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Exploring the Value of a Transnational, Reciprocal and Multi-Stakeholder Approach to the Migration-Development Nexus. Case Study: TRANSCODE Programme

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Abstract

There is a prevailing bias, even amongst the actors directly involved, to consider activities falling under the migration-development banner as bipolar engagements, i.e. activities linking a country of origin of migrants to their country of present residence. Such conceptualisations assume the nation-state as the default frame of reference. Whilst progress has certainly been made towards a necessary sophistication of migration related issues in policy thinking and related academic research, the migration-development nexus remains something still often considered as essentially something to approach within a singular or bipolar nation-state framework. This can be seen in studies of potential policy interventions related to transnational flows such as human capital transfers, remittance flows and community development projects initiatives. Taking the case of the Transnational Synergy for Cooperation and Development (TRANSCODE) Programme, and focusing on empirical insights gained with this programme in relation to its conceptual underpinnings, we explore alternative modes of incorporating migration and development. This article thus seeks to provide insights in opportunities for alternative initiatives resulting out of cross-fertilization of experiences and ideas between migrant organisations and other actors engaged in migration and development efforts.

Keywords: transnational development, multi-stakeholder initiatives, migration & development

Introduction

In June 2010 a five-day workshop was held in Tagaytay City, The Philippines under the banner of the TRANSCODE programme. TRANSCODE stands for Transnational Synergy and Cooperation for Development¹. During the workshop 35 participants from The Philippines and The Netherlands met together to have a series of intensive debates, brainstorm sessions and field visits. These different activities had the endeavor

our to learn from each other practices in the field of international migration and to critically discuss the migration-development nexus from a multi-stakeholder perspective. The Scalabrini Migration Institute (SMC) in Manila, the Global Society Foundation (*Stichting Mondiale Samenleving* or SMS) in Utrecht and the Geography Department of the Radboud University (RU) in Nijmegen took the initiative for this workshop. The first is a research centre studying international migration and policies in Asia, the second came forth out of a desire in the Netherlands

¹ Also see: www.transcodeprogramme.org, www.simiroma.org/transcodeRome.html and www.facebook.com/pages/transcode-Programme

amongst refugee associations to establish a support organisation, and the third is an academic institution that, among others, focuses on globalization issues. The majority of the Philippine participants represented migrant NGO's, local governments, national government agencies and the private sector. The Dutch delegation also had a varied composition albeit more in terms of their origins, as they represented diaspora organisations based in The Netherlands with roots in the various continents of the Global South, including countries such as Burundi, Ghana, Somalia, Turkey and Indonesia. By mere virtue of being part of such an amalgamous body the participants at the Tagaytay 'learning and linking' event already felt they had a real opportunity to communicate across the usual divides. What brought further innovation to this event, however, was its setup. Rather than bringing diverse actors together for an afternoon, or even a full day to hold a workshop, here a 'live in' setting was created. This meant the (social) need to engage with each other not only in a conference setting, but also outside this, namely over dinner and during leisure time, this for a whole five days. According to the participants such a prolonged time of sharing of one space, which implied a mixing in of formal and informal moments, helped to create a feeling of shared commitment, more than would be the case in more structured setting of limited duration. Indeed, some of the participants even spoke of the emergence of some kind of TRANSCODE 'spirit' during those days, and this became a term used affectionately and instrumentally at subsequent TRANSCODE gatherings.

Beyond the merits of such a live-in happening and the kind of commitment this evoked, the event also provided another interesting insight. When the delegates from The Philippines itself arrived at the venue and added their names to the registration list, they found out, much to their surprise, that the names of delegates from The Netherlands already on the list did not look typically Dutch. Instead these names appeared have their origins in all sorts of other countries. Their surprise is significant in reflecting a general ten-

dency, or perhaps bias, to consider activities falling under the migration-development banner as bilateral engagements, i.e. as linkages between two countries: the country of origin of migrants and the country of current residence, rather than a much more diverse set of actors, assorted also by the particular qualities they bring rather than their nationality. Such a bilateral view basically assumes the nation-state as the default mode of identity and most relevant frame of reference. In other words such a view is based on certain 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

The Philippines delegates at the Tagaytay event cannot be faulted for coming to the event with such a view however, when this view still has a general following, also in academic research (particularly that which has an applied political nature). This perspective all too often still conceives development cooperation opportunities through migration as taking place within the framework of the framework of a bipolar nation-state to problematize, conceptualize and study the migration-development nexus. This is for instance the case with studies looking at the impact of migration on human capital transfer (brain drain/gain/regain), studies focusing on remittance flows between two countries, and studies exploring the meaning of community development projects through migrant support. (Smith and van Naerssen 2009; van Naerssen 2008)

Of course we recognize that various programmes have been initiated which have given attention to a wider set of actors than just migrants and their organisations in migration and development initiatives. Yet, in most cases the ultimate focus remained on meeting a national agenda, usually of the country in the Global South. This is for instance the case with the diaspora-oriented projects organized under the banner of the Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) of the European Commission and the Swiss Agency

for Development and Cooperation. From a more conceptual viewpoint empirical examples can also be found in scholarly work focusing on transnational spaces created by diasporas (Brah 1996; Lampert 2012), and the potential for development these generate (Mohan 2002; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009; van Naerssen, Spaan and Zoomers 2008) and on the nature of co-development modalities (Riccio 2011). Conceptually these studies again pay tribute to more fundamental underlying theoretical notions such as that of social remittances (Levitt 1998) and collective remittances (Goldring 2004).

