the broader conditions of local action and, most significantly, the lessons and consequences drawn from that. In the end, state action will always be strategically selective in what is facilitated and what is reproduced (Jessop). This raises, once more, the issue of legitimacy and democratic support. Are regions indeed sites of governance that acquire legitimacy and power through associationalist practices? Or is it the way certain associativist discourses are employed, through the powers-that-be, that counts?

Responding, in particular, to the policy challenges arising in the late 1980s and 1990s, the so-called ‘New Regionalist’ literature shifted from a critical political-economy perspective to a ‘softer’ institutionalist approach (MacLeod, 2001). Building, in a relational manner, ‘institutional capacity’, regions could nourish ‘associational modes of economic organisation’ that would sustain, in turn, a region’s competitive and innovative capacity (Cooke and Morgan, 1998). Storper (1997), in his elaboration of the notion of a ‘Regional World’ that acts and interacts on the basis of locally embedded ‘conventions’, emphasises the crucial role of talk between regional agents to shape regional political and economic strength. Yet, such attempts to move to more constructive and developmental perspectives on the region have not really managed to address the issue of fullness. Also the broader literature appears to be lacking in this respect. Rather than critically examining, conceptually and empirically, how the different stories fit together in concrete cases of region formation, the literature tends to focus on advocating overarching concepts that, in different configurations, selectively draw on the regionalist narratives. For instance, planning oriented accounts tend to take the economic and political accounts as ‘received wisdom’, employing these to inform and support conceptualisation of strategic regional governance (Healey et al., 1997). Economically oriented accounts, on the other hand, often invoke relatively simple notions of spatial governance to elaborate notions of spatially embedded ‘collective learning’ and systematic innovation. Detailed empirical work, furthermore, is often lacking in theoretical reflection, often rather simply presenting a case as an endorsement of the wonders of associationalist practices. Below, we will assess these issues by exploring associationalist regionalism in the Netherlands, first in a broader historical context, and then focusing on more specific recent developments.

**Associationalist regionalism in practice: the case of regional governance in the Netherlands**

Since the early 1800s the Dutch governance system has been dominated by the central state. The lower level authorities (the provinces, water boards and municipalities) are endowed with competences devolved to them by the central state. At first sight, the provinces are the closest thing to a regional government in the Netherlands, but their role in the Dutch multi-level governance system remains limited (Hulst, 2005). Moreover, the province mainly acts as an
intermediary agent between the central state and local government and has little power on itself (Vries, 2008; Peters, 2007). Until recently (the early 1990s) no other powerful body of regional governance existed in the Netherlands.

Although some developments go back to the early 1900s, claims for regional governance have really become more pressing in Dutch policy-making circuits from the 1970s onwards. It was believed that a system of regional governance would provide better and more flexible means for integral-strategic intervention, regional cooperation and territorial governance than the traditional state-province-municipality framework (ROB, 2003; Hulst, 2005). A specific claim put forward drew on policy discourses on territorial collaboration (see Hulst, 2005). Because of the weak mandate of the Dutch provinces, cooperation and coordination between municipalities to address problems and issues of supra-local scale proved to be extremely difficult. The main reason was that the provinces simply lacked the power or the interest to overrule individual municipalities. As a result, municipalities often let their individual interests prevail over the regional interest, often leading to a ‘race to the bottom’ between municipalities. So, instead of bolstering benefits from regional cooperation, the competition between individual municipalities actually hampered regional development on the whole (see for instance Gualini, 2007:304; VNG and Pröpper, 2008).

However, these pressures did not directly lead to institutional change. There would be no significant changes in the Dutch governance framework until the mid-1980s (Hulst, 2005). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, many municipalities therefore decided to build upon the existing institutional infrastructure to develop ways to cooperate regionally. The most important legal context was provided by the Joint Provisions Act (WGR) of the early 1950s, which was enacted to stimulate and regulate territorial collaboration amongst municipalities. Inspired by discourses on territorial collaboration -that stressed the importance of achieving higher levels of efficiency through functional cooperation- municipalities set up a wide variety of regional, single-purpose agencies aimed at coordinating and integrating different public services regionally. This often involved functional cooperation between municipalities in the field of collective waste disposal, fire fighting, disaster contingency plans, ambulance services et cetera.

The concept proved to be popular and in the mid-1980s a heterogeneous and scattered patchwork of over 1500 regional, single purpose agencies existed in the Netherlands (Andeweg and Irwin, 2005). At one moment there were even more regional collaborative arrangements than municipalities in the Netherlands! This created problems in terms of policy-coordination and transparency. Different single purpose agencies in the same area had different definitions of the region and its boundaries, and the wide variety of different agencies active in the same area created an almost chaotic institutional environment. This heavily complicated the synchronisation and coordination of regional policy, leading to many conflicts, tensions and inefficiencies (Geelhoed, 2002). These problems demanded a more integral and coordinated approach to regional cooperation.

In the mid-1980s therefore, the national government revised the Joint Provision act of the 1950s (WGR+), now forcing municipalities to integrate the different single purpose agencies into one larger multi-purpose regional governance body. The latter would also have a democratic body consisting of
members of the elected councils of the participating municipalities. Under the new scheme, the regional agencies delivered some satisfactory results with respect to cooperation on public services. However, as the basic premise of regional cooperation remained one of voluntary participation and cooperation, not much happened in the field of economic development (Andeweg and Irwin, 2005). Municipalities in the Netherlands were rather reluctant to give up their autonomy on economic matters and they were certainly not willing to transfer these competences to regional agencies (Nota kaderwet, 1994).

The need for regional cooperation and coordination in the field of economic development was expressed more urgently in the early 1990s. Under the (alleged) pressure of growing economic competition, especially with other European (urban) regions, the Dutch national government initiated a project which was directly concerned with regional economic development, aimed in particular at the main urban regions in the Netherlands (Geelhoed, 2002). The city regions of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven/Helmond, Arnhem/Nijmegen and Enschede/Hengelo were the main targets of this new policy. The temporary framework act ‘Kaderwet Bestuur in Verandering’ (the Act Administrative Change 1994) obliged municipalities that partook in a regional governance framework to transfer several of their competences (in particular on the field of economic development) to the regional agency. The act provided a firmer institutional basis for regional governance, endowing regional agencies with more competences, in particular, in the field of spatial planning (notably infrastructure) and economic development. The main competences ascribed to regional governance agencies involved (obligatory) collaboration in the fields of spatial planning, housing, transport and infrastructure, economic affairs and environmental issues. Yet, because the ‘obligatory collaboration’ in regional governance agencies was still based upon consensual politics, municipalities still pulled the key levers (Hulst, 2005; Geelhoed, 2002:39). As a result, regional governance agencies remained rather indecisive and powerless.

Regional governance in practice: problems and discrepancies, the case of Arnhem-Nijmegen.

As Hulst remarks, in theory, the new context constituted regional agencies with sufficient power to coordinate local governments and create coherent regional policies. In practice, however, these agencies did not fulfil the series of tasks that were the very reason of their existence (Hulst, 2005). First of all, there were many discrepancies between policy competences and decision making procedures of regional governance agencies. This relates, in particular, to the conflicts between the democratic/ representative structure of the regional governance agencies (based upon the polder model/ consensus) and the need to go beyond the interests of individual municipalities in favour of regional interest. The design of the democratic structure and the processes of decision making within these governance bodies has severely hampered their output. As the management of the regional agencies mainly lies in the hands of indirectly elected representatives from the participating municipal councils, municipalities are still pulling the most important levers. This has led to major legitimacy and accountability gaps and a vast indecisiveness of these regional agencies which made them unable to address the urgent matter of regional policy integration and
the development of coherent and strong regional economies. Instead of generating a powerful proactive regional authority with sufficient capacities to deal with major economic, political and societal changes (Gualini, 2001), decision-making within the regional governance agencies was severely bound by the self-interest of municipalities (Geelhoed, 2002:42). This has hugely negative effects on the overall sharpness and decisiveness of regional governance agencies.

Another set of problems comes out of the tensions between the different substantive goals for regional governance. Most important to mention here are the conflicts arising from tensions between political-economic claims for regionalism and the policy-making/collaboration discourses. Such problems are mainly caused by the different economic interests of the municipalities involved in regional governance. Whereas most regional governance areas in the Netherlands are dominated by one or more core cities, they also consist of several smaller, often more sub-urban or even rural municipalities. As major cities tend to have different (economic) interests than rural and sub-urban municipalities, there is often more competition over regional economic development policies than one that can actually speak of real territorial ‘collaboration’. Rather, instead of pursuing regional policy coordination and cooperation, struggles over economic policy (notably competition in providing business parks and attracting firms) are actually producing territorial fragmentation. Such tensions are also intensified by the different hierarchical positions that municipalities take up in regional governance agencies. As Dutch regionalist policy is first and foremost targeted at city regions, it is often the core cities that have the dominant voice in regional governance agencies, at the expense of sub-urban and rural municipalities. This often leads to conflicts (see the discussion in Geelhoed, 2002).

An illustrative example of this is the case of the city-region Arnhem-Nijmegen. Via the regional governance agency (the KAN) the core cities Arnhem and Nijmegen aimed to set up a multi-mode transport centre in the rural area of the municipality of Elst (which is located just between the two core cities). For both Nijmegen and Arnhem, the setting up of this transport centre was a matter of economic urgency. Through its development, the cities tried to hook on to an international trade-route from Rotterdam to Germany and Eastern-Europe. The municipality of Elst and some smaller rural/sub-urban municipalities in the region agreed to the importance of such a development but also feared the impact it would have on the local environment and infrastructure. In other words, they supported the idea but operated on a ‘not in my backyard strategy’. Despite this opposition, the cities of Arnhem and Nijmegen pushed on with the planning of the development of the transport centre using their power over the regional governance agency (in which they had the most powerful votes). However, they did not succeed. The municipality of Elst, together with some of the smaller municipalities in the region, resisted the development of a transport centre in their proximity by linking up to citizens groups, environmental NGOs and activists. This created widespread public opposition to the plans. When they finally appealed against the project in the higher court, the court ruled against the project (on the basis of environmental law) and the development came to a complete stop. This also led to political fragmentation in the city-region’s governance agency. At present, the regional agency continues to
coordinate, in particular, regional housing and transport planning. It is also investing more in region-marketing. The region now sells itself under the label of ‘cool region’, see http://www.coolregion.nl). This presents, to some extent, a move away from primarily economically oriented discourses and towards issues that may appeal more to local citizens, like housing, education and leisure. The future will tell what this will mean for the position of the regional agency in terms of legitimacy and capacity to act.

**Conclusion**

Regional governance has emerged as an increasingly popular concept. It has been represented as a synergetic and coherent mode of governance that embraces a variety of policy discourses of both substantive and political character, notably through its capacity to enrol a variety of resources and to harness public support. Cherished even by the traditional territorial ‘powers’, notably the central state and the municipal administrations, the region features as a cure-for-all, meeting a broad set of policy challenges.

However, as the case of associationalist regionalism in the Netherlands shows, in real life, regions seem to be severely hampered by way they are loaded with tasks and goals. Behind its powerful and appealing image, regional governance has become replete with contradictions, ambiguities and tensions. In particular, in contrast to its function as a lubricator and catalyst, the comprehensive and associative character of regional governance often appears to be a major stumbling block. To achieve their goals, regional agencies therefore often resort to the strategic use of the powers-that-be without much attention to the broader governance context in which they operate.

The question then arises as to whether regions could still become the highly potential ‘associations of power’ as initially represented. Are regions actually able to fulfil the wide array of tasks and goals set out for them, in an open and democratic way, as expected? In the current state of affairs, we are inclined to answer this question negatively. The region has become an intrinsically ambivalent concept and many (internal) conflicts arise from tensions between the multiplicity of tasks and discourses it has been associated with. Not only are there many conflicts between the many substantive claims for regionalism and accounts of political legitimisation, the specific governance settings in which regions operate make it far from easy to adopt democratic and associate practices. What we thus see is that the myriad of appealing narratives on regionalism, the various consultancy practices which spawn out of it and the legion of examples, texts, lectures and presentations that circulate have perhaps been too enthusiastically establishing the region as a governance panacea.

What is required, accordingly, is a greater sensitivity in both academic work on and policy experiments with regionalism. Rather than overloading regional governance practices with ‘stylised facts’, appealing concepts and promises, there is a need to approach things more reflexively. In order to create regions that have sufficient political standing, policy makers and academics should better consider how ideas and theories about regional governance will actually work out in the field. This asks for a closer relationship between discursive knowledge and governance practice. Only through such reflexive practices will regions be
able to meet the promise of ‘power of association’ beyond a mere performance of ‘associations of power-that-be’.