What the composition of the Dutch delegation to The Philippines really gave, as an eye-opener, was that their diversity, as representatives of all kinds of migrant associations had an interest in learning from the experiences of Philippine migrant related institutions and civil society organisations to reconsider their own role and the shape of their migration and development programmes and projects. To illustrate this we return with the specific example of the project proposal led by the Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD) later on in this article.

In this article we provide an overview of the activities and initiatives of the TRANSCODE programme and an explanation of its conceptual underpinning in order to support a more general discussion on good practises in the migration-development field². In essence the TRANSCODE programme queries the premises on which conventional approaches to collective initiative development in the global South are often conceived, as also reflected in the Millennium Development Goals signed in 2000 (see also the Introduction by Sorensen). Also, and perhaps more fundamentally, it explores opportunities for alternative initiatives that result from cross-fertilization of experiences and ideas between migrant organisations of various geographical origins, as implemented in locations around the world. This builds on work already done in this very direction (see for instance Faist 2000;

Goldring 2004). This article thus seeks to set out the societal and policy rationale for initiatives in the development arena that take a reciprocal, transnational and multi-stakeholder approach.

The Mainframe of Migration and Development

In the last five years, the discussion on migration and development has taken momentum, not least due to the rising awareness of the sheer volume of remittances sent by migrants to their countries of origin, as Sorensen has set out clearly in the Introduction of this special issue. Following the first publications by the World Bank on the flow of hundreds of billions of Dollars from migrants to their home countries, an amount quickly surpassing official development assistance provided to these same countries in the Global South, but also the volume of foreign direct investments, discussion amongst governments quickly zoomed in on the options available to capitalize on these migrant remittances to make them of benefit to the whole nation. Such “mythicisation” of remittances, e.g. entertaining the idea that remittances are the panacea for all the development issues of migrant-sending countries, is conceptually flawed (García Zamora 2009; de Haas 2005). However this essentially functionalist and somewhat simplistic line of reasoning was taken by many countries in the Global South, when adopting or reinforcing national programmes encouraging the export of labour, seeing this as a clear development strategy.

A second misinterpretation relating to the migration-development nexus concerns the relegation of development responsibilities to migrants and diaspora groups (Márquez-Covarrubias 2010). This emerged out of an understanding that individual remittances comprise only one of various channels through which migrants contribute to the development of their home countries (van Naerssen, Spaan and Zoomers 2008). Another channel is formed with so-called “collective remittances”. These follow out of philanthropic donations to collective savings, or by supporting the collection of certain goods (in kind). Once these were considered to be suf-

² All three authors are currently involved in the programme.

ficient in volume, they were sent to their communities of origin.

A third issue concerns the fact that the focus on financial flows from migrants to their home countries often ignores many kinds of knowledge transfers of overseas workers, immigrants and returnees to their countries, at both individual and collective levels. These are seldom registered as remittances³. This transfers insights in new skills, technologies and professional expertise gained abroad to home countries. It is only with the general acceptance of the term “social remittances”, coined first by Peggy Levitt, that this kind of input by migrants has come to be better recognized (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). These “social remittances” also include the transfer of new norms and values, particularly when women migrate (van Naerssen forthcoming). Finally, there are also examples of international cooperation aid undertaken through diaspora groups, as in the case of transnational development practices promoted by some receiving countries (Giménez Romero et al. 2006).

In terms of development, all these migrants’ contributions constitute a huge potential. Indeed, policy makers would make a big mistake to ignore or underestimate their value. Nevertheless, also according to various recent studies, the precise development impact of international migration in many sending countries provides a ambivalent insights (Asis and Baggio 2008; Castles 2007; de Haas 2008; Delgado Wise and Guarnizo 2007; García Zamora 2009). The unleashing of the development potential of migration is not automatic or linear and all benefits generated may be overshadowed by the costs incurred. Indeed, these gains and losses are to be considered not only in the economic sphere as they also extend to the social, cultural and political realm.

Policies and programs aiming at enhancing the benefits and reducing the costs of migration and

the remittances that follow may help to reduce this ambivalence, but they should not be governed by an instrumentalist understanding of the link between migration and development. In many cases immigration and emigration policies seem to respond more to economic – and unilateral – concerns rather than to ethical and/or humanistic principles. When benefits derived out of migration are the result of abuse, exploitation and discrimination of migrants elsewhere, then they are surely most questionable. Moreover, the interests of receiving countries and sending countries generally do not coincide, and this lack of correspondence has negative implications on the effectiveness and consistency of migration policies and regional dialogues.