References


Urban governance for development. Recent trends in Latin America

Paul van Lindert

Introduction

In the year 2008, for the first time in history the world’s population has become more urban than rural. Small wonder that urbanization and the immense implications of urban growth in the next few decades are being recognized by academics and policymakers alike as a crucial challenge for future sustainable development. As such, the current debate on urban development focuses not only on the many problems and opportunities of urbanization but also, and in particular, on the vulnerability of the urban poor and on the social and sustainable use of space. At the same time, it is to be expected that an ongoing process of localization and decentralization will affect the exercise of urban governance in future, especially because most urban demographic growth will occur in intermediate cities and small towns. Local governments will need to develop, together with local stakeholders, a longer-term vision on development that should guarantee the growing numbers of (poor) people’s rights to the city.

In this paper, I will focus on current trends of decentralisation and urban governance in Latin America. Although it is often maintained that local governments traditionally are the weakest link in the public sector (UNFPA 2007: 67), Latin America shows a growing variety of promising and innovative initiatives that lead to improved urban governance. The paper finishes with an overview of the key areas for a longer-term vision on urban development policy that is pro-poor and uses a rights-based approach.

Decentralisation and the new role for local government

Over the past few decades, in association with region-wide decentralisation processes, the public sector in many Latin American countries was substantially restructured, which in turn led to new relationships between the central and the local state, as well as between the public sector and civil society. An important precondition for these decentralisation processes was the fact that popularly elected governments came to replace the once so powerful military-controlled bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes. In the year 1980, the crisis of state legitimacy was still reflected by the fact that out of the 18 countries in Latin America only 6 had regular elections. The democracies of 3 of these countries – Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela – were still based on one- or two-party systems (Lora 2007: 2). In contrast, at the start of the new millennium, all nations of the region had elected governments and they had pluriform party structures put in place. Admittedly, during much of the 1980s and even in the next decade, armed
conflicts, state repression and violation of human rights continued in too many parts of the region, especially in Colombia, Peru and in some of the poorest Central American countries that were still ruled by patrimonialist governments. In other countries, the transition to representative democracy had triggered the participation of marginalized social groups, albeit often channelled through new political movements with a notorious populist flavour, causing high levels of political instability which in some cases resulted in the deposition of consecutive presidents (e.g. in Bolivia, Ecuador). Thus, while it is a fact that as of the 1980s most Latin American nations have restored their representative democracies, many struggle with the challenges ‘to reduce the democratic deficits’ (Greig et al. 2007: 229).

An important step on the road towards a gradual consolidation of democracy in Latin America was the introduction of municipal elections. The unequivocal link between the transition to democracy and the introduction of municipal elections is clearly established by Daughters and Harper (2007:218-219; see Table 1.1). Between 1991 and 1995, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Chile and Panama were the last countries in the region to make the change from appointed to elected mayors and councillors. In addition to that – and depending on preceding municipal arrangements – new administrative and territorial municipal jurisdictions were defined through the promulgation and implementation of so-called ‘organic laws’ 1. In some countries, such as in Bolivia, these laws indeed tackled one of the traditional democratic deficits by directly incorporating the formerly excluded rural populations in the municipal political structures, which hitherto had always been dominated by the urban population. In the next step towards the consolidation of democratisation, the central governments transferred more political power to the sub-national governments and reformulated the respective public responsibilities for each of the various tiers of government.

Now that the reforms of the public sector have done away with the tradition of appointed mayors who might be tempted to act primarily in the interest of the president and the party, the ‘new’ local government is in many cases less authoritarian and exclusive than before. Under the current conditions of elected mayors and councillors, local political autonomy has increased vis-à-vis the central state. At the same time, there is more potential for local authorities to include a larger scope of actors in their decision-making and to open up spaces for social participation than there was under a centralist regime. This arrangement thus offers enhanced possibilities to establish multi-sector partnerships for local development, enabling and promoting participation of a wide range of stakeholders.

On the other hand, even if there is increased political autonomy from the centre, this does not mean that decentralisation policies also have brought financial autonomy to the local governments. According to the principles of subsidiarity, the various roles and functions of the state at the different levels of government should be mutually complementary and decentralised to the lowest administrative level at which their implementation is the most effective. In many cases of service provision, the local/municipal level would be the most appropriate. In practice, however, the required transfer of fiscal resources from

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1 A ‘ley orgánica’ in Latin America creates a new institutional regime.
the national to the local governments, combined with measures to increase revenues from local taxes, did not keep pace with the delegation and devolution of responsibilities. As Nijenhuis (2006: 116) shows, fiscal decentralisation in the countries with a federal state structure primarily focused on strengthening the intermediate levels, such as the provinces (Argentina) and the states (Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela). In the unitary states of the sub-continent, the main focus of decentralisation policies was on the municipal level. Whereas in the federal states sub-national spending varies from 20 to 50 per cent, the equivalent in the unitary states is quite modest. Even today, after roughly two decades of decentralization in Latin America, the share of national resources that is reassigned to municipal budgets is in most nations still lower than 10 per cent of the central state budget, while only a few countries (e.g. Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Guatemala) show a fiscal decentralisation from the central to the local governments of 15 to 25 per cent (IDB, 2000; Nijenhuis, 2006). Evidently, the decentralisation of functions and responsibilities to the municipalities only occasionally coincides with a new distribution of resources, diverting resources from the central government to the municipalities.

Table 1. Central and South America: Year of Democratic Transition and First Municipal Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year of Democratic Transition</th>
<th>Year of First Municipal Elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belize</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Daughters and Harper (2007: 218-219)

In recent academic literature there has been quite some attention for the promising experiences of public management in for example Bogotá (Gilbert 2006), Monterrey (Paiva, 2003), Buenos Aires (de Luca et al., 2002), Montevideo (Canel, 2001; Chavez, 2004), and – perhaps most notorious of all –
Curitiba (Schwarz, 2004) and Porto Alegre (Abers, 1998; Fedozzi, 2001; Souza, 2001). These studies show that the municipalities that cover the large metropolises of Latin America can at times demonstrate an admirable performance in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in urban planning and management, despite the existence of interlocking and overlapping structures within metropolitan areas which makes coordination among the local governments a challenging task indeed (Paiva, 2003).

Many of these municipalities have also been successful at generating funds. They have been able to use their newly established or increased powers to raise local taxes directly, obtain funds from other sources, and attract national or foreign investment. After a thorough and systematic comparison of governments in some important capital cities of the region, Meyers and Dietz concluded that citizens become less resistant to paying taxes when they perceive that the municipal apparatus is likely to act in a fair and accountable way: ‘in a few cases, elected municipal governments in capital cities have gained, at least momentarily, the reputation for collecting taxes honestly, impartially, and transparently – and for using tax revenues to fund needed urban improvements’ (Meyers and Dietz 2002: 336).

Finally, some of these cities also stand out for their innovative ways to include citizen participation in their (budgetary) planning cycles. Having said this, however, we should also add that tensions between the old-style centralised practices of clientelism and more transparent forms of public management continue to exist in many of Latin America’s major cities.

In the smaller towns of the region, not to mention the predominantly rural municipalities, the municipal balance sheets tend to show quite a different picture. Here, the transfer of financial resources from the central government is vital for the local governments if they are to perform their new roles properly, if only to cover the expenses of services now provided to the citizens by them on behalf of the central government. This is even more important as many municipal authorities in Latin America lack the necessary capacities to raise their own revenues (van Lindert and Verkoren, 2004). By and large these local administrations suffer from a lack of competent staff, who would normally be held responsible for setting up and maintaining administrative information systems, analyzing local development opportunities, project planning, providing infrastructure and public services, collecting local taxes, development fees and user charges, etc. On top of that the small municipalities do not have the same opportunities as their big sisters to engage in debt financing (e.g. through municipal development funds) in order to contract additional means for investment. As the lion’s share of the small local budgets is spent on personnel costs (in some cases up to 70-80 per cent), it is hardly surprising that many of the tasks that were transferred from the central government to the local government cannot be carried out properly (Van Lindert, 2005). A truly functioning subsidiarity principle calls for more than ‘just’ political decentralisation; it must be completed with a true and meaningful form of fiscal decentralisation.
Local governance

One of the traditional primary roles of local government is to secure a smooth and efficient functioning of the public services, which are generally managed by its technical-administrative apparatus. As a matter of fact, this was one of the fundamental arguments of the first generation of decentralisation proponents, who also claimed that it would be easier to tailor local-level services to local needs and preferences. Implicitly, however, this raises the question as to how such local needs and preferences are to be identified. The current decentralisation doctrine firmly holds that ‘the only feasible way is to have an inclusive process of local governance through which each segment of the population can express and fight over their preferences’ (Osmani, 2000: 6).

At the same time citizen participation has gained recognition as an essential principle, the vital role of the local government in development has also come to be generally acknowledged. In the current international development debate, local government is held to be the key agent both with respect to local sustainability and to the eradication of poverty. The poverty reduction strategy papers of the most indebted countries, for example, generally include a strategic focus on local government, which is to become the main facilitator for the effective provision of social services and the creation of a productive environment. Also, capacity strengthening projects for local governments are now part and parcel of many international development aid programmes.

Most of such programmes focus on how local governments can become efficient, effective agents for the improvement of local production and living conditions. In this respect, it is revealing that the World Bank, in its latest ‘Strategy for Urban Development and Local Government’, highlights such concepts as liveability and good governance, together with notions of competitiveness and bankability (World Bank, 2000).

The notion of liveability includes the social and environmental dimensions of development, such as adequate housing, safety, security, health and education. The competitiveness of the local economy relates to the efficient functioning of factor markets (capital, labour, land); bankability refers to sound municipal finance, i.e. the competent and transparent management of municipal budgets (Van Lindert, 2006). Together with an established integrity in local government, bankability and creditworthiness are important prerequisites for municipalities to be eligible for World Bank loans. Again, it is not surprising that such attributes and competences will be more readily available in the bigger cities (with larger tax bases and a more qualified staff) than in the rural municipalities.

As mentioned above, the new developmental role of the local governments implies that they really open up to their constituencies for participation in decision-making, not only during election times but especially when they have taken office. Latin America presents many interesting experiences which demonstrate how local government may become the prime mover for civil society to effectively participate in matters that concern their own living and production environments. Such restructuring of the relationships between government and citizens is crucial to ‘good governance’. According to Mitlin (2004:3), governance ‘encompasses the institutions and processes, both formal and informal, which provide for the interaction of the state with a range of other agents or stakeholders affected by the activities of the government’. Many
authors, including Mitlin (2004), Gaventa (2001), Osmani (2000), and Schneider (1999), use the notion of participatory governance, which appears to carry a similar meaning as an earlier term: participatory democracy (as opposed to representative democracy). Both terms imply institutionalised processes through which stakeholders participate in activities such as needs assessments, agenda setting, decision-making, inspection and monitoring. Defined in this way, participatory governance is a necessary, but not a sufficient precondition for good governance. In addition to fostering participatory action, governance should also be transparent, accountable and contribute to equality before it would duly deserve the good governance certificate (UNDP, 1998; Nijenhuis, 2002). In this respect, Andrews and Shah (2005) use the concept of citizen-centered governance. They give the following three distinguishing features: citizen empowerment through a rights-based approach, bottom-up accountability for results, and evaluation of government performance (as the facilitator of a network of providers) by citizens (in their multiple roles as governors, taxpayers, and consumers of public services). Box 1.1 presents the key elements of this new role of local government, as summarised by Shah and Shah (2006).