The discussion on the migration-development nexus should include the principle of co-responsibility in the development of the whole human community (Baggio forthcoming). Grounded on the universal destination of the earth’s goods, this principle calls on countries to go beyond the concept of national sovereignty, acknowledging everybody’s right to have access to resources where they are. Moreover, the same principle dispels the myth of the ‘generosity’ entailed in the international cooperation promoted by the more industrialized countries, recalling the duty of sharing to those who have more resources. Another ethical principle that should be considered in the discussion on the migration-development nexus is the principle of subsidiarity. Grounded on the respect of the autonomy of local communities and institutions, this principle should be considered in the initiatives for international cooperation undertaken by receiving countries – in other words, promoting sustainable development should be respectful of local history and culture (“incultured” development). The inclusion of the principle of democracy in the discussion on migration-development nexus is also crucial. According to this principle, the discussion leading to the elaboration of migration policies and programs should include all the stakeholders through duly recognized representatives.

³ For instance many small scale and informal entrepreneurial activities exist which are created and/or supported by migrants. For an in depth account of such an activity by (permanent) migrants, see Maas (2005).

No political exercise can neglect the centrality of the human being understood in his/her individual and collective dimensions. The clear identification of the main beneficiaries of migration and development policies and programs reaffirms the inviolability of human rights beside visas and passports. The defence and promotion of human dignity cannot be jeopardized by economic or security concerns.

Strategically speaking, the reflection on the migration-development nexus should always consider the bottom-up approach, since a lot has already been done at the grassroots level and migrants and migrant associations have been learning from their own experience. Their inclusion in the debate may result highly beneficial. Then, when translating reflection into practice, spirit and trust should be always connected to achieve a sustainable and effective empowerment. The trust is to be built among all the stakeholders of the migration and development exercise with no ground for competition and no dependence from governments.

Tracing the Origins of TRANSCODE

Based on the conviction that migration has development potentials beyond remittances, in 2007, the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) decided to develop a project proposal for submission to the European Union. The proposal was tendered as a response to the 2007 call of the Aeneas Programme, which focused on financial and technical assistance to third countries in the field of migration and asylum. In November 2007, the project proposal was approved and in December 2007 SMC started implementing the project titled "Migrants' Associations and Philippine Institutions for Development" (MAPID). The project aimed at building and strengthening the partnership between government institutions in the Philippines and migrant communities, particularly through migrants' associations, in Italy and Spain. Being a three-country project, SMC decided to partner with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas in the Philippines, the Foundation for Initiatives and Studies on Multi-ethnicity

(ISMU Foundation) in Italy and the University of Valencia in Spain.

The MAPID project had two overall objectives: (1) to advance the understanding of the migration-development nexus among migrant associations and in Philippine institutions as a key factor contributing to national and local development; and (2) to promote cooperation between migrant associations and national and local institutions in the Philippines. Through the action 44 migrants' associations and 60 Philippine institutions (national agencies and local government units) acquired knowledge of the development potential of migration, examples of good practices and models of cooperation. More migrants' associations and Philippine institutions (but also other stakeholders) were reached through MAPID research, training and dissemination activities undertaken between 2008 and 2010 such as free distribution of reports and training materials in the three countries, and the availability online of various materials. All in all 87 migrant leaders participated in the MAPID training programs in Italy and Spain and acquired skills to serve as focal points/advocates/mediators between their members and Philippine institutions. Furthermore 116 Filipino policy-makers, development and migration officers attended the training programs in the Philippines and thereby acquired a better understanding of the migration-development nexus, particularly the transnational dimensions of development. Finally, MAPID also had the effect of creating or fostering the linkages between Filipino migrant associations in Italy and Spain and Philippines based institutions (Baggio 2010).

The final assessment of the activities undertaken within the MAPID project led the implementers to highlight some lessons learnt. In the first place, the success of the measures and actions for development in the countries of origin cannot be *a priori* defined, since it depends to a large extent on the 'quality' of a territory, i.e. those characteristics that render it more or less receptive to the contribution of migrants. This does not only mean material and infrastruc-

tural features but also other factors such as the rootedness of democracy, the presence of an enlightened ruling class to lead incentives, and the vitality of civil society as a way of enabling stratification for individual mobility. All these were of strategic importance for determining the impact of initiatives promoted by migrants and helped to recognize and overcome certain unfavourable contexts and institutional hurdles to initiatives taken. Thus it emerged that the involvement of local authorities but also locally based civil society organisations in countries of origin is of strategic importance for readying those local contexts to become true receptacles and co-investors for investment projects of migrants.

Secondly, the impact of return migration cannot be interpreted merely through economic measures, as this would underestimate the contribution that migrants and former migrants can make to the perspective of a development in the wider sense. Particularly attention to the cultural impact of migration and return migration is of importance. In this context it can be seen how significant the MAPID project was, and notably its training initiative aimed at empowerment as a keystone to engaging local actors in actions of transnational development.