Box 1. – The role of local government under the new vision of local governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'old view' (20th century)</th>
<th>'new view' (21st century)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on residuality and local governments as wards of the state</td>
<td>Based on subsidiarity and home rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused on government</td>
<td>Focused on citizen-centered local governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent of the central government</td>
<td>Primary agent for the citizens; and leader and gatekeeper for shared rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsive and accountable to higher-level governments</td>
<td>Responsive and accountable to local voters; assumes leadership role in improving local governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct provider of local services</td>
<td>Purchaser of local services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance for risk</td>
<td>Innovative; risk taker within limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends on central directives</td>
<td>Autonomous in taxing, spending, regulatory, and administrative decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic and technocratic</td>
<td>Participatory; works to strengthen citizen voice and exit options through direct democracy provisions, citizens’ charters, and performance budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>Focused on earning trust, creating space for civic dialogue, serving the citizens, and improving social outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscally irresponsible</td>
<td>Fiscally prudent; works better and costs less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive with elite capture</td>
<td>Inclusive and participatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When applied to the role of the local government as to development and poverty reduction, participatory governance is seen to have considerably more potential than purely bureaucratic-technocratic forms of governance. Schneider (1999) emphasises that joint decision-making by politicians, civil servants and the relevant stakeholders (including the poor and other intended beneficiaries) leads to more efficient (and just) outcomes, since decisions and policies will be based on information that is more complete and of a better quality. A second rationale for citizen-centered governance that is stressed by Schneider is the fact that all actors are accountable vis-à-vis all stakeholders, and if effective mechanisms of sanctioning have been put in place, participatory governance will result in high levels of commitment to poverty reduction and development (Schneider 1999: 523).

The accountability issue, including the associated sanctioning mechanisms, is also identified by Blair (2000) as one of the major conditions for participatory governance to succeed. From an analysis of six countries with relatively successful track records of decentralisation and participation (including Bolivia and Honduras) this author also stresses the importance of having a critical mass to participate in the political process. Participatory democracy only works if participation is general, and not limited to only a few interested stakeholders or the male segment of the population (Blair, 2000).

Another important lesson learned from the Brazilian participatory budgeting experience is that the process of participatory democracy is not sustainable or irreversible by itself. One condition for irreversibility is that the population at large is aware of the importance of the process and its benefits (Cabannes, 2004: 45). This is demonstrated in the case of Porto Alegre, where, contrary to what several other municipalities in Brazil have experienced, participatory budgeting proved to outlast a change in government. Here, in the cradle of the participatory budgeting (PB) experience, the Workers’ Party, who had introduced PB, had governed for an uninterrupted period of 15 years since 1989. The year-round PB-meetings involved ever-increasing numbers of participants who knew exactly what their entitlements were and also noticed that there had been a substantial shift in spending towards the poorest areas of the city. When eventually a new government came into power in the year 2004, it was decided – most likely out of fear that the new government would otherwise lose legitimacy – that the process would be carried on as before.

Whereas in Porto Alegre the PB process was institutionalised following its successful practice, and not imposed by rules from above, Bolivia presents a different case. In Bolivia, the central government promulgated various laws in order to force participatory governance unto the local governments (Van Lindert and Nijenhuis, 2002). After a hesitant start and some initial resistance from the organised peasants’ segment in Bolivian society, the new legal and regulatory frameworks were soon followed by a massive transformation of the country’s socio-political landscapes (Assies, 2003). Most importantly, the municipalities received relatively large amounts of money transferred from the central government, provided that they would follow the mandatory participatory planning procedures and follow up with formal municipal development plans. Today, local governments in Bolivia receive 20 per cent of all central government revenues. Some of the chapters that will follow will go into the role
of local governments, citizen participation and development in Bolivia more specifically.

In sum, local governance ought to be intimately related with a well-defined decentralisation program which, apart from its local development goals, is specifically aimed to tackle democratic deficits (such as human-, gender-, democratic/political rights), to achieve a proper transition from a representative democracy to a participatory democracy and to bring about effective local decision making (see e.g. Gill, 2000; UNDP, 2002; Greig et al., 2007).

**Pro-poor urban management and governance**

The ongoing urbanisation of the developing world should no longer be considered as a threat or a problem for sustainable development, but instead as a potential solution and opportunity for development (Lerner, 2007; UNFPA, 2007). Urban areas are agents of change (UNCHS, 2001) and both the large and the smaller cities are engines of growth for the national or regional economies. The cities of Latin America also provide for the livelihoods of three out of every four households living in the region. Yet, it must be recognized that the cities of the South – even more than those of the North – are characterised by acute forms of socio-economic polarisation, residential segregation and environmental degradation. The very existence of slums and squatter settlements, often located in ecologically vulnerable parts of metropolitan areas, is a symptom of urban poverty; but even more so it is the result of urban policies that fail, of legal and regulatory frameworks that are inadequate or inappropriate, and of land- and housing markets which are far from functional. On top of that, it should be mentioned that political will is just lacking in too many city governments. In noting these challenges, Tannerfeldt and Ljung (2006) explain that sustainable urban development requires action on many fronts, including those of policy frameworks at all levels of government, land- and housing markets, urban transport systems, environmental management, local economic development, etc. Like some of the authors mentioned above, they also hold that policies designed to foster dynamic processes of sustainable urban development need to be inclusive and pro-poor (Box 2).

**Box 2. Key areas in pro-poor urban development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNANCE AND URBAN MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>➢ decentralization policies, local self-governance, democracy at the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ transparent and efficient municipal administration, measures against corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ comprehensive and inclusive local development strategies (involving all stakeholders, including economic development, land use, infrastructure, environment, culture etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ pro-poor policy and broadened opportunities for participation by the poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ land management, in particular to ensure the provision of serviced land for housing, cadastral systems, physical planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ strengthened municipal finance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC SERVICES
- Reforming of public utilities including regulatory frameworks, tariff structures and the promotion of market-oriented and demand-driven approaches to service provision
- Enabling of private sector participation, especially local firms and community initiatives
- Development of affordable solutions to water, sanitation and energy in poor settlements including subsidized connection fees for the poor
- Urban transport, especially non-motorised traffic and public transports

### HOUSING AND SLUM UPGRADE
- Housing policy
- Secure tenure, legalisation of squatter settlements
- Revision of obsolete planning and building regulations
- Improved land and housing markets
- Legal protection of tenants
- Promotion of self-construction and incremental housing
- Housing finance including micro-finance for low-income households
- Integrated improvement of slum areas
- Education and health facilities even in informal settlements

### ENVIRONMENT
- Improved sanitary conditions through better infrastructure and service delivery
- Reduction of air pollution
- Waste water treatment and industrial water management, ecological sanitation
- Solid waste management and promotion of recycling concepts
- Management of the historic environment including its protection and sustainable use
- ‘Greening of the city’
- Energy conservation, particularly with regard to heating of housing and the use of renewable energy sources
- Education and information on health and environment

### LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- Promote efficiency in the economy through improved infrastructure and service provision and through removal of obstacles and disincentives such as obsolete regulations and corruption
- Enabling environment for self-employment and micro-enterprises
- Pro-poor financial services
- Employment generation, e.g. labour-intensive methods for infrastructure works
- Urban agriculture

### SAFETY AND HEALTH
- Prevention of crime through institutional development, training of the police and support to neighbourhood actions
- Inclusion of youth and support to youth activities
storm water drainage to prevent landslides and other measures to reduce damage caused by hurricanes, earthquakes, etc
safer environment for women like lighting of walkways, improved urban transport, etc
improved traffic safety
risk reduction as part of urban planning and management
programmes to prevent the spreading of HIV/AIDS
accessibility for disabled


It will be clear to everyone that no blue-print solutions for urban development planning, management and governance exist. Urban development planning should always be based first on a clear analysis of the political economy of the social, spatial and institutional context. That is why this paper focused on the theme of urban governance and management in the specific context of Latin America, which in itself already presents a huge variety of practices and policies – not to mention how different the experiences of cities in other macro-regions will be. Such ‘context-dependent’ approach is advocated in particular by Jenkins, Smith and Wang (2007), who also underpin the crucial importance of a (planning and housing) approach “that is politically aware, applies critical analysis and is proactive” (p.184). These authors are especially critical as to the conventional transfer of ideologies, theories, policies and practices from the already ‘urbanised world’ (i.e. the North) to the ‘rapidly urbanising world’ (the South). In this paper, I have emphasized some recent trends in decentralisation and local governance in Latin American cities. It may be held that urban governments of the North indeed may learn a lot from the many innovative forms of local participatory democracy that have developed over the last fifteen years in Latin American cities. It is telling that between 2000 and 2006, more than 50 cities in Europe have adopted a participatory budgeting approach, and in other continents many initiatives are under way (Perlman and O’Meara Sheenan, 2007: 181).

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Environment and health in an urbanizing world

Françoise Barten and Geert Tom Heikens

Introduction

The social and physical environments have long been recognized as important determinants of health and the rapid change in these environments is affecting people worldwide. Despite major advances in knowledge, unprecedented gains in wealth and important policy commitments such as the MDGs, health inequities both within as well between countries and regions are deepening (Marmot, 2006; UNDP, 2005). These inequities not only affect the poor but the whole of society (Wilkinson, 1996; Wilkinson, 2005)

This paper firstly describes the unprecedented challenge posed by rapid urbanization and the deepening inequities presently seen within and between urban settings (KNUS, 2007). It explores in particular some implications of the increasing informalisation of the economy for worker’s health and safety. The paper argues that there is a need for a systems’ (or ‘integrated’) approach of health in order to address not only the proximal risk factors but above all the structural and underlying determinants. The paper focuses attention on the role of meaningful participation, empowerment and participatory governance in these approaches. The paper finally examines the implications for health policy and systems’ research and argues that there is an urgent need to reorient research priorities, and to enhance interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches in research.

Urbanization and growth of informal settlements

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized and herewith is poverty becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon. If current demographic trends continue, most of the projected growth in the next two decades is to take place in the less developed regions of the world, where cities and towns will absorb 95 percent of urban growth and will be home to almost 4 billion people, or 80 per cent of the world’s urban population by 2030. The growth of densely populated, squatter settlements or “slums” often equals urban growth. According to recent projections, the population living in informal settlements in low and middle-income countries is likely to double in less than 30 years (UN Millennium Project , 2005; UN-Habitat, 2006). Throughout history, cities have provided new opportunities for income growth, improved living conditions and health

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1 This paper is partly based upon an earlier paper presented by F. Barten at the workshop: Responding to Global Challenges. The role of Europe and international science and technology cooperation. Brussels, 4/5 October 2007
development (Hall, 1998; Leon, 2008). However, it is worth noting that Africa and Asia were still almost wholly rural in 1950 and that at present, the annual urban growth rate in Africa has become more than twice the global average, which is comparable to urban growth rates in the towns of 19th century Europe. Current urbanization differs from what the world has experienced so far and this has implications for health equity, sustainability and development policy.

In many cities urban services and infrastructure have not kept pace with rapid urbanisation and an increasing proportion of the people in urban areas will live without adequate social infrastructure, especially housing, water supply, drainage and sanitation facilities (People's Health Movement, GEGA, and Medact, 2008). People are exposed to a variety of health hazards, that are inter-connected and often produce synergy in health effects (Barten et al., 2006; Heikens et al., 2008). Risks, exposure and vulnerability differ according to socio-economic status, gender, place etc. and the health impact is mostly felt by the most vulnerable, marginalized and excluded population in the informal settlements. In Sub-Saharan towns, children living in informal settlements are more likely to die from respiratory and waterborne illnesses than children in rural areas (UN-Habitat, 2006), while HIV prevalence in the urban population is on average 1.7 times higher than among those living in rural areas (UNAIDS, 2006).

Already in the early 1980s Rossi-Espagnet drew attention to the fact that the urban poor are at the interface between “underdevelopment” and industrialization and that their lifestyle and disease patterns reflect the problems of both. While still exposed to the traditional health hazards related to poverty, un- and underemployment, malnutrition, poor shelter and inadequate environmental and social services, the urban poor are also more exposed to hazards related to “modernization”, such as unhealthy urbanization and pollution - while the lack of social support systems in cities and social exclusion increases the risk of mental health problems (Rossi-Espagnet, 1983, 1984).

Many urban centres face problems related to a rapidly increasing socio-economic-cultural differentiation, deteriorating living conditions and social polarization. A study in 23 countries highlighted the fact that generally inequalities are higher in urban areas relative to rural with the exception of countries in which rural economies are structured around plantation agriculture (Mitlin, 2004). In Nairobi the average infant and child mortality rates are lower than in Kenyan rural areas; however, in the informal settlements of Kibera and Embakasi these rates are three to four times the Nairobi average (APHRC, 2002). The deepening inequalities and polarization within urban settings appears to be increasingly associated with conflict and insecurity.