Thirdly, although traditionally the idea of migrants as agents of development of their countries of origin above all focuses on those classified as temporary migrants with clear intentions to return home, attention through MAPID efforts has also shifted to other actors engaged with migration. This provides for a more complete, albeit also more complex, picture of all kinds of actors, including diaspora members, permanent expatriates, citizens who are clearly well integrated in their host countries and younger populations abroad, i.e. second and third generation migrants. In fact, when considering the diaspora, their knowledge of things such as market opportunities, the most appropriate distribution channels (including first hand information about customs and laws of countries involved with their trading activities), but also their ability to communicate fluently in two or more lan-

guages, can give great impetus to commercial flow, investments and the creation of businesses, the transfer of new technologies, the circulation of expertise and other forms of cross-cultural fertilisation.

Lastly, the success of the process of adaptation to the host society, including the crowning achievement of naturalisation, is not enough to erode the attachment of migrants to their country of origin, but rather turns them into strategic actors of its modernisation. Increasingly, this is acknowledged by national governments that are setting up special ministries or departments to deal with their compatriots, former citizens and second-generation emigrants. The transnational identities and the development potential of migrants and their associations have also attracted the attention of researchers (van Naerssen 2008; Smith and van Naerssen 2009; Agunias and Newland 2012) and international organisations (Sharma et al. 2011; IOM 2013).

Defining the Key Objectives and Principles of TRANSCODE

The TRANSCODE programme expressly built on the foundations laid out with the MAPID programme, seeking to extend its activities to other countries and migrant populations. One of its key objectives is to provide a platform to enable the creative and structural engagement of various actors, understanding these as stakeholders with certain common, but also with divergent interests as related to their basic approach, scale and location of implementation, their resources and their operational timelines. TRANSCODE thus sought to bring together NGOs in migrant-sending countries with migrant organisations in destination countries for migrants, commercial actors, local and national governments, traditional authorities (ethnic leaders, religious institutes) sharing potentially similar interests.

The overall objective of this programme is to engage different stakeholders in realizing the potential of migration and development and to provide a forum for transnational (North-South and South-South) exchanges of innovative ideas

for local development initiatives. This general objective translates to a focus on enhancing the level of engagement and collaboration between transnational community organisations (TCOs) and other migration and development actors. The latter include actors situated both in the Global North and South such as migrant-related NGOs and home-based organisations. Thereby it was also expected that a certain set of best practices with development projects would emerge to then replicate elsewhere. Following onto this field of practise dimension the TRANSCODE programme then envisioned identifying areas of cooperation and thereby also designs for transnational projects, the so-called *TRANSCODE spin-off projects*, in order to also search for funding. Finally, the TRANSCODE programme sought to disseminate the results and outcomes as learning tools for capacity building and shaping of policies to promote the development potentials of migration.

While the first connection with The Netherlands was more or less accidental, based mainly on personal relations between the initiators of the MAPID programme and one Dutch researcher, the choice for SMS (Global Society Foundation) as a partner was deliberate. As a service and support organisation for migrant organisations in The Netherlands, SMS had an extensive network linking the TRANSCODE initiative to programmes of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and various development funding agencies. SMS also cooperated closely with ten migrant organisations that formed the Dutch Consortium of Migrant Organisations (DCMO) platform. DCMO, among others, included an umbrella organisation of Moluccan forced migrants and their descendants. They brought in forty years of experience with small-scale development projects in East Indonesia. Another member organisation of DCMO is the Joint Muslim Aid Organisation (SMHO). This is of Turkish Dutch origin and is primarily engaged in educational and relief programmes in African countries. For these migrant organisations TRANSCODE offered a substantive opportunity to exchange insights with other

organisations, for instance at the first event in The Philippines.

Obviously migrant organisations are only one of various actors involved in TRANSCODE activities. Yet we give them special attention in this article, as, by and large, they remain the principal actor to initiate activities in the field of migration and development. Furthermore they also take up a particularly complex position, as they are involved with developments in their country of origin, thereby becoming enmeshed through social networks with local actors, whilst they are simultaneously also serving local interests in countries of residence, e.g. dealing with societal perspectives on integration. They are thus directly responding as much to so-called immigration processes as to prospects for being part of the migration-development nexus. To understand the connections between these two, and their different settings, we prefer to use the term: *transnational community organisations* (TCOs). This concept then helps to understand new kinds of transnational spatial configurations taking shape through families, churches, communities, etc. TCOs then also include organisations that might otherwise be classified as Diaspora, as migrant or refugee led, when these have a firm embedding in a country of origin.

TRANSCODE is thus an effort to explore the role of TCOs to further the discussion and understanding of the migration-development nexus and, at the level of implementation, to learn from each other and co-operate in the programmes and projects. In this, specific features are promoting the involvement of multiple stakeholders and fostering cooperation across transnational contexts. The *multiple stakeholder approach* gives recognition to the need for engagement between civil society, governments and private sector, i.e. for them to work together. To that end the academics involved in this initiative also made sure not to take the limelight in the discussion on the direction TRANSCODE and its various activities should take. As the participants of the first workshop elected a steering committee mainly comprising academics (the authors of this

contribution included), this committee was careful that it limited its role to the continuity of the overall programme, staying well outside decision-making over individual activities and the direction which projects were taking. As we will discuss in the reflections part of this article, the endeavour to take a reflexive rather than defining or stipulating role was at times hard to maintain not only because of the personal engagement of the committee members with some activities, but because some of the other actors, and notably the TCOs, readily sought their support in formulating their proposals to secure funding for their projects. Nonetheless, beyond the slight concerns with the nature of the steering committee, given its original representation, overall TRANSCODE has always been seen as a real 'bottom up' endeavour and has been able to sustain a strong interest the TCO, but also from grassroots organisations and local government representatives.