Informal employment and working conditions
As urban growth rates in some cities equals those of the towns in 19th and early 20th century in Europe, many similarities exist with respect to the developmental problems, living and working conditions common in many European towns of that period (Szreter, 2005). A critical difference is the fact that rapid urbanization in many cities has not been accompanied by a similar growth in employment and production activities. The recent waves of economic reforms in many poor countries have added to the complexity of informal labour markets, where high and sustained growth rates are not necessarily accompanied by increased growth
in formal employment (Guha-Khasnobis and Kanbur, 2006). In both poor as well as rich countries, there are now more “flexible” employment arrangements, fewer institutional protections, and greater job insecurity (Hogstedt, Wegman, and Kjellstrom, 2007) and the number of informally employed, unprotected and low-income workers is rapidly increasing. There is also increasing evidence that the expansion of precarious employment and job insecurity over the past three decades has had serious adverse effects on workers’ health, both directly and indirectly (by undermining regulatory and other protections) (Barten, 1993; Kivimaki et al., 2003; McDonough, 2000; Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle, 2001a; Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle, 2001b; Vosko, 2003).

Gender is an important variable. Gender-based inequity influences responsibilities, benefits and vulnerability and it conditions the types of exposure at the workplace with consequent health impact and health inequalities (WHO, 2006). While women – relative to men – have been restricted in their access to jobs, from 1960 onwards, and in particular over the last two decades, they have increased their participation in remunerated employment (Social Watch, 2008; UNRISD, 2005; Wamala, and Kawachi, 2007; World Bank, 2001). However, these employment gains are often precarious and many women work in the informal sector (Aguilar, et al., 2005; Cedeño and Barten, 2002). Work is often invisible or carried out under poor working conditions. It often entails no direct payment, is excluded from social protection and has implications for workers’ health and safety. Moreover, the position of women influences child health outcomes (Acevedo, 2002; Barten et al., 2008; Social Watch, 2007). Women are also less organized in unions (Kolk et al., 1999; WHO, 2006). Another challenge is the rapidly increasing numbers of illegal migrants, who often end up in hazardous work and lack rights to health care, education or decision-making. Informal work is not limited to informal urban settlements (Werna, 2001). However, workers that survive in the informal economy in urban settings are a more vulnerable group. The workers’ health and that of the wider community cannot be considered in isolation of the rapidly changing context in many cities.

The capacity to address these challenges in a context of climate change, global economic slow-down and energy crisis, long-term and emerging violent conflict, food insecurity and weak global governance appears limited and demands urgent strengthening. Clearly, there is an urgent need to move beyond a “symptom-treatment mode” and to develop a systems approach that addresses not only the proximal risk factors, diseases and individual health effects – but in particular the upstream driving forces of this urbanization and of deepening health inequity.

An important and so far neglected historical lesson is the role that was played by the state and public services in improving living conditions and health in Europe (Szteher, 1988). An important institutional impact of globalization on cities has been the weakening of national and local public institutions, relative to the arrival of powerful, informed and decisive multinational external private sector companies. Effective government power had already been reduced since the 1990s, when essential public services, such as water supply, sanitation, waste collection; health, education and other social services in many countries were privatized and outsourced from government to private companies.

Local authorities are under pressure to attract private investment in order to create job opportunities and generate income in the city, while external private-
sector companies enjoy wide freedom to establish themselves where conditions such as wage rates, tax breaks and other incentives, and national regulatory framework are most beneficial. When these conditions change, or become more favourable elsewhere, the companies can quite easily move to another more favourable location (Barten, Mitlin et al., 2006). As a group, women suffer more from competitive pressures and are usually the first to be laid-off when labour-intensive manufacturing jobs move to even lower-wage countries (Fussel, 2000; Joekes, 1995). They often have limited possibilities for skill acquisition and advancement and have inadequate security coverage in terms of old-age pensions, whereas their work as carers of family-members often continues into old age (ILO, 2002; Social Watch, 2007). In some rapidly industrializing economies or export-processing zones, women’s share of employment has fallen and apparently no sustained improvement in labour market status has been achieved (Berik, 2000; Fontana, et al., 1998; Jomo, 2001). Although the relevance of capacity enhancement and empowerment is increasingly recognised, these changes imply that a fundamental shift in employment relations and power is taking place. This has implications for long-term health outcomes at individual and societal levels (Marmot et al., 1997).

The major consequences of these changes are increased urban poverty and a widening gap between the rich and the poor in cities. The twin processes of increasing poverty and deepening inequity need to be understood as a process of increased socio-economic differentiation in cities (National Research Council, 2003) and this also occurs in cities of more developed economies, where this differentiation is significantly increased by transnational migration (Beall, 2002).

**Participatory governance, information and health systems**

Considering the complexity of and linkages between health, poverty, working conditions, urban environment, it is clear that improvements in health and health equity need to move beyond fragmented interventions. These conditions are not addressed by health interventions that prioritize single issues, vertical disease-programs, curative care above prevention or that focus on changes in lifestyle only. Although essential, universal access to health services is insufficient to improve the health of communities and to reduce health inequities under such circumstances (see Box 1).

In 1978 the Alma Ata conference defined health as linked to the living and working conditions of the population and acknowledged the role of community participation in health (WHO, 1978). This was underlined again by the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, which focused on processes of advocacy, enablement and mediation and on strategies to build healthy public policy, empower communities, create supportive environments and reorient health services. Healthy Cities and healthy settings (districts, neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, etc) were seen as “a means to take these broad concepts and strategies and applying them at the local level” (WHO Ottawa Charter, 1986).
Box 1. Moving beyond a symptom-treatment mode…?

Environmental lead exposure of children in low-income neighbourhoods in Managua has since long been a neglected urban health problem. Already in the 1980s several children died of lead poisoning and hundreds of children upon examination appeared to have unacceptably high blood lead levels (Barten, 1988; Barten, Sousa Santana et al., 2008). They were living in the vicinity of a car-battery factory and in cottage factories involved in the recycling of car batteries (see map annex). In those years, the population of the capital city doubled due to the tidal wave of refugees from the war-zones in the rural area. Many people ended up working in the informal sector as a survival strategy. While the war and trade embargo created a high demand for car batteries, water was rationed and hygiene therefore limited. Malnutrition increased the vulnerability of young children. Thanks to the preventive focus of the universal health care system a screening of all children living in the vicinity of the car-battery factories was conducted despite severe resource constraints in order to identify children at high risk. However, and as raised by the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (Solar and Irwin, 2005), “what sense does it make to cure a person and then to send him or her back to the same environment that caused the illness in the first place…” Participatory action enabled a better understanding of the fundamental issues at stake and the need to address this problem at all levels.