TRANSCODE Programme of Activities

In conjunction with the above objectives the TRANSCODE programme of *activities* was then divided into the following:

- Interface meetings through workshops, conference, reflection sessions and field trips – face-to-face meetings to enhance maximum linking and learning and forging of partnerships;
- TRANSCODE spin off projects: Transnational multi-stakeholders projects enhancing the positive contribution of migration in development, and,
- Research: publications and documentation to disseminate information for capacity building, share learning processes to ensure the sustainability of results.

International workshops

Returning to the chronology of events. In TRANSCODE 1 (2010), two workshops were held, one in *Tagaytay City* (Philippines) in June and the second in *Soesterberg* (The Netherlands) in October. The workshops brought together participants representing different stakeholders involved in migra-

tion and development issues in the Philippines and the Netherlands: TCOs, local and national government agencies, private companies, the academe, and development organisations. Both workshops explored the possibilities for collaborative engagements to tap the development potentials of the participating organisations.

Project ideas on collaborative and transnational projects were prepared by the participants, which were then presented at the workshop in *Soesterberg*. The participants unanimously recommended that the initiative be continued. To this end the organizers proposed an expanded TRANSCODE, by opening up the initiative to participants from a new set of origin and destination countries: Ghana and Italy. Ghana was chosen because: (1) it is an African country with an emerging migration infrastructure; (2) it has a sizable Diaspora in Europe; and (3) there are existing links between academics based at the Radboud University and academic institutes in Ghana, The Centre of Migration Studies most particularly. The choice of Italy was also based on several considerations: (1) the existence of various TCOs in Italy, itself an emerging global south derived migrant destination; (2) the clear participation of (local) government(s) in migration and development projects; and (3) the strong links between the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC) in The Philippines with the Italy-based institution Scalabrini International Migration Institute (SIMI) facilitating research related activities.

In 2011, soon after the first two workshops had been held, the Global Society Foundation, as one of the initiators of the TRANSCODE programme, had to close its doors because of financial issues. This did not impact the initiative too much since the Steering Committee (SC) continued. To ensure that its role would not be too coercive and/or influential an Advisory Board was also set up. The members of this board came from the full range of actors already involved with initiatives under the TRANSCODE flag. Later on the Steering Committee changed its name in *TRANSCODE Programme Board* (TPB) and, more significantly, also revised its composition to bet-

ter reflect the multi-stakeholder representation that is so strongly envisioned in TRANSCODE.

Two TRANSCODE workshops were held in 2012: the first took place in Elmina (January) with the second workshop organized in Rome (April). With the assistance of RECOGIN, an umbrella organisation of Ghanaian diaspora organisations based in Amsterdam, and the TRANSCODE secretariat, the Centre for Migration Studies (Ghana) organized the first 2012 workshop. The selection of participants responded to the multi-stakeholder criterion and practically all the key sectors were represented. All the attendees showed clear knowledge and interest in the main topics related to the migration and development nexus, with an enriching variety of approaches towards these. Particularly noteworthy was the presence of representatives of the Ghanaian and Philippine governments for the entire duration of the workshop. The second workshop in Rome, Italy, was organized by SIMI. The selection of participants again responded well to the multi-stakeholder criterion. However, unfortunately, and this despite reiterated efforts, the organizers were not able to secure representatives from the private sector. At the same time representatives of the Ghanaian, Philippine and Italian (national and local) governments attended the introductory section providing clear messages of commitment.

TRANSCODE Spin off Projects

In TRANSCODE meetings held in Elmina (January 2012) and Rome (May 2012) the criteria for projects were set out and discussed with participants. For all TRANSCODE projects three specific and one overall criteria was discerned:

Multi-stakeholder approach: Projects were expected to pay much attention to the role of different stakeholders in their design and implementation. For one the workshops revealed that local governments could play a key role. Also the involvement of the private sector needed critical appraisal, for instance in choosing certain terminology in proposals that would appeal more (e.g. return to investment) or less (e.g. develop-

ment aid, poverty alleviation, communal ownership) to this sector. Sustained effort at engaging openly with various sectors should be seen as an important objective for the principal actors of a certain project.

Cross Transnational engagement: For TRANSCODE the inclusion of a transnational dimension in the design of proposals needed to be more thought through than the typical bilateral ties of a certain TCO, linking a country of origin with a country of receipt of migrants. Instead the expertise of similarly minded other TCOs and their partners should be sought where possible, also to take heed from the lessons learned there. Additionally the attention to such linkages could also help to fortify South-South relationships, for instance through further engagement between local governments involved.

Bi-directionality: The project should have a positive impact on both the Northern and Southern partners involved. In essence this point calls for a discerning perspective on power relationships and the need to understand and essentially minimize unequal investments in projects between partners, especially between the global North and South, to avoid different levels of involvement and associated sense of ownership (and thus sustained commitment) to projects initiated.

Expected development impact (beneficiaries): The sustainability of projects is a criterion quite common with all development cooperation oriented projects, and under TRANSCODE it is seen as being important and legitimate too, notably in relationship to the prior three more specific criteria. This fourth criterion would then also help to more easily satisfy potential donors. Thus it was recommended to the authors of project proposals that they would give special attention to questions such as: What are the problems that need to be solved? What are the indicators for the expected development impact? To this end a logical framework was considered to be an important integral component of all proposals.

The transnational development projects are conceptually complete but, at this moment, still

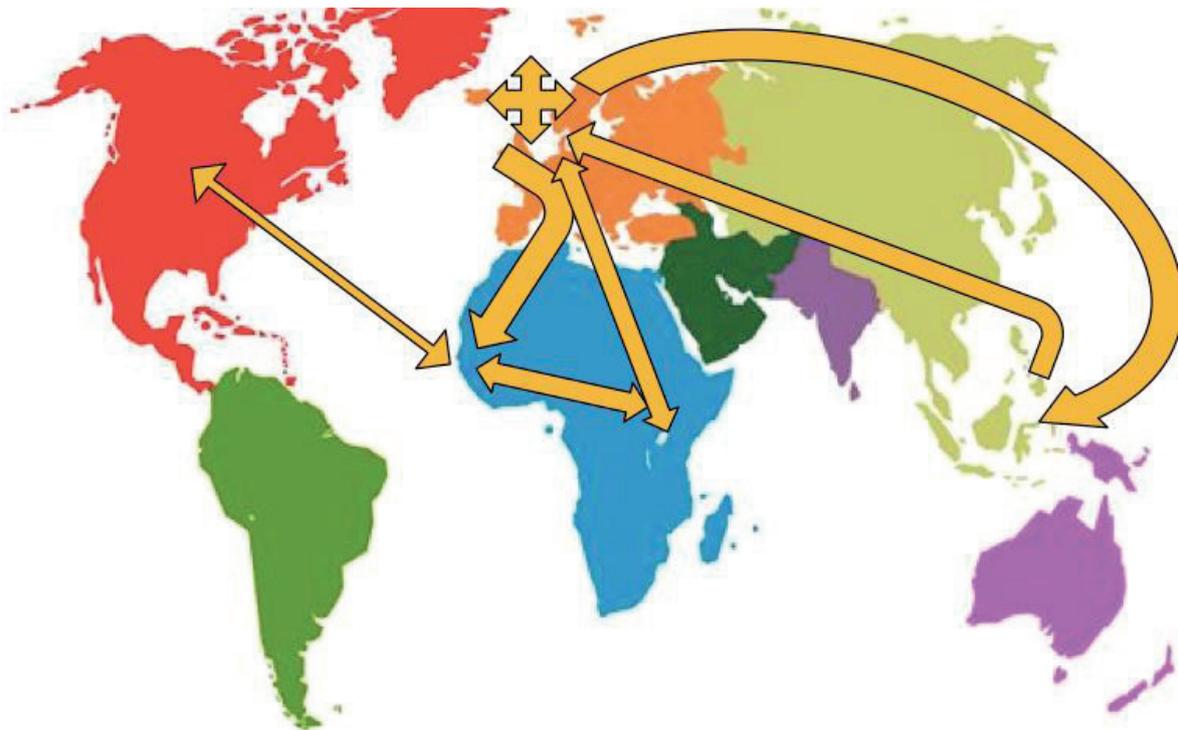


Figure 1: Illustration of communication exchanges during the project proposal phase of the Burundian Women's Post-Conflict Resilience Project

under review with regard to funding. In two cases this might be explained by their scale and ambition. Thus the project "Transnational Partnership in Return Migration and Human Development" aims to encourage Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands to invest in food security in Ghana and to establish small farmers cooperatives in three districts. The major partners are RECOGIN from the Netherlands and ADRA, a relief organisation in Ghana.

The second project concerns the "Burundian Women's Post-Conflict Resilience Project". Its principal objective is to build and enhance the livelihood capacity of 120,000 Burundian women and men in the province of Kirundo, Burundi. One of its activities is income-generating sewing and weaving programmes. To ensure that this is set up properly the Netherlands based Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD) will cooperate with the Philippine based return migrants NGO Development Action Women Network (DAWN), drawing on their methodology and many years of implementation experience even if provided in a different. This project is a

prime example of how transnational exchanges can lead to new inspiration and ideas. During the first TRANSCODE workshop in Tagaytay, BWPD had the opportunity to visit DAWN offices and witness its so-called healing and empowerment programme for traumatized female migrants returning from Japan. The BWPD programme will include hands-on training in sewing and weaving in its BWPD Peace and Reconciliation Centre in Kirundo. This provides women, many widows, who have survived the civil war and are returning from refugee camps in neighbouring countries to the region of Kirundo with an activity that is both therapeutic and income generating. Thus these traumatized women can regain their self-esteem, gain social footing in the region and manage to make a living.