Improvement in health and health equity demands not only change in physical and social environments of cities, it also demands an integrated long-term multi-sectoral approach which takes into account the wider socio-economic and contextual factors affecting health (Barten, et al., 2008). Integrated or multi-level approaches that involve the public sector and civil society should address not only the immediate, but also the underlying and particularly the basic causes at societal level of related health issues (Barten, et al., 2006; KNUS, 2007). However, in order for comprehensive approaches such as healthy settings to address the upstream determinants of health inequities effectively and at multiple levels, they need to tackle issues of participation, governance and the politics of power, decision-making and empowerment explicitly (Barten, Mitlin et al., 2006; Barten et al., 2002; van Naerssen and Barten, 2002a, 2002b; Perez Montiel and Barten, 1999).

Participation is considered crucial to the social transformation necessary for development as, among other factors, it would contribute to building ownership and commitment, to shaping avenues for involvement in decision-making processes and to allowing for sustainability of development processes, outcomes and decisions (Stiglitz, 2002). Although the relevance of participation has been recognized by many agencies, in practice it has been more difficult to achieve and often took place in name only (Arnstein, 1969). Priorities in global health policy are often set at international level (Ollila, 2005) and local political commitment for long-term participatory planning processes is limited in a context of limited resources and heavy donor dependency.

Access to information is an essential precondition for participation and it is worth noting that information systems played a critical role in improving health and health equity in cities of 19th century Europe (Szreter, 2005). However,
Figure 1. Estimated ‘Exposure levels’ in dependence of distance to industry and cottage factories in the districts Domitila Lugo, Riguero Norte and Pedro Joaquin Chamorro in Managua 1987.

Information systems in many cities often do not capture the living and working conditions, environment and health status of their societies, let alone in communities living in unplanned and informal settlements and urban poverty in low and middle-income countries is still under-estimated (David et al., 2007; Satterthwaite, 2004).

Implications for research and policy

The manner in which any problem is framed, inevitably affects the type of response that is developed to address it (Ambert, et al., 2007). Although the funding to and profile of global health has increased in recent years, through new
initiatives like MDGs, Global Fund, GAVI, PEPFAR etc., and development of new diagnostics, vaccines and drugs has led to increased numbers of clinical trials, research into the fundamental drivers of problems is still neglected, including but not only health systems research. Even more limited are the geopolitical interests to reverse the outcomes of such studies. As long as these knowledge gaps are not addressed, progress however will remain limited (Marmot, 2008).

Also, a system analysis of health differs from an analysis of health systems as this involves a set of actors and processes, change over a large period of time and the important historical, social, economic, cultural and political determinants (Lawrence, 2003; Pearce and McKinlay, 1998). Equity, solidarity, universality and access to good quality care have long been common values and principles that have oriented health systems’ and policy development in Europe (EC, 2007). Research therefore should be made more responsive to the challenges of deepening and new inequalities and pay more attention to the upstream driving forces of population health equity, and its interface with social structures and the health system (McCoy et al., 2004).

It is particularly important to strengthen the evidence-base of and role of public policies. Applied public health research is essential to evaluate public policies and practice as well as e.g. the nature and outcomes of changing arrangements in urban governance, human resources development, economic and climate change. This implies the need to study the reasons of planning failures as well as of effective policies and actions at national, regional and global level. It is compelling to develop an evidence-based research agenda on these topics. Comparative studies may enable relevant lessons to be learned and governments have an important responsibility to ensure cross-sectoral public health research for the public good.

However, it continues to be neglected and while the “10/90 gap” has come to symbolise the mismatch between the south and the north in health research, it is important to acknowledge this other critical 10/90 gap that exists in Europe: the mismatch between biomedical pharmaceutical research and public health research(McCarthy, 2008). To date, biomedical research on specific diseases has dominated, and the implications of transferring this “European” focus and bias into research partnerships with the South deserves further scrutiny. The present dominance of translational pharmaceuticals research is surely not in the public interest(McCarthy, 2008) and it is urgent to acknowledge the public health dimension of the rapid and chaotic urbanisation, migration, the growth of informal settlements, the changing arrangements in governance, the informalisation of the economy, the commercialisation of health care and the implications of global warming. Large knowledge gaps still remain.

What should be done? Firstly, there is a need to mobilize knowledge from different disciplines, to better integrate the natural and social sciences and to engage with different knowledge systems and its actors. So far, disciplinary research has dominated and knowledge institutions should have a crucial role in facilitating interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. Countervailing knowledge and power, and innovative approaches in research cooperation are needed; not only to increase the relevance of research for communities, but also for reducing health inequities in the society. Secondly, which policy methodologies are at our disposal? How will the modes of conducting research
and of research cooperation condition and set our research agenda? Reverse which determinants and mode of investigation determine our research agenda? Have we drawn the correct lessons from past health research, have we been able to develop new paradigms or have we followed the traditional scientific paths? Did we carry out real participatory action research and involve all relevant actors in our studies, or did we leave those who are studied out for the convenience of our publications? What is the role of civil society in establishing the research agenda and become participatory and owner of real participatory and action based health systems research? It has become evident that the context, the values, the politics of power and the unequal access to resources in research partnerships are essential and preconditions for health systems research if it is to improve equity and health in communities.

In summary, the problems of the urban social and physical environment posed by the current trends of urbanization, uneven development, political motivated development assistance and global warming are immense and the public health dimension of these challenges are still largely neglected. Consensus should be achieved on a value-based approach to health and on an new integrated or systems approach in public health and urban planning that addresses above all the upstream underlying and structural determinants - and not only the proximal individual risk factors and/or health effects. There is an urgent need to incorporate these essential values in the upcoming agenda for global health research only than will we address in a meaningful and effective manner the political and economic changes needed to address the determinants of health and health equity in urban settings. Such an approach requires vision, leadership and engagement in an interdisciplinary manner. Ton van Naerssen, and his colleagues in Nijmegen, had such a vision as they jointly established the interdisciplinary Nijmegen Urban Health Group and the international civil society programme Health and Environment in the Cities. Over the last 15 years applied research on the determinants of urban health, health equity and development in health have become effective means to inform the highly needed changes in public policy to achieve health for all in an equitable manner.

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