The name of the "Pasali Farm Machinery Pool" speaks for itself. The project is relatively small scale with the total budget required anticipated to remain below 100,000 Euro. PASALI is a Philippine migrant organisation with branches in the Netherlands and the Philippines (Mindanao). Unfortunately, partnership with another non-

Philippine organisation, which had seemed quite keen to fund this project as the endeavour fitted well with its own ideology, failed. Now alternative funding is being sought.

TRANSCODE as a Process

Besides initiating and supporting the above-mentioned spin off project proposals, the TRANSCODE programme also produced a platform to ensure more continual engagement and collaboration between TCOs and other stakeholders in the field of migration-development in various sending and home countries. To that end it may be noted that all kinds of spontaneous bilateral exchanges have arisen between actors who have come to know each other through TRANSCODE initiatives, of which we have only learned of some, also contingent to the stage of development of ideas that they are in. Examples are a spin-off from the 2010 workshops in which a Philippines based local government contacted the migrant NGO Athika to start a migrant house in the municipality; the initiative of Applied University Rotterdam's Department of Water Engineering sending interns to the municipality of Infanta, The Philippines to support local water-related developments there; and DCMO, which has started several initiatives based on core TRANSCODE principles.

Whilst the above list of activities might seem to suggest remarkable progress, which in many ways would be a justified conclusion, it is important to also dwell on a number of critical points, notably also as lessons learnt from which other programmes might also profit. To start, the programme did not manage to equally involve all envisaged actors in its programme and various projects. In particular the private sector remained weakly represented, which may be attributable not so much to the nature of activities pursued, but rather to the way they had a strong developmental character, as opposed to having a more outright entrepreneurial sense.

Where the commercial sector was then somewhat under involved, the knowledge institutions by contrast appear a little overrepresented, par-

ticularly in the more processional phases. The effect of this is twofold: First, whilst the role of non-academic actors is, without any real exception, perceived as enduring and engaged throughout project design and implementation, that of the academics is less clear. Second, while the academics certainly readily contributed their insights in discussions of the projects of others doing so in a form that might almost be considered 'action-research' (and we also speak from personal experience here). On the other hand they also maintained a certain distance towards project initiatives started under the TRANSCODE flag, notably at the stage of project proposal design. This points to a preference to keep certain objectivity, and thus also distance, to these projects, with the argument that this was key for generating ownership. At the same time however the question arises whether they are not also one actor amongst the various involved, and that an exceptional role would thus be a misfit. To date no consensus has been reached on this.

Moreover, none of the actors could be involved in initiatives on a full time basis. In practice, this led to the situation that the knowledge institutions are not so only facilitative or supportive to the project proposals but became also involved in project formulation and lobbying. This has certainly also to do with capacities and capabilities of project proponents. From the TRANSCODE workshop held in Rome (2012) it emerged that there are clear coaching needs for the groups involved with the projects. This relates to project formulation, and how the proposal can comply with needs of funders.

Most participants do have experiences with local kinds of projects and their implementation. That was also the reason why they were invited to participate in the programme in the first place. Our premise thereby rests on the achievement of sustained transnational levels of engagement, notably between migrants and counterparts in their country of origin, but also in partnership with other related local partners both abroad and in the countries of origin. This adheres well to the argument of Faist (2000: 191) argues

that when studying 'transnational social spaces' researchers must be careful not to conceive of these spaces as 'static notions of ties and positions' but rather as 'dynamic social processes'. In his view:

Cultural, political and economic processes in transnational social spaces involve the accumulation, use and effects of various sorts of capital, their volume and convertibility: economic capital, human capital, such as educational credentials, skills and know-how, and social capital, mainly resources inherent in or transmitted through social and symbolic ties.

This kind of conceptualization of interventions as a principle also held in TRANSCODE initiatives, does call for quite comprehensive, multi-sited (countries) approaches, sometimes through various concomitant interventions, which not all actors may feel sufficiently well equipped for. This relates to financial means and other forms of investments, but also to their human capital, a required level of expertise, for instance in writing proposals in a manner relevant for funding agencies or at least the way they perceive it. To try and solve this apparent issue close friends were approached, and many of these were the academics involved in TRANSCODE. Whilst their conceptual knowledge does not stand to question here, the point is that such insights may not be the most required ingredient for these proposals. As was also stated earlier, the matter of trust with the academics involved in the programme in steering further proposal developments seems to prevail in the choice to call on them for assistance first. Needless to say this led to certain delays as these academics were then required to play intermediary or catalytic roles vis-à-vis others to provide more relevant, direct technical assistance.

Every organisation that took part in one of the TRANSCODE workshops is considered to be member of the 'TRANSCODE family'. The term family, like thinking 'Transcodely', or in the spirit of Transcode, is important, as it denotes a sense of long-lasting commitment and a mutual commitment to meeting a shared set of needs. And,

as in just about every family, there may always be some conflict at certain times. This was also the case here, as an internal conflict between Dutch participants was also taken into the discussion space of one of the workshops. This not only caused certain delay but also produced some confusion with other participants about the reasons for bringing this up at that occasion, also because the underlying issues were not clear. The value of that moment of crisis was that it showed up two things: First, it highlighted the role of power and hierarchy, which a horizontal, bottom-up platform approach like that of TRANSCODE did not automatically resolve. Second, and related to the first point, funding opportunities for projects play out an element of competition between actors, notably between TCOs, for as long as this funding is not primarily own resources, when there are clear limitations in the funds available from external donors, such as supporting governments of countries of destination.

TRANSCODE has a clear endeavour to achieve transnational modes of collaboration involving various actors (stakeholders) in activities that are mainly based in the South. Usually the approach taken is one of collectives, of mutual and consensual approaches between various actors. What needs to be recognized in this is the fact that some activities were also considered as enabling for migrants, namely to allow them to become involved in activities that would actually facilitate a financially sustainable return to their countries of origin.

Another matter that came out of the Rome workshop, was the question of representation, notably from the angle of generations. At the Rome event a few second-generation migrants had been invited to join the occasion. Whilst overall they enjoyed the occasion, and felt they had learned a lot, they also stated how as a generation they felt somewhat underrepresented, and also a little subdued in the presence of senior members of their migrant organisations. Furthermore, and perhaps more significantly, they also felt that the proposed projects were a bit "old-

fashioned” and traditional in approach, focusing on rural communities, on agriculture, and generally not bringing in new technologies, virtual spaces and such. This point is being addressed with a particular project that is initiated by the second generation.

Last but not least, funding of the workshops and proposed projects is a continual challenge, particularly since the European economic recession is felt in both Italy and the Netherlands. In the latter, the government budget for development cooperation has seen major cuts, which has also heavily affected the development organisations involved with, and supportive of, the TRANSCODE programme. To this we can add that one of the principal challenges remaining at this moment concerns the friction between the conceptual approach of TRANSCODE, which is essentially transnational, multi-scalar and multi-stakeholder, thereby embodying through activities it generates not only bilateral North-South (N-S) engagements but also the possibility of S-S, N-S-S, configurations, etc., versus the geo-political context it is part of. Whilst the workshops of TRANSCODE have clearly shown up the legitimacy and value of such variations in approaches, development-funding organisations seem still to primarily be organized along the lines of nation-states, and then in N-S constitutions, or in regional formations (for example sub-Sahara Africa, Southeast Asia) in their consideration of the merits of projects proposed to them.

Discussion: Lessons Learned

When considering what lessons we have learned from the TRANSCODE initiative, we need to immediately ask: lessons for, and by whom? For TRANSCODE this is an important and critical observation, given the fact that we do not give precedence to one or the other actor in goals to achieve. At the same time, as also argued earlier, the involvement of TCOs is crucial in the overall programme as they are the principal bearers of migration and development programmes. Many of these organisations have already gained experience in small-scale development projects, e.g.

in the field of education and health. Considering the needs and requests from the communities of origin and more in general the immense problems remaining in many migrant sending countries, TCOs feel the pressure to broaden their programmes and upscale their development efforts. In this respect, TRANSCODE can be instrumental in bringing TCOs in contact with each other and with other developmental actors in order to achieve this endeavour without thereby overextending themselves. In that vein the TRANSCODE programme has already proved to be quite valuable.

A multi-stakeholder approach is complicated and time consuming, certainly in the defining stages, however we anticipate that there will be a positive return to investment in the course of time, defined more precisely through the implementation of various TRANSCODE projects, but also by achievement of a sustained and active community of *Transcodians*, that embodies representatives for various actors who are willing to exchange and share ideas and perspectives, because they understand the added value of this for all involved. Indeed, from personal interviews held with various participants at workshops it emerged that participants were struck by the amount of information and debates they could pick up through the TRANSCODE events. They particularly noted the value of some similarities in the way transnational developments were achieved at local levels in various countries of the global south. Given the value of such exchanges it is also important to give more emphasis to the importance of institutional changes taking place over time.

As for the balance between the several actors in a multi-stakeholder approach, a case to the point is provided with the process that has been taking place within TRANSCODE in the relationship between its Programme Board and the Advisory Board. Where the TPB was envisaged as guiding team for the setup of various components under TRANSCODE, with input in those components limited to an overall role, the members of the Advisory Board took a more critical

perspective, asking why the Steering Committee seemed to only comprise academics, asking how this then reflected the overall multi-stakeholder approach of TRANSCODE. Beyond the question of practicalities, which *would* favour a small core steering team with few direct own interests, this question is, of course, legitimate.

In 2015 TRANSCODE will be formulating its second Five Year Plan. While maintaining the essential principles of a multi-stakeholder, transnational approach, more attention will need to be given to the mechanics of multilateral cooperation. Furthermore we want to give specific attention to original, out-of-box activities that are not already enmeshed in policy orientations. Among such initiatives, a capacity building process through educational E-learning programmes, but also the start of a TRANSCODE youth programme, are some of our priorities.

Temporal dynamics in the field of migration and development also relate, logically, to actual levels of mobility, a relation that from a policy perspective remains uneasy at best, especially in the migrant receiving countries. In conceiving development prospects as enabled through investments that come forth out of migration, we consider human mobility as a core value. This needs to then also reflect the long-term engagement through various activities of TRANSCODE.

